



VIEWS OF HISTORY

At the close of World War II, the United States was a proud and confident nation. Yankee strength, knowhow, and vast natural resources defeated fierce enemies and overcame great hardships abroad. It was widely believed that problems at home—clearing slums or building modern highways—could be faced with the same determination and skill that crushed foreign tyranny and restored peace to the world. The country was not particularly hospitable to those who cherished the past—particularly those defending old buildings that otherwise stood in the way of “progress.” Similarly, the intellectual struggle over architectural style and taste was waged by a small clique of tradition-minded preservationists against the more dynamic proponents of modern concrete, steel, and glass structures. Reminders of the old world and its velvet-tufted aristocracy were typically shunned, while the “international style” was the rage among the design intelligentsia. Not surprisingly, these multiple and overlapping conflicts in architecture, history, and taste had a significant influence on the continuing development of the Capitol and its surrounding campus following the second World War.

Upon the death of Franklin Roosevelt on April 12, 1945, Harry S Truman became president. He inherited a presidency that had been strengthened and expanded through Roosevelt’s management of New Deal programs and the massive war effort. Powerful executive departments grew at a brisk rate under Roosevelt while the Congress limped along with an archaic and inefficient committee system manned by a small and largely nonprofessional staff. Following the war, the public generally viewed Congress as unhelpful to the president. Robert La Follette, a progressive Republican senator from Wisconsin, led a bipartisan effort to streamline and professionalize the committee system and, thereby, reassert Congress’ role in government. By the provisions of the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, the number of standing committees was reduced from forty-eight to nineteen in the House and from thirty-three to fifteen in the Senate. However, expanding responsibility for a growing and more complex government and Congress’ emerging oversight role called for a substantial increase in staff. The number of people working for congressional committees actually doubled in the decade following the adoption of the act. A new emphasis on the efficiency of the work of committees, aided by a new class of professional staff, resulted in a need for more hearing rooms and staff space in the Capitol and the legislative office buildings. Like the country it served,

Aerial View of the Capitol, Looking West
1996

Congress was experiencing a period of rapid post-war growth.

In 1948, the Senate Office Building Commission acquired half a city square immediately east of the 1909 office building. Dormant since the First Street wing was finished in 1933, the commission acted in response to the Senate's need for office space tailored to its new committee structure. The site was selected partly due to its convenient location and partly to rid the neighborhood of substandard housing. In announcing the plan to acquire the site, *The Washington Post* published a photograph of the neighborhood under the banner: "Senate Office to Replace This Slum."¹ Speaking for the commission, David Lynn asked the attorney general to condemn the properties, including 148 tiny dwelling units in "Schott's Alley," along with various rooming houses and residences collectively known as "Slum's Row." Congress appropriated \$1.1 million to acquire and clear the site in preparation for the Senate's second office building. About 500 residents were left to find housing elsewhere.

With the demise of the trusty Carrère & Hastings firm, the commission was obliged to interview architects for the job of designing the new office building. Although matters of style were left to the

design professionals, the commission expressed a desire for a building that would look at home among the classical structures on Capitol Hill, without necessarily replicating the expensive and (to some eyes) archaic detail of a full-blown classical design. A synthesis of modern and antique would do.

The facilities needed in the new physical structure were dictated by the Senate's new committee structure. The building was expected to house all fifteen standing committees, and their various subcommittees, with office suites for chairmen located nearby. Staff would be accommodated near the chairmen and the committee rooms. Most important, the committee rooms would be set up not with a central conference table but with a rostrum where senators would face witness tables and the public. That arrangement would be more conducive for holding informational and investigative hearings. A large auditorium equipped with radio, television, motion picture, recording, and broadcasting facilities was also needed, along with a cafeteria, a stationery room, a barber shop and beauty salon, a mail room, and underground parking.

On April 30, 1948, after interviewing five architectural establishments, the Senate Office Building Commission directed Lynn to hire the New York firm of Eggers & Higgins to prepare the preliminary plans and estimates for the new building. An initial fee of \$14,500 was set aside for this phase of work. Otto Eggers and Daniel Paul Higgins had worked in the office of John Russell Pope, one of America's great classical architects, and carried on with his practice following the master's death in 1937. Pope's designs for the National Archives, the Jefferson Memorial, and the National Gallery of Art, built in the 1930s and 1940s, already adorned the federal city. Against the trends of the day, Eggers & Higgins continued to work in the classical idiom and were considered to be among the few firms able to blend a modern office building into the design context of Capitol Hill.

On June 8, 1948, only six weeks after the Eggers & Higgins firm was hired, the Senate Office Building Commission was shown a design for a seven-story "E"-shaped building with its principal elevation (about 450 feet long) on First Street backed by three rear wings. The building was a simple structure dominated by a central pavilion on First Street with square engaged columns capped by a plain entablature. (A pediment was

Original Design for the Second Senate Office Building

by Eggers & Higgins, 1948

The entrance into the office building appeared to be located in the center of the main elevation, yet the doors were actually located around the corners. Despite this deception, the design of the Senate's second office building (now called the Dirksen Building) is a successful synthesis of classical and contemporary design.



added later.) By its location and design the central pavilion seemed to indicate the main entrance to the building, but the promise was a sham. There was in fact no room to spare behind the portico for a grand entrance so side entrances on Constitution Avenue and C Street north were the main ways into the building. The suggestion of a colonnade was created by tall ribbons of glass and dark spandrel panels alternating between white marble piers. Cast into the panels were commemorations of American shipping, farming, manufacturing, mining, and lumbering. Unfurnished, the cost of the building and its underground connections and subway was first estimated at about twenty million dollars. The design was approved without debate and Lynn was instructed to meet with the legislative counsel of the Senate to draft the necessary authorization to build the second Senate office building, as well as to secure \$850,000 to begin work. The legislation was approved on June 9, and two weeks later the money was granted. In two months, schematic designs had been developed and approved, and funding started—yet the hopes raised by this auspicious beginning soon turned sour.

Eggers & Higgins signed a contract with Lynn to provide architectural services for 5½ percent of construction cost. Final plans were approved on April 7, 1949, and construction documents were sent out for bids. Ten million dollars was requested to start work, but despite the support of Dennis Chavez of New Mexico, chairman of the Senate Office Building Commission, it was defeated at the hands of Senator Allen J. Ellender of Louisiana, chairman of the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee. The project was sent back to the drawing board to trim costs. Lynn was directed to survey the Senate's existing facilities to see if a more economical solution to the space problem could be identified. The possibility of adding a new floor to the existing office building was investigated but rejected due to the cost of relocating air conditioning equipment in the attic. Space in the proposed east front extension of the Capitol was also found to be insufficient. Various studies were made that eliminated or lowered the three rear wings of the new building. When debate resumed in July 1950, senators in favor of the new office building declared that the project would have to

wait until settlement of the Korean conflict that had begun in June. For the next four years, action on the second Senate office building was deferred.

A NEW ARCHITECT

With expansion plans in limbo, internal security investigations and spy scandals kept the political climate on Capitol Hill charged with paranoia and fear. In 1950, the suspected spy Alger Hiss was convicted of perjury, and the following year Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were convicted of passing atomic secrets to the Soviet Union. Also in 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, claiming that hundreds of communists worked in the State Department, launched his investigations to root out traitors. McCarthy held his hearings in the elegant and versatile caucus room in the Senate office building under the hot lights brought in for television cameras. Building on hearsay and innuendo, McCarthy's fanatical investigations continued into the early days of Dwight Eisenhower's administration, ending only when the Senate could bear the charade no longer. In 1954, McCarthy was censured for bringing that body into "dishonor and disrepute."

As McCarthy stumbled into disgrace, David Lynn, one of Congress' most honest, trustworthy, and respected servants, retired from office. His resignation was written on August 5, 1954, and effective on September 30. His letter to Eisenhower, reviewing thirty-one years as architect of the Capitol, emphasized the buildings constructed and the vast sums of money expended under his supervision. At age eighty-one, he felt it was time to relinquish the post and retire from public service. Newspapers acknowledged Lynn's retirement with stories of his fidelity to the job, his longevity, and, most particularly, the changing face of Capitol Hill that took place during his long years in office.

A few days before Lynn resigned, the Speaker of the House, Joe Martin of Massachusetts, wrote Eisenhower recommending a replacement. Martin suggested an old friend who had served with him in the 74th Congress, a Republican from Delaware named J. George Stewart. The Speaker's petition was cosigned by all of the Republican hierarchy in

Congress, including the president pro tempore of the Senate, Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, and the Republican leader of the House, Charles Halleck of Indiana. Martin's efforts were quickly rewarded, precluding the American Institute of Architects or any other interested party from becoming involved in the process of recommending Lynn's replacement. On August 10, newspapers announced that Stewart would become the next architect of the Capitol. He was appointed on August 16, 1954, and, with Lynn looking on, took the oath in the Speaker's office on August 19, 1954. His service began on October 1.

Nearly twenty years earlier, as one of the victims of Roosevelt's landslide reelection victory of 1936, Stewart had been swept out of office after one term as Delaware's lone representative in the House. After his defeat, he returned to Wilmington to run the family's construction business and helped to build some of the area's great estates. After selling the business, Stewart returned to Washington to serve as the chief clerk of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, and he later worked as a civil engineer for the Justice Department and the Army Corps of Engineers. Gregarious and well liked, Stewart was equally comfortable in the company of Democrats and Republicans, and his status as a former congressman afforded him access and courtesies reserved for members. But because he had not come up through the ranks like Woods and Lynn, or been trained as an architect like Walter or Clark, Stewart's qualifications for the office soon came into question.

Stewart took the reins at the beginning of a period of great construction activity on the Hill. While plans were afoot to construct a third office building for the House of Representatives, and while the east front extension project simmered on the back burner as usual, the first project Stewart became involved with was the new Senate office building. (The armistice ending the Korean conflict had been signed in July 1953.) In July 1954, the Senate Office Building Commission issued a report urging Congress to fund the work, noting that every possible economy had been taken to assure a fine product at a reasonable cost. The center rear wing was eliminated to save money, as were a page school, a suite for the vice

president, and thirty-five parking spaces. Twelve committees, instead of the previously planned fifteen, would be accommodated in the new building. A simple exercise room replaced plans for a gymnasium. On August 26, 1954, Congress appropriated six million dollars to begin construction. Groundbreaking ceremonies were held on January 26, 1955, and the cornerstone was laid on July 13, 1956. The building was finished in October 1958 at a final cost of \$26.3 million.

THE EAST FRONT EXTENSION

While investigating ways to provide more and better-equipped hearing rooms, the Senate Office Building Commission looked again at the accommodation provided in the proposed east front extension. Only one committee room and twenty-six offices were on the drawing board in the Senate's half—not enough to solve the problem. The idea of building a new addition to the east front had been originated by Thomas U. Walter in 1863 as a means to correct the impression that the dome was not adequately supported. Since then others had come to see the project as a good way to add more rooms to the Capitol, while covering the flaking sandstone wall with a new marble facade.

People who disagreed with the proposal cited the history of the east front as reason enough to preserve it. Since Andrew Jackson's first inauguration in 1829, most presidential swearing in ceremonies had taken place on the central portico. Some inaugural speeches were considered defining moments in American history, including Abraham Lincoln's eloquent words of reconciliation near the close of the Civil War and Franklin Roosevelt's buoyant message of assurance during the depths of the Great Depression. The Capitol's central portico was revered as one of America's greatest historic places. The condition of the sandstone and the overhanging dome did not bother history-minded observers, who considered these quirks as harmless or even charming. They wanted the Capitol maintained just as it was, and they could become quite vocal in calls for its preservation.

By 1955, many members of the House and Senate were well acquainted with the reasons behind the proposal to extend the east front. Almost every year, the architect of the Capitol reviewed the conditions there, asking for the authority and money to build the addition. The dome that bore down on the east-central portico and the crumbling sandstone were two architectural reasons given year after year in support of the project. A quieter mention of additional rooms whetted the appetites of senior legislators who stood to gain a Capitol office if the project were authorized. The basis of discussion was usually Carrère & Hastings' scheme "B," devised in 1904, which would create an addition thirty-two and a half feet deep that approximated the existing facade but did not replicate it.

Joe Cannon almost succeeded in his attempt to authorize the extension in 1903. In 1935 and 1937 the Senate approved legislation, but the House disagreed. World War II and the Korean conflict deferred the project until the return of peace. During this period the architect of the Capitol made sure that the east front project was not forgotten. At the beginning of 1955, a new Democratic Congress was seated and a veteran Speaker returned to preside over the House. Sam Rayburn soon gave the east front project the push it needed to proceed. He agreed wholeheartedly with the arguments supporting the project and thought that too much time had been spent in discussion when it was clear something needed to be done soon. What Joe Cannon could not accomplish a half-century earlier, Sam Rayburn did within a few weeks after returning to the Speaker's chair in 1955.

In June 1955 Stewart gave the House Appropriations Committee an account of the proposed project, including arguments for and against. No one who disagreed with the project was invited to the hearings, and there was little interest within Rayburn's circle of friends for further discussion. After ninety-two years, every argument that could be made on either side of the issue had been made, again and again. With the help of the Senate Majority Leader, Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas (critics began calling the new addition the "Texas Front"), Rayburn secured an appropriation of five million dollars to "provide for the extension, reconstruction, and replacement of the Central Portion of the United States Capitol in substantial accordance with Scheme 'B'" by Carrère & Hastings.² A new



Speaker Sam Rayburn (wearing a hat) and J. George Stewart

The development of Capitol Hill was profoundly influenced by Rayburn (1882–1961). He singlehandedly revived the proposal to extend the Capitol's east front and spearheaded the creation of the third House office building, which would eventually bear his name. He worked to provide better parking, restaurants, and other creature comforts for visitors and representatives alike. Throughout, he found a loyal lieutenant in the person of George Stewart (1890–1970), the architect of the Capitol. (1960 photograph.)

commission was authorized to oversee the work, including the leadership of both houses of Congress and the architect of the Capitol. Rayburn was named chairman and Stewart was elected secretary. The public was neither invited to participate in the decision nor even informed that the extension was so close to authorization. To some, it seemed that Rayburn slipped the legislation through as quietly as possible—more than a few called it "sneaky."

On August 5, 1955, Stewart was authorized to spend \$50,000 for preliminary engineering studies to determine site soil conditions and the condition of the Capitol's foundations. The first meeting of the Commission for the Extension of the Capitol was held on March 26, 1956, with only Vice President Richard Nixon absent. Stewart announced that the legislation under which the commission operated authorized the enlargement of the central building and, therefore, did not preclude other things such as an extension to the west

front, an underground garage, or a “security vault” (bomb shelter) under the west grounds. These facilities had not been openly discussed but were items on an informal “wish list” worked up by Rayburn and Stewart.

The work of the commission required the assistance of several architectural and engineering firms. Stewart brought with him the names and resumes of four associate architects, two associate engineers, and three advisory architects. Heading the list were Roscoe DeWitt and his partner Fred L. Hardison of Dallas, architects better known for their hospitals, office buildings, and banks in Texas. Alfred Poor and his partner Albert Swanke of New York City were recommended as associate architects. Jesse M. Shelton and Allen G. Stanford from

Atlanta were proposed as the associate engineers. To fill seats on an advisory board Stewart recommended Arthur Brown of San Francisco, John Harbeson of Philadelphia, and Henry Shepley of Boston. Only Harbeson had a prior association with the Capitol, having served in 1949–1950 as an associate architect on the project to rebuild the House and Senate chambers. With his partners, he was also engaged in developing a design for a third office building for the House of Representatives. DeWitt and Hardison had recently been retained to remodel the old House office building, while Poor and Swanke were preparing documents for a similar project for the new House office building. Shelton and Stanford were developing plans for a pair of underground garages to be located behind the House office buildings. The Texas architects had been associated with Rayburn, although the extent of their association is difficult to determine. Roscoe DeWitt, for instance, designed the Sam Rayburn Library in Bonham, Texas, without charge. All the architects were endorsed by the Commission of Fine Arts and according to Stewart were outstanding members of their professions. The commission unanimously approved the recommendations, launching the associate and advisory architects and engineers on an intensive study dealing with the Capitol’s expansion possibilities.³ Once confirmed, the architects from Dallas and New York City joined the engineers from Atlanta in a business venture known as DeWitt, Poor & Shelton.

The consulting architects proved to be an imaginative group. With Rayburn and Stewart’s encouragement, they thought about enlarging the Capitol in ways never before (or since) contemplated. Ideas that were put forward included building three stories of underground offices beneath the Olmsted terraces, building sets of wings on the Walter extension in every available direction, adding to the center building both above and below ground, and building a bomb shelter with living and working space for 800 people. One proposal to improve the architectural effect of the Capitol suggested removing the east porticoes from Walter’s wings to make way for additions. Thus, the central entrance would stand alone without flanking porticoes competing for attention.⁴

While the brainstorming sessions were going on behind closed doors, the American Institute of



Speaker Rayburn’s Working Office

*S*am Rayburn referred to his private office (modern day H-128) as the “Board of Education,” for it was there that new House members learned their lessons about getting along and going along. On April 12, 1945, Vice President Harry Truman was visiting Rayburn in this room when a phone call from the White House asked him to come quickly. Truman had no idea that Franklin Roosevelt was dead and he was about to become the nation’s 33rd president.

In 1857 the room was specially decorated for its original occupant, the House Committee on Territories. (1959 photograph.)

Architects became alarmed at the prospects of drastic alterations being made to the nation's most revered building. The Committee on the National Capitol was formed by members of the AIA along with other preservationists to oppose the east front project. It became a vocal critic of the Speaker, the architect of the Capitol, and the associate architects (who, awkwardly enough, were all members of the AIA). On June 12, 1956, Edmund R. Purves, the executive director of the AIA, appeared as a witness before the Senate Committee on Appropriations. He spoke against further funding for the extension, citing a report prepared by the Committee on the National Capitol, but he could not be specific because the report was confidential. Reluctantly, he confessed that he supported the plans to extend the Capitol, but because the AIA was opposed he was obliged to testify against it. This ambivalence so annoyed Senator Bridges of New Hampshire that he suggested Purves apologize to the committee and leave.⁵ Meanwhile, the Dallas and Fort Worth chapters of the AIA refused to endorse the institute's position. The Dallas chapter's secretary transmitted a joint resolution to the Washington headquarters stating its belief that the project was in "trustworthy hands."⁶

On May 23, 1957, the associate architects issued a report with their recommendation regarding the enlargement of the Capitol. The architects took the position that the current generation had every right to add to the Capitol to meet the needs of Congress, as Walter's generation had done in the past. As long as the nation grew, it was only natural that the Capitol should grow along with it. Nothing was considered sacred, except that the Capitol should function efficiently. According to their calculations, the Capitol needed about 90,000 more square feet to accommodate an anticipated growth from 2,848 occupants (including visitors) per day to 3,174 occupants. It recommended spending \$10.1 million on an east front extension and included an entirely new idea: rather than using the design developed by Carrère & Hastings in 1904, the original elevation was to be replicated exactly in marble. It was hoped that this "archaeological reproduction" would satisfy those who did not want the Capitol's appearance altered.

Continuing their extensive list of proposed improvements, the associate architects recommended a vast west front extension necessitating demolition and reconstruction of the Olmsted terraces at a cost of more than nineteen million dollars, a four-level parking garage for 1,800 cars costing almost forty-two million dollars, new pedestrian tunnels to the Library of Congress and Supreme Court estimated at \$960,000, and four million dollars for new subway terminals for the Capitol and the legislative office buildings. On the bottom line, the architects totaled some seventy-five million dollars. This figure did not include cost of the bomb shelter, which was considered classified information.⁷

When he transmitted the architects' report to the commission, Stewart added a few items of his own. He wanted the Capitol's foundations underpinned, the dome repaired, the landscape improved, and the electrical service and lighting upgraded. Stewart estimated \$110 million would be needed for all contemplated improvements. In addition, the advisory architects came up with their own recommendations, including restoration of the old Supreme Court chamber on the first floor and improvements to other "Shrine features." They wanted to ban automobiles from the east plaza and add dining facilities to the terrace to take advantage of the views.⁸

“DELIBERATE DESECRATION”

The full effect of the sweeping recommendations was not felt immediately. To some in Congress, Rayburn, Stewart, and the architects had overstepped their bounds and misinterpreted their legislative mandate. The American Institute of Architects began agitating for public hearings and the press started to question the matter as well. While Rayburn and the architect of the Capitol had encouraged their associates to “think big,” they were now obliged to chart a more modest course to calm the protests. Rayburn took the view that the package of improvements should be treated as a long-range plan for the Capitol. Only the east front extension,

dome repair, lighting improvements, and new Senate subway terminal would be pursued for the time being. On January 22, 1958, Stewart gave the associate architects oral instructions to proceed with the working drawings for the extension based on the “archaeological reproduction” design concept.

Along with plans and specifications, the associate architects drafted rebuttals to the increasingly vigorous opposition heard from historical societies and patriotic groups. The troublemakers were, in the opinion of the architects, too sentimental and not sufficiently informed about the problems facing the Capitol. They thought that the cry of “desecration” was nothing more than a “catchy phrase” shouted by overexcited agitators. They wanted the commission to prepare a sound and irrefutable defense.⁹ It would come in handy during the public hearing on the east front matter that was scheduled for February in response to legislation introduced by Senators Alexander Smith of New Jersey and Joseph Clark of Pennsylvania to revoke the project’s authorization. The hearings were the first (and only) time the east front question was discussed before a congressional committee during this period.

The day before the hearings were held, *The New York Times*’s highly regarded architecture critic, Ada Louise Huxtable, wrote a scathing article condemning the east front extension. She called on people to wake up to America’s architectural heritage, which she claimed was threatened by the proposed addition. The “deliberate desecration” was too high a price to pay for a few more committee rooms and a few more restaurants. Filling up the Capitol’s forecourt with the new addition was also a grave aesthetic mistake. She criticized Stewart by noting that the architect of the Capitol was not an architect and condemned the secrecy shrouding the project. After questioning the motives of the various architects and politicians who supported the extension, Huxtable observed: “Since one of our fundamental freedoms seems to be freedom of taste (in the democratic tradition, the layman’s is equal to the expert’s) Congressmen are perhaps no less guilty than many of us in exercising unqualified expertise in matters of art.”¹⁰ On its editorial page, *The New York Times* joined the opposition with a strongly worded opinion. Under the banner “Capitol Folly,” the paper wrote that “architectural vandals” plotting at the Capitol were

nothing more than self-centered men bent on putting “the impress of their incompetence” on the most important building in the land. It did not begrudge Congress the space needed to do its work, noting that the Senate’s second office building was almost finished and the third office building for the House was under way. But it argued that the historic east facade of the Capitol, “the product of Thornton, Latrobe, & Bulfinch ought to be left alone.”¹¹

On February 17, 1958, the Public Buildings Subcommittee of the Senate Public Works Committee held a full day of hearings on legislation to end the east front project. Senator Smith read a joint statement signed by three colleagues warning of the great mistake that was about to take place, a mistake “for which we are all responsible.” He hoped the hearings would explore ways to relieve the space shortage without resorting to the “drastic alteration to the historic east front of the Capitol.”¹²

George Stewart testified that the preservation of the old sandstone walls was not feasible. The legacy of Thornton, Latrobe, and Bulfinch was, in fact, encrusted beneath thirty-five layers of dirty paint that hid the evidence of their design skills. Falling stone was a danger to the public, and the necessary patching further eroded the authenticity of the facade. To answer the charge of “desecration,” Stewart presented his own definition of the term:

Decade after decade, century after century, down the vista of years beyond man’s imaginative vision, the painting continues. Whereas there are now 35 coats of paint, a hundred years from now there would be 60, in another century 85—a staggering prospect. Already peeling and cracking, already obscuring the fine detail, there would only be a trace. Such a treatment of a fine old building can only be called desecration.¹³

A discussion followed about the Speaker’s handling of the business of the commission, the lack of meetings, and the absence of open debate. It seemed that Rayburn ran the commission with an iron fist, not allowing other members to participate. A copy of a note written by Joe Martin was read into the record indicating that the minority leader of the House did not recall ever voting for the east front extension during commission meetings. Julian Berla from the AIA spoke at length about the need for Congress to create more working space,

suggesting that perhaps Stewart should give up his Capitol office. Berla also hinted at the possibility that the architect of the Capitol might be willfully neglecting maintenance of the outside walls in order to promote the extension project. Dr. Richard Howland, the president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, sent a statement condemning the east front extension as an “ill-advised alteration . . . in the guise of necessary repairs.” He understood that the Capitol was a working building but hoped that “present needs and the heritage of the past can be so reconciled that future generations will receive from us at least this small part of our legacy.”

The president of the AIA diplomatically praised the architect of the Capitol as well as the associate architects, but condemned the legislation that led them astray. Another witness, Douglas Haskell, editor of *Architectural Forum*, noted that his magazine as well as *Look* opposed the extension. He thought the project cost was indefensible: it was a waste of money to tear one wall down to build another to gain a “thin sandwich of space.” He did not believe the stories about falling stone posing a threat to the safety of the public or legislators:

Mr. Chairman, to listen to gossip around the city of Washington, you would think that the present east front was showering everyone with meteors of falling stone. We have heard described some entirely fictitious stones weighing as much as 60 pounds which casually fell off as if a dog were shaking off water. Mr. Chairman, if this condition were indeed a fact, it would cast grave doubt on the competence and integrity and even the mother-wit of the Architect of the Capitol, who is charged with maintaining our public buildings and should long ago have prevented such stone shower baths by prudent patching.¹⁴

The docket was full of other people anxious to help put a stop to the east front project. Letters were introduced from the historical societies of Vermont and the District of Columbia, the state museum of Florida, the Society of Architectural Historians, and the American Veterans Committee. All agreed that the Capitol’s east front was a historic treasure not to be meddled with after so many years as witness to the nation’s history.

What no one who spoke that day noted was that a fundamental change was occurring in the perception of the nation’s Capitol. Until quite



Condition of Exterior Sandstone

1958

*B*y the mid-twentieth century the Capitol’s exterior sandstone was in places worn, cracked, and encrusted with paint. A particularly graphic example of deteriorated stonework is shown here.

recently, the building had been considered susceptible to improvement, capable of enlargement and modernization to keep pace with the needs of the legislative branch of government. Now voices were heard opposing change. For the first time in the history of the Capitol, the swell of a grass-roots preservation movement could be felt by those who ran the place. In years past, a handful of committee members discussed what course the Capitol should take, what should be done to make it better. Speeches were made in the House and Senate to debate the wisdom and cost of proposed changes, but the public’s participation in the discussion had been largely reactive. Now, the public was trying to involve itself at an early stage of discussion, bringing a sense of history to the debate. With so much of the nation’s past being swept away by highway construction and urban renewal, preservation of the Capitol’s east front seemed a matter of great

importance. Historic preservation had become a growing force in the Capitol's destiny.

Sam Rayburn, however, was not deterred. He considered the project good for the Capitol, good for the House of Representatives, and good for the American people. Four days after the Senate hearings he convened the commission and told Stewart to proceed. Repairs to the dome, a new Senate subway terminal, and improvements to the electrical and lighting systems were also authorized. (For the time being no further plans would be pursued on the west front extension, bomb shelter, terrace reconstruction, underground garage, or landscape improvements.) Stewart was authorized to enter into contracts as soon as possible so that the extension would be finished before the next inaugural ceremony on January 20, 1961. Samples of Vermont Imperial Danby marble and White Georgia Golden Vein marble were presented by Stewart to the commission, which responded by leaving the decision up to him. The Georgia Marble Company later withdrew its Golden Vein sample because there was not enough available for the project and requested that Georgia Special White be considered instead.

Stewart asked the advisory architects for ideas about the disposition of materials to be removed from the Capitol to prepare for the new work. They replied that pieces of the columns, stairs, entablature, and balustrade coming off could be stored or, as Harbeson suggested, reconstructed into a national museum. What to do with the sculptural decorations was also open for discussion. The statuary groups on the two cheek blocks, *Discovery of America* by Luigi Persico and *Rescue* by Horatio Greenough, were, in the opinion of the advisory architects, not worth reusing. The Greenough group was considered particularly offensive to American Indians and was thought best consigned to a museum. With these sculptures out of the way, there would be an opportunity to commission new statuary groups as a show of more sophisticated contemporary taste. Other worn pieces of sculpture, such as the two figures of War and Peace by Persico and Antonio Capellano's *Fame and Peace Crowning Washington*, would be reproduced under the supervision of a trustworthy sculptor.

During the spring of 1958, arguments over the wisdom of going ahead with the project showed up again in the nation's newspapers. Although the

committee hearing was over, the full Senate had not yet voted on the proposal to shelve the project. Writers pro and con kept the editorial pages filled with all the old arguments. A series of well-balanced articles by George Beveridge began to appear in *The Washington Star* on March 23, 1958, fairly presenting the justifications to extend or restore. The first was titled "East Front Architects Blast Foes As Unethical," followed by "Architects Differ Widely on East Front Extension—Views Range From Vandalism of Shrine to Improvement of Historic Values." Next came an article under the short rhetorical headline "Sense or Sentiment?" Editorially, *The Washington Star* eventually concluded that the east front project had been victimized by the "sinister accusations and half-truths of the whipped up 'Write Your Congressman campaign'" and should proceed immediately without "further dillydallying."¹⁵

On May 18, 1958, news of an important change of heart was reported in Washington's *Sunday Star*. The executive committee of the local AIA chapter had passed a resolution supporting the east front project. Members of the committee noted that the plans were "basically sound, esthetically pleasing, and in harmony with the design of the present Capitol."¹⁶ Editorially, the *Sunday Star* thought that the reconsideration was wise and asked the architectural profession in general to take another look at the east front question. Too much passion and not enough hard facts had colored the debate, and it urged the profession to decide the matter "based on knowledge—not emotion." On June 13 *The Evening Star* reported that the Metropolitan (Washington) Chapter of the AIA voted to withdraw its opposition to the project. It was, according to the paper, a "knockdown, drag out session" lasting four hours. Richard Howland of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and one of the project architects, Albert Swanke, were among those who presented opposing arguments before the chapter that evening.¹⁷

On May 27, Rayburn went to the National Press Club to defend himself against charges being made regarding his handling of the project. Accusations that the Speaker thought he "owned" the Capitol, and that he was a dictator, were charges that surprised him. One by one Rayburn went down the list of problems with the east front: the thick paint obscuring carved details, falling stones that might

bop a president elect on the head as he stepped forward to be sworn in, cracks patched with cement, and the dome overhanging the portico. The materials could not be saved, but the design could be, if faithfully replicated in a durable material like marble. On another issue, Rayburn pleaded innocent to the charge of trying to pull a fast one. After all, he argued, generation after generation starting with Thomas U. Walter had advocated the project. He summed up changes made by Latrobe and additions made by Walter to illustrate the point that the Capitol had always been the subject of alteration and expansion.

The Speaker then took questions from the audience. A reporter wanted to know why so many architects had opposed the east front extension. Rayburn replied that of the thousands of members of the AIA, only a few had ever seen the Capitol up close; those who had, had approved the project. The recent action taken by the Washington chapter reversing its position proved the point. Would he consent for the House and Senate to vote on the issue again? Rayburn argued that Congress voted on the issue twice in the 1930s and again in 1955 and he did not see any use of “chewing over that old cud again.” Questions continued and Rayburn cheerfully kept up his spirited defense. It was his first appearance before the Press Club in twenty-one years, a performance characterized as “lively” and “impassioned.” No one doubted that Rayburn was determined to see the project through.¹⁸

The Washington Post was not swayed by the Speaker’s performance and thought that he should let the question be voted on again. It did not believe that the east front was crumbling, or that Congress absolutely had to have more space in the Capitol. But even if those assertions were true, why did the Speaker and his “staunch ally”—the architect of the Capitol—oppose a fair and open hearing before Congress and let the facts speak for themselves? The paper concluded gravely: “We fear that Architect Rayburn made Parliamentarian Rayburn a trifle arrogant in dogmatically insisting that any reconsideration was out of order.”¹⁹

In July 1958, the American Institute of Architects held its annual convention in Cleveland and considered a proposal to reaffirm its traditional stand against the east front extension. One of the leading critics, Julian Berla, addressed the assembly about the “hydra-headed issue that will not

stay dead.” He blamed Stewart for not allowing the project to wither on the vine, and urged the institute to uphold its position in favor of retaining the old facade. His stand was supported by Ralph Walker of the New York chapter and Turpin Banister, the dean of the University of Florida’s school of architecture. One of the few voices raised against the current policy was that of Amos Emery of the Iowa chapter. He claimed that architects did not have the exclusive right to determine what was best for the Capitol and that the institute was just saving face by refusing to reconsider its position. He warned his fellow architects that “consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, little statesmen, little creatures, and little men.”²⁰

The delegate from Iowa notwithstanding, the convention voted to reaffirm its opposition to the extension. In a few weeks, Fred Schwengel, a Republican representative from the Hawkeye State, gave a speech in the House condemning what he saw as the AIA’s personal attacks on the Speaker. He demanded an apology for its “gross misunderstanding” of Rayburn’s role in the extension and for calling him an “historic barbarian.” As a member of Congress, Schwengel did not appreciate being called an “arrogant politician” just because he supported the Speaker, nor did he think the charges of “vandalism,” “mutilation,” and “destruction” were accurate or fair. He spoke of the honorable intentions of those involved in the project and again demanded that the AIA apologize to the Speaker.²¹

THE FOURTH CORNERSTONE

*T*he AIA never apologized and Rayburn never budged. On August 14, 1958, the full Senate rejected Senator Smith’s bill to send the project back for further study. Advocates of historic preservation may have been shaken by this defeat, but they soon learned to be more vigilant. It was nearly impossible to derail Rayburn’s plans once the first appropriation passed. The public debate aired many issues but ultimately could not alter the course of events. Yet interest in the preservation of historic buildings was growing deeper and broader every day, and

there would be ample opportunity to savor victory in the future.

At the end of August 1958, the decision was made to use Special Georgia White marble for the exterior of the extension, and Stewart accepted the offer of the Georgia Marble Company of Atlanta to furnish and deliver it for \$2,873,650. In September, three local firms were asked to bid on the work to remove the east central portico and other features standing in the way of the new extension. John McBeath & Sons was awarded the contract on October 3, 1958, and directed

to have demolition completed by the first week in April. A sculptor's shed was built on the east grounds, where artisans working for the Vermont Marble Company repaired the weathered figures of *Fame and Peace Crowning George Washington*, the statues of War and Peace, and the three figures in the pediment comprising the *Genius of America*. When repairs were completed, carvers made reproductions from Vermont Imperial Danby marble. Repair and replication of exterior sculpture were supervised by Paul Manship of New York.

Portico Removal

1958

The monolithic column shafts, which were so difficult to quarry, transport, cut, and install in the 1820s, were removed with ease in the 1950s.

Portico Removal

1958

The head of America, the central figure in Luigi Persico's *Genius of America*, was one of the first things removed from the east portico during its demolition.



As the sandstone was removed, some was stored at a facility operated by the National Park Service, while other things such as the column shafts were stored at the Capitol Power Plant. Later, when the power plant was enlarged, the columns were transferred to a remote nursery operated by the U. S. Botanic Garden. Once demolition was complete, excavation was begun and workmen began installing new underpinning under the old foundations. On June 23, 1959, Stewart's office issued a press release announcing that the cornerstone of the east front extension would be laid by President

Portico Removal
1958

The lower half of a Corinthian capital was taken away while workmen disassembled another in the foreground.



Eisenhower on the upcoming Fourth of July. A block of red granite was ordered in the form of a three-foot cube and bearing the inscription "A. D. 1959" on one face. The top of the stone was cut to receive a metal box for memorabilia. The cornerstone was quarried near Marble Falls, Texas, not far from Lyndon Johnson's ranch.

Construction of temporary stands and platforms began a week before the ceremony. There were none of the parades or barbecues that marked previous ceremonies, but Eisenhower, like Washington and Fillmore before him, came to the Capitol to personally lay the stone. An estimated 3,000 people were at the Capitol on July 4, 1959, to hear Rayburn introduce the president, who, in turn, made a short speech. Descending into a deep pit, Eisenhower spread cement on a foundation slab using the same trowel Washington wielded at the Capitol in 1793. As he leaned down to dip up the mortar, the president noted the small size of the tool and observed, "You can't get much mortar on this trowel!" A crane lowered the stone into place. With his hand on the cornerstone, Eisenhower tapped it lightly with the gavel that Washington had used in 1793. The president left as soon as the rites had been completed.

On July 17, 1959, the copper box containing memorabilia of the ceremony was removed from its niche in the cornerstone. It contained sealed messages from members of Congress, telephone books, a signed copy of the president's speech, and a



East Front Columns at the National Arboretum

Friends of the National Arboretum proposed reusing the columns from the east portico in a new setting at the arboretum located in northeast Washington. The noted landscape architect Russell Page provided the plan. After years of work and fund raising, permission was granted in 1984 to transfer custody of the columns to the Department of Agriculture. Four years later the columns were re-erected along a nearly square plan in front of a water stair and reflecting pool. (1991 photograph.)

**East Front
Construction and
Dome Repair
1960**

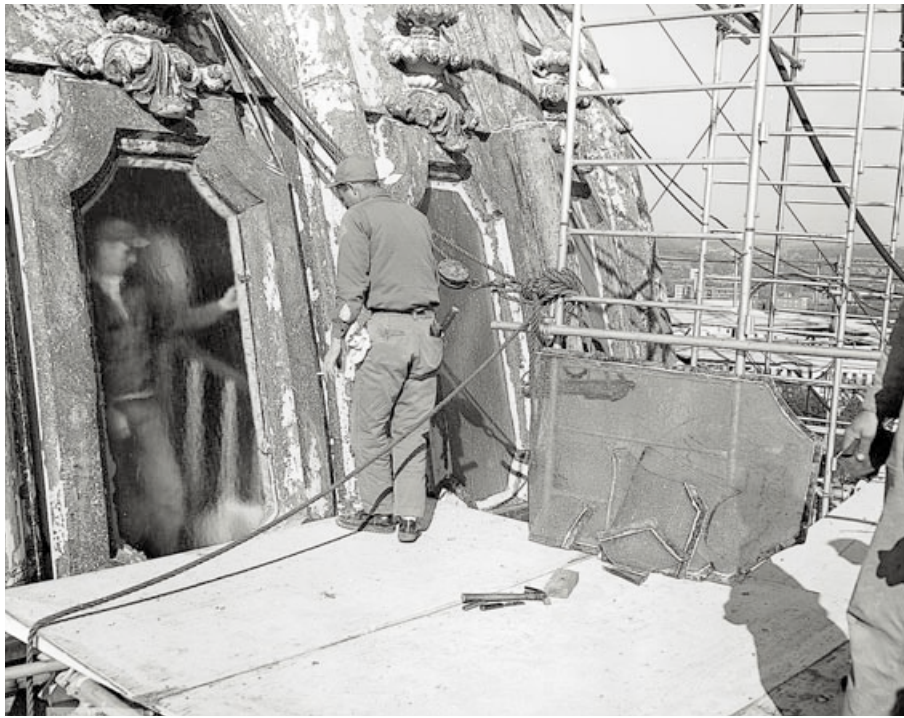
*S*tripped of white paint, the ironwork of the dome was primed with a rust inhibitor.

replica of the Bible on which Washington took his first presidential oath. A tape recording and a movie of the ceremony were added. The box was then treated by scientists at the National Bureau of Standards, who replaced the interior air with helium containing a small amount of moisture. The box was then hermetically sealed. (The same steps were followed to preserve the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution at the National Archives.) Weighing more than eighty-two pounds,

the box was returned to the cornerstone by Rayburn on September 3, 1959.

The Charles H. Tompkins Company was contracted to build the extension, a steel-frame structure with brick walls, reinforced concrete floors, and a facing of white marble. While construction was under way, the J. F. Fitzgerald Company of Boston repaired the dome. By the end of 1959, the exterior of the dome was surrounded by a scaffold with towers, ramps, and hoisting equipment.





Dome Repair

1959

A few sheets of nineteenth-century hammered glass were replaced while repairs were made to the dome. Opaque glass diffused light and thus reduced glare and heat gain.

East Front Construction

1960

The original walls gradually disappeared as the new addition grew higher.

Workmen wielding special pneumatic hammers removed paint from the iron, which was then sand-blasted. Since bare iron rusts quickly, it had to be treated with a protective coating within five hours of paint removal.²² Corroded and cracked metal was repaired or replaced where necessary, loose bolts were tightened, and missing bolts were replaced. New bronze window frames were installed in the tholus and the interior bracing in the statue of Freedom was reinforced. Repairs were made to the drainage system and flashing and the dome was completely inspected and repaired, using stainless steel wherever strength was required. Additional lightning protection was provided, along with a modern electronic bird control system. On the interior, Stewart hired a muralist, Allyn Cox of New York, to restore Brumidi's *Apotheosis of George Washington*. The methods used by Cox included scraping the fresco with nylon brushes, filling bare spots and overpainting with pigments ground in water. (The painting was subsequently treated by professional conservators in 1988.) The dome repair work was completed in the spring of 1960.²³

On May 26, 1960, the first marble column shaft was installed on the new east central portico. It weighed about eighteen tons and was hoisted into place by a crane as Rayburn and Stewart proudly





New Senate Reception Room
1962

*T*his photograph was taken before carpets were laid or paintings hung. The colonial revival paneling, pilasters, and entablature were fashioned from walnut by a Baltimore woodworking firm.

In 1976 the reception room was named in honor of Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana.



Office of the Clerk of the House of Representatives
1960

*B*efore work began on the interior phase of the east front project, a photographic survey was made of every room affected by the new addition. This office (modern-day H-235) was about to lose its view of the east plaza but otherwise would remain essentially as seen here. When this photograph was taken the office was occupied by Ralph Roberts, the clerk of the House. Today, it is part of the congresswomen's suite named in honor of Lindy Boggs of Louisiana.

Before the fire of 1814, the room was occupied by the Committee on Ways and Means. From 1819 until 1857 it was the Speaker's office. Here, on February 23, 1848, John Quincy Adams died on the sofa seen against the wall. The ex-president was serving his ninth term in the House of Representatives when he suffered a stroke at his desk in the nearby chamber. The bust of Adams by John Crookshanks King was acquired by Congress in 1849 and mounted on a marble bracket near the sofa.

looked on. Installing one column each working day, twentieth-century builders completed the colonnade in less than a month; the job had taken Charles Bulfinch, George Blagden, and their men more than two years in the 1820s. The last column hoisted was one of the eight Maryland marble columns taken down and reused from the House and Senate connecting corridors. It was reset on June 29, 1960.

As the exterior marble work was being finished, it was discovered that some marble blocks were

defective. Cracks were patched in an attempt to fool inspectors, who caught the imperfections only after the stones had been set. Once discovered at the end of August, the faulty stones were ordered replaced. Luckily no other problems arose to threaten the completion of the outside in time for the inaugural ceremony on January 20, 1961. On that bitterly cold, blustery day, forty-three-year-old John F. Kennedy stood on the new portico and took the oath of office. His inaugural address is usually ranked with the most eloquent in the nation's



East Front Lobby
1962

Although the outside of the east front extension was completed by January 1961, the interior was not ready until eighteen months later. Here, the new ground floor lobby appears as completed in July 1962. The column shafts were made of Colorado breccia while white Vermont marble was used for the capitals.

annals, and with it the patina of history began to accrue on the Capitol's new east front.

THE THIRD HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

In the spring of 1955, Speaker Sam Rayburn requested \$25,000 to study the feasibility of building a third office building for the House of Representatives. When the legislation came before the House, Rayburn left the chair, took the floor, and offered an amendment to replace the modest planning funds with \$2 million and any additional money “as may be

necessary” to begin construction of a new building. Republican Representative Clare E. Hoffman of Michigan objected to funding a project that had not yet been authorized pointing out that it was contrary to House rules. Yet, the chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Clarence Cannon of Missouri, quickly accepted the amendment in light of the urgent need for such a facility. After little debate, the House approved Rayburn’s amendment on a voice vote. The legislation came less than four months after ground was broken for the second Senate office building, two months before the east front project was approved, and only two months after Sam Rayburn became Speaker and chairman of the House Office Building Commission. Other members of the commission, James Auchincloss of New Jersey and Carl Vinson of Georgia, supported the Speaker’s plan to provide members with three-room suites and other rooms to accommodate the increasingly heavy load of committee business resulting from the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946.

Building a large new office structure was but one component in a complex scheme to improve accommodations for the House outside the Capitol. Each of the two older office buildings would be remodeled to provide three-room suites and to improve the spaces occupied by committees and staff. A three-level garage was planned for the courtyard of the 1908 building, while a cafeteria was to be built in the courtyard of the 1933 structure. The site for the new building was created by closing a block of Delaware Avenue, S. W. and uniting the two squares immediately downhill from (i. e., west of) the second House office building. Adjacent blocks south of the site were acquired and cleared for park land, but the decision was soon made to build underground garages there as well. A transportation system, consisting of pedestrian tunnels connecting the new and old structures and an electric subway, was planned to link the new office building with the Capitol. Taken together, Rayburn’s schemes for the House office buildings and other improvements far exceeded any project ever before seen on Capitol Hill.

The same architects who helped design the new House and Senate chambers, Harbeson, Hough, Livingston & Larson of Philadelphia, were retained by the House Office Building Commission

to design the new building. As noted earlier, Roscoe DeWitt and Fred Hardison of Dallas were hired for the remodeling of the 1908 building, while work in the other structure was planned by Albert Swanke and Albert Poor of New York City. Underground structures were the responsibility of Jesse Shelton and Alan G. Stanford, engineers from Atlanta in Congressman Vinson's home state. All of these firms were also involved in the east front project, which was undertaken at the same time as the new House office building.

Work began on the site of the new office building immediately after the land and title were clear. Soil samples and test borings were taken to help design the building's foundations. On May 8, 1958, McCloskey & Company of Philadelphia was awarded the contract (worth more than eight million dollars) for excavation and foundation work, while two months later the Bethlehem Steel Company was given a contract (worth almost seven million dollars) for the delivery and erection of the building's skeleton.²⁴

As the highly visible site along Independence Avenue was excavated, the press became curious about the building destined to occupy the enormous hole. On August 13, 1959, the *New York Herald Tribune* ran a story about the new House office building under the banner "6-Block Hole in Ground Has Washington Guessing."²⁵ According to the article, plans for the new building were "top secret," a charge Stewart vigorously denied. He said the plans were under revision and would not be made public until they were finalized. The plans were, therefore, not "secret" but, rather, "unavailable." *The Washington Post* asked its readers if they had "Ever seen a \$10 million hole?" and wrote that "no one knew what's going on." On the editorial page the *Post* complained about Stewart's "Edifice Complex":

The plans for this new edifice are still sealed up in secret—even though \$16 million has already been spent on digging the biggest hole in town for the foundation. The architect's office will concede that the four-story building will be made of white marble and shaped like an "H," but not much else. The plans, Mr. Stewart's office explains, are still not in a final form for release, although preliminary sketches have been on hand for a year. Will it be Gothic? Or Byzantine? Or an H-shaped copy of Stonehenge. We mere mortal taxpayers must just wait and see.²⁶

Working closely with Rayburn and Stewart, the Harbeson firm labored at the building's design over a four-year period. Neither the Speaker nor the architect of the Capitol wanted to expose the design to public scrutiny until it was finalized. On October 16, 1959, Stewart unveiled the design and informed the press that his office would soon solicit bids from general contractors. From the elevation prepared by the associate architects, it was difficult to comprehend the scale of the new building. It would be 720 feet long and 450 feet wide, enclosing more than a million square feet (25 percent more than the Capitol), with another 1.2 million square feet for a garage capable of parking 1,600 cars. It contained 169 congressional suites, nine standing committee rooms, sixteen subcommittee rooms, fifty-one committee staff rooms, twenty-four passenger elevators, four freight elevators, stationery rooms, press and television facilities, a post office, work shops, storage rooms, a cafeteria with 750 seats, shipping and receiving docks, two gymnasias, and a swimming pool.

A typical office suite was fifty-four feet long, thirty-two feet wide, and divided into three rooms. The middle room housed the reception area and an office for the chief assistant. On one side was the member's private office with an adjacent toilet, closet, and file room with a burglarproof safe. The third room accommodated the general staff office and was lined with built-in file cabinets. Another storage room, coat closet, and toilet facility were nearby. Later, after the building was occupied in 1965, some representatives complained that the plan made it necessary for them to pass through the public waiting area in order to confer with staff. Without private access to the staff room, wrote the *Sunday Star*:

a Congressman would have to sashay through a waiting room exposed to the pleading eyes, rapid tongues, and clutching hands of his constituents. To protect him, doors were cut from private offices to staff rooms, but, symbolically enough, you couldn't just cut a door. Built-in files had to be unbuilt and money had to be thrown to the winds in great handfuls to accomplish belatedly what the most chuckle-headed architect could have seen as necessary from the first.²⁷

After advertising for bids, the general construction contract was awarded on March 19, 1960, to McCloskey & Company, the same Philadelphia

firm that built the foundations. The contract was in the amount of \$50,793,000, a figure that helped make the new House office building the most expensive construction project yet undertaken on Capitol Hill. McCloskey & Company's success at landing lucrative government contracts raised eyebrows because the owner of the firm, Matthew H. McCloskey, was the treasurer of the Democratic National Committee and one of its major contributors. (During the Great Depression he invented the \$100-a-plate fund-raising dinner. In 1962 President Kennedy named him the ambassador to Ireland.²⁸) The press and politicians began complaining about the cost of the project, comparing it with the Pentagon or the new Pan Am building in New York City. Charges of extravagance and waste were hurled at the architect of the Capitol, who defended the large expenditures by noting the size and permanence of the structure and the costly materials used to build it.

During a brief ceremony held on December 14, 1961, an American flag was run up on the last steel column installed on the site. The "topping out" ceremony was conducted by Republican Representative James Auchincloss, who expressed his hope that the spirit of "Mr. Sam" would forever inhabit the building. Only a month earlier, Rayburn, to many Americans the very personification of the House of Representatives, had died of cancer. His intense interest in the building being built for the comfort and convenience of the House was well known and appreciated by the majority of his colleagues. Few members quarreled with him over matters concerning their accommodations, in either the east front extension or the new office building. "Mr. Sam" always had their best interests in mind and they loved him for it.

On May 21, 1962, the House voted to name its new office building after Rayburn. At the same time, the 1908 building was named for Joseph Cannon and the 1933 structure for Nicholas Longworth. Each man honored had served as Speaker at the time the building was authorized. Three days after the Rayburn Building was named, Speaker John McCormack and President Kennedy laid its cornerstone. They spread mortar on the half-ton marble block and, with the help of some professional masons, guided the cornerstone into place. During his remarks, the president recalled

that Rayburn was serving his 34th year in Congress when he, as a freshman representative from Massachusetts, came to Washington in 1947. Having now served at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, he appreciated the comity between the legislative and executive branches of government that Rayburn had always promoted.²⁹

A QUESTION OF STYLE

When the architect of the Capitol released plans for the Rayburn Building in 1959, he described it as a "simplified classic design" that would fit in with its neighbors on Capitol Hill.³⁰ After seeing the rendering, the editors of *The Washington Post* were relieved to find that rumors of the building being "shaped like a wilted mushroom" were untrue. "Judging from the sketch now in public view," they continued:

the third House office building looks just about like every other office building designed under Government auspices. This comes as something of an anticlimax after all the furtiveness of the past. For a while, the Capitol architect had us thinking that the House was really building a factory for H-bombs. . . .³¹

The *Post's* initial assessment of the building's architecture was high praise compared to the scorn heaped on it as construction neared completion. As its bulk became clearer and its sparse, eccentric details came into focus, critics began to use words like "hideous" or "monstrosity" when describing the Rayburn Building. One design critic claimed it could only be defended militarily. Its position on the slope of Capitol Hill, a site necessitating a towering podium in the form of a rock-faced wedge, caused others to speak chillingly of Valhalla, the Great Wall of China, or the great zigurat of Babylon. Masses of cold, white marble, punctuated by long rows of square, unadorned windows, reminded at least one wag of ice cube trays. *The Washington Post* could not discern a single style and thought it might be a hybrid of "Middle Mussolini, Early Rameses, and Late Nieman Marcus."³² Even thirty years after the building was finished, its detractors were as acerbic as ever. In 1993, a survey of Washington architecture included a scathing assessment of the building's



Rayburn Building

1965

The design of the Rayburn Building struggled to reconcile the practical needs of a modern office building to the architectural context of classical Capitol Hill—compliments from the architectural community have been few. Yet with fifty acres of floor space, views of the Capitol, and a subway, the Rayburn Building holds some of the most highly prized House offices.



Committee Room in the Rayburn Building

1965

Following reforms contained in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, committee rooms were designed to allow members to face witnesses from a raised podium.

design. After describing the city’s “most maligned public building,” the author concluded:

The difficulties of designing in a historical style whose time has passed by those untrained or ill-trained in the basic principles is manifested most obviously in the Rayburn Building by the lack of a comprehensive human scale, the most fundamental legacy of the classical system of architecture. . . . The end result is a bombastic architectural expression of raw, arrogant, and uncontrolled power that dominates through sheer size rather than coexisting amicably with its neighbors or enhancing the art of architecture by contributing a viable new interpretation of its building type or architectural style.³³

Not everyone, however, condemned the building. Paul Manship wrote George Stewart a letter

Rayburn Building’s Finishing Touches

1964

Ancient drinking horns called “rhythons” inspired the design of these unusual sculptural ornaments.



praising the design, which the architect of the Capitol found “reassuring.” The sculptor wrote:

May I say how much I enjoyed the architecture of the building which impressed me by its beautifully proportioned simplicity. It is modern in its adaptation of grand traditional forms and style. The fenestration, the great entrances with majestic columns and lofty ceilings add their impressive harmony to the whole; just but reticent detailing of ornament enhanced the architecture. The materials, marble and granite, are beautiful and fitting to this building in the great stately tradition. . . .³⁴

But Manship’s opinion of the building’s architectural merit was not shared by many others, and condemning the building remains a favorite pastime among Washington’s design critics.

Representatives and their staffs began occupying the Rayburn Building at the end of February 1965. With the remodeling of the Cannon and Longworth buildings and the land acquisitions, underground parking garages, tunnels, subway, furniture, and landscaping, the entire project had cost more than \$135 million. Despite unfavorable reviews, the Rayburn Building is the most popular House office building among members, who covet its convenience, amenities, views, and space.

WEST FRONT

The Rayburn Building brewed a storm of controversy that was slow to pass. At the same time, another controversial project was to keep architects and politicians on Capitol Hill under intense scrutiny for two more decades. The latest idea was to build an addition to the Capitol’s west front, a scheme hatched by the Rayburn team of architects and engineers soon after the east front extension was authorized in 1955. They considered the west front extension the logical next step in the building’s inevitable development. For precedent, they cited plans by Thomas U. Walter and Edward Clark, both of whom had designed additions to the west front for the expansion of the Library of Congress. They also claimed that Olmsted anticipated an addition to the west front by providing courtyards between the terrace and the Capitol. The argument that a west front extension was not a new idea was accurate; however, the present proposal was entirely

unlike anything suggested before. It would have enclosed four and a half acres of space behind new marble walls, changed the composition of that side of the Capitol, and required the demolition and reconstruction of the terrace.

As with the east front project, the condition of the outside walls was a major factor behind the proposal to build a new marble addition. The Aquia Creek sandstone had not held up well, and ample evidence of structural failure was visible to the untrained eye. Particularly frightening was the sagging entablature above the central colonnade. A few keystones had dropped and there were cracks everywhere. In one farfetched additional observation, extension proponents claimed that the old building was somehow out of proportion with the dome. For those who admired the new east front, the obvious solution to the problems was a new marble facade on the west. To those who fought against the east front project, the solution was restoration and better maintenance. The battle lines were soon drawn over the last part of the old Capitol not covered by marble additions.

On December 30, 1963, Congress appropriated \$125,000 to survey, study, and examine the structural condition of the west front. Stewart contracted with the engineering firm of Thompson

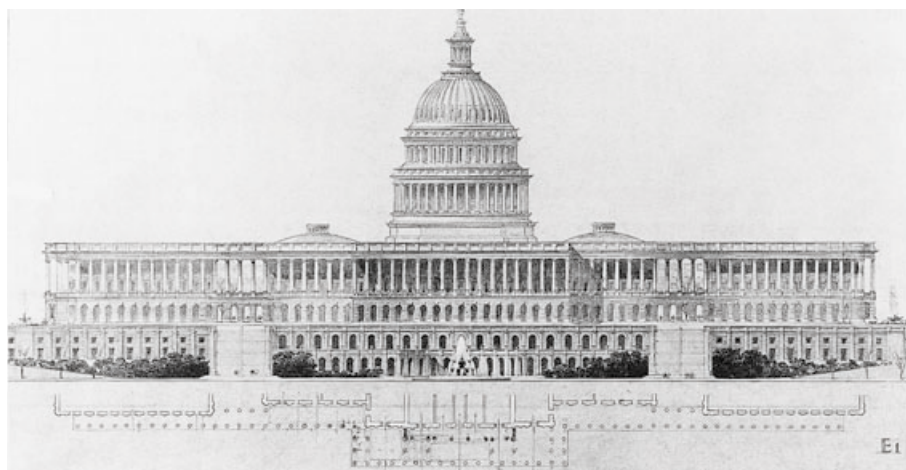
Vice President’s Office

The vice president’s office (modern day S-214) appears little used in this view taken while Lyndon Johnson presided over the Senate. A bust of Vice President Henry Wilson, who died in the room, was placed there in 1885. Rembrandt Peale’s portrait of George Washington hung in the vice president’s room from 1859 until it was returned to the old Senate chamber in 1976. (1962 photograph.)



Taft Memorial and Carillon

The memorial to Robert Taft is a lean, modern design consisting of a rectangular bell tower 100 feet tall faced with Tennessee marble. Douglas Orr of Connecticut was the architect of the memorial, which is located in the park between the Capitol and Union Station near a site once proposed for the Lincoln Memorial. Wheeler Williams sculpted the bronze statue of the Ohio senator. (1961 photograph.)



Study for the West Front Extension

by DeWitt, Poor & Shelton, 1963

One of the more drastic proposals for the west front envisioned an unbroken colonnade stretching from one end of the Capitol to the other. A massive reconstruction of the terrace included scores of new windows that would have diminished the impression of strength that Olmsted intended.

& Lichtner for the structural survey and with the J. F. Fitzgerald Construction Company for soil tests of the ground immediately adjacent to the west front as well as for drilling core samples in the old walls. Both firms were headquartered in Speaker John McCormick's home state, Massachusetts. In November 1964, the consulting engineers presented their findings in a five-volume report describing the alarming conditions of the west front. Not surprisingly, they wanted to brace the old walls behind a new addition, providing more room for offices and committees. A public hearing was held on the recommendations in June 1965, with McCormack presiding. The president of Thompson & Lichtner, Dr. Miles Clair, gave extensive testimony about the west front, its construction history (as he understood it), soil conditions, stone weathering, deterioration, and settlement. Representative Gerald Ford of Michigan (later president of the United States) asked about the "net result" of all these conditions and Clair predicted that the Capitol would begin to collapse within five years. Some areas, such as the portico, were in more immediate danger. He warned that stopgap measures would only delay a final solution. "You can keep compromising with this," Clair warned, "or you can face the problem."³⁵ George Stewart recommended that Congress appropriate funds to build an addition in order to buttress the old walls. Meanwhile, stout wooden braces were installed to keep the entablature from falling from the west central portico.

On October 31, 1965, \$300,000 was appropriated to the architect of the Capitol to prepare preliminary plans and cost estimates for the extension of the west front. The veteran firm from the east front project—DeWitt, Poor & Shelton—was retained for this work. Within six months, three schemes were developed. All the plans called for a large addition, eighty feet deep, that would necessitate the demolition of the Olmsted terraces. Each scheme sought to "improve" the composition of the west side of the Capitol, an architectural pastiche that a handful of critics deemed "incorrect." Bulfinch's portico with its odd intercolumniation (2-2-1-1-2-2) baffled some observers, as did the lack of a pediment. Such architectural oddities would be "corrected" by a new front.

Before an appropriation was secured, however, history-minded preservationists began loud protests. In June 1966, the American Institute of Architects asked the Commission for the Extension of the Capitol to reconsider. The AIA offered to make an impartial examination of the structural conditions and recommend solutions to problems it uncovered. Building on the growing strength of the preservation movement, the AIA led the battle over the west front, hoping to atone for its losses in the war over the east front. Unlike the east front project, however, the west front had no champion with Rayburn's single-mindedness or clout, and opponents had sufficient warning to fend off an initial appropriation. At the same time, historic preservation became a national policy on October 15, 1966, when President Johnson signed the National Historic Preservation Act—legislation that helped prevent federal money from harming historic sites. Although it did not directly affect the Capitol, the act emboldened preservationists in their efforts to preserve the west front.

One of the leading opponents to the extension was Representative Samuel S. Stratton of New York. He published a call to the American people to save the west front in a widely read article in *Parade* magazine. Stratton claimed that the architect of the Capitol, the Speaker, and other members of the Commission for the Extension of the Capitol were about to accomplish something that British invaders had failed to do in 1814—destroy the Capitol. He described one of the plans for an addition eighty feet in front of the old north and south wings and forty-four feet in front of the central building. Thus, Stratton concluded, the pleasing composition of the Capitol's west front would become a "flat and undistinguished architectural blob." He also described what would happen to the Olmsted terraces:

To add the restaurants, auditoriums, extra hideaway offices and special-access road for service deliveries and garbage removal that he deems necessary, Stewart further proposes a vast, seven-level expansion down under the back side of Capitol Hill. This means the grand terraces and marble staircases, added in 1874, are slated for extinction.³⁶

Sixteen senators and twenty-five representatives had already formed a committee to defeat the project, and Stratton urged readers to write

Speaker John McCormack and Vice President Hubert Humphrey: "You'll be surprised how effective your voice can be here in Washington."³⁷

The AIA submitted its report on the west front's structural conditions on March 24, 1967. Officials of the institute presented alternatives to the extension before hearings of the House and Senate Legislative Appropriations Subcommittees. Such maneuvers and the escalating conflict in Vietnam prevented the project from being funded. Meanwhile, the forces against the extension grew stronger, persuading key members of Congress to examine alternatives that might be wiser and less expensive. In 1970, an appropriation of \$2.75 million was given to the architect of the Capitol for a restoration feasibility study, and on May 25, 1970, a consulting engineering firm from New York, Praeger, Kavanaugh & Waterbury, was retained to undertake it. By the end of the year, the engineers reported that restoration was indeed feasible. They recommended strengthening the structure by injecting grout and epoxy into the foundations and walls and installing steel tie rods to strengthen the arches and vaults. All exterior stone work would be cleaned of paint and each block evaluated for stability and strength. Stone would be replaced only as needed. The entablature would be dismantled and rebuilt, using tensioning cables for strength. Following repairs, the exterior could be treated with a stone preservative and repainted. The engineers had no question that a restoration could return the west front to a stable, authentic, and attractive condition.

George Stewart, however, never learned of this recommendation: he had died the day before Praeger, Kavanaugh & Waterbury was hired. His health had been impaired for some months, and during his last days in a nursing home his office was operated by his assistant, Mario Campioli. Over his seventeen-year tenure Stewart had been hounded by critics, who loved to point out that he was not an architect. While the same was also true of his two predecessors, it made no difference to the critics. The real difference between Stewart and Lynn or Woods was not so much the persons as the times in which he and they worked. Stewart's alliance with Rayburn, for example, was different from Woods' relationship with Cannon: whereas Cannon championed and protected

Woods, Stewart used his office to protect the Speaker. Criticism that should have been aimed at Rayburn was routinely fired at Stewart, who gladly took the shot. Another factor was that too often the Speaker and architect kept their plans to themselves, not letting people know of their intentions and opening themselves to legitimate charges of secretiveness. Consequently, their relations with the architectural profession, the press, and the Capitol Hill community were hardly cordial. Following Stewart's death, plenty of ammunition remained in detractors' arsenals for the next architect, who inherited the hornet's nest hanging over the Capitol's west front.

A PROFESSIONAL ARCHITECT

When news of Stewart's death reached the White House, President Richard Nixon assigned his staff assistant (and future New York senator) Daniel Patrick Moynihan to the task of identifying a replacement. For the first time since the agency reached its present form in 1867, the initiative to fill the top position came not from Congress but from the president. The sentiment in both branches of government was that the next architect of the Capitol should be an architect, one with professional credentials to quiet the perpetual controversies that seemed to envelop the office. Nevertheless, rumors circulated around Washington that William Ayers, a ten term representative from Ohio who recently lost his reelection bid, was under consideration. Alarmed at the prospect of another politician in the architect's job, Congressman Andrew Jacobs of Indiana introduced a resolution providing that if the next architect of the Capitol were not an architect, then the next attending physician of Congress should not be a doctor.

Logically, Moynihan turned to the American Institute of Architects for advice. A roster of qualified candidates was duly prepared by the institute, and its own vice president, George M. White of Ohio, was at the top of the list. With a diverse and accomplished background, White seemed perfectly suited for a job with so many dif-

ferent demands and clients. He held two degrees in electrical engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a degree in business administration from Harvard, and a law degree from Case Western Reserve University. He was a registered architect and engineer, a member of the bar, and a successful businessman. Ohio Senators William Saxbe and Robert Taft, Jr. lent their support, and Nixon appointed White on January 27, 1971.

When White took office, the controversy over the west front was hardly front-page news. The effort to "complete" the Capitol was stymied by the war in Vietnam. After two weeks on the job, White was obliged to deal with an explosion in the Capitol, the result of a bomb planted to protest America's military presence in Southeast Asia. Growing unrest in the streets and on college campuses reflected a nation uncertain of itself and unsure of its leaders. Antiwar marches and protests grew louder as a fumbled break-in at the Watergate began to undermine the Nixon administration. His subsequent resignation, the ascent of Gerald Ford, and the end of America's involvement in Vietnam started a healing process that helped restore faith at home.

During the early 1970s, the Senate refused to go along with the idea of enlarging the Capitol, which was advocated mainly by the leadership of House of Representatives. In 1973, the Senate Subcommittee on Legislative Appropriations blocked a request for funds to build the addition. Despite opposition in the Senate, the Commission for the Extension of the Capitol, chaired by Speaker Carl Albert of Oklahoma and, later, Thomas P. O'Neill of Massachusetts, remained committed to the project. While skeptical at first, the new architect of the Capitol became converted to the cause, which he felt promised the best chance to ensure the building's structural stability. But the size and scope of the proposed extension had to be trimmed to become architecturally and financially palatable. Under White's direction, the associate architects modified their design, scaling it back enough to preserve Olmsted's terraces. The revised design, varying from nineteen to sixty feet in depth, was also considerably less expensive than its predecessor.

After a four-year lull, the west front issue exploded upon the front pages of the nation's



Revised Design for the West Front Extension

by DeWitt, Poor & Shelton, ca. 1973

To calm the storm of criticism gathering around the west front extension proposal, the architects scaled it back and left the terraces undisturbed. Congress rejected the extension scheme in favor of restoration in 1983.

newspapers in the spring of 1977. A change in the chairmanship of the Senate Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee gave hope to backers of the extension that the project would be funded. The new subcommittee head, Walter Huddleson of Kentucky, replaced Ernest Hollings of South Carolina, who had opposed the extension. On May 20, 1977, White presented the revised extension plan to Huddleston's subcommittee, telling the lawmakers that its estimated cost of fifty-five million dollars compared favorably with the estimated forty-five million dollars that would be needed for restoration. For a mere ten million dollars more, White argued, 135,000 square feet of office space could be added to the Capitol and the original walls would be protected behind the new addition.

Writing for *The Washington Post*, columnist George Will characterized the latest extension proposal as "Another Mindless Attack on the West Front." He claimed the extension would block views of the dome, flatten the elevation that so clearly expressed the bicameral legislative principle, and bury a "splendid achievement" of Ameri-

can architecture. Senator Ernest Hollings was praised for his sense of stewardship in having protected the Capitol from vandals. In a final thought, the author observed solemnly:

Preservation is a civilizing task; it involves discerning and cherishing the most excellent work of previous generations and holding it in trust for subsequent generations. Preservation of the Capitol is a test of Congress's fitness for trusteeship, the most important measure of fitness to govern.³⁸

The editorial board of *The Washington Post* strongly opposed the west front extension and claimed that upon learning that the congressional leadership approved the latest design, it had suffered a "sinking sensation." While agreeing that

the new design was an improvement over its “monstrous” predecessor, it considered restoration the only proper treatment for the ills plaguing the facade:

The “Commission for the Extension of the Capitol” should restrain its lust for architectural disfigurement and get on with its *real* duty: the repair and restoration of the existing West Front, parts of which are now supported by unsightly heavy timbers. Three times in the past four years the Senate has voted to do just that, and the proposal has been shot down by the space-hungry House each time. The responsible action for congressional leaders would be to proceed with repairs that should have been done years ago—at a fraction of present costs.³⁹

When the House Appropriations Committee voted fifty-five million dollars for the extension on June 29, 1977, *The Washington Star* wrote in disbelief:

A reasonable piety toward the past is no more than a form of present self-respect. Considered in that light, the congressional itch to vandalize the West Front of the Capitol suggests a severe deficiency in our sense of national self worth—so far as that quality is refracted through the current crop of elected representatives. . . .

The American Institute of Architects has valiantly opposed the congressional vandals. And the Capitol Hill poo-bahs who have pushed stubbornly ahead with the extension have disregarded even an engineering study commissioned by Congress itself that found restoration of the West Front to be feasible. The cost of the restoration would be more than expansion: to adduce that as a telling argument is to carry historical insensitivity to a canine level. The Capitol is a glorious monument and its preservation is not to be toted up merely in dollars.⁴⁰

On the Fourth of July 1977, *The New York Times* weighed in with a stinging rebuke of the extension and its few but powerful supporters. On its editorial page, the *Times* demanded that the west front be restored. Scolding the powers in Washington, the editors wrote:

Surely it is time to stop all the foolishness, once and for all, about extending the West Front of the Capitol. This dangerous Congressional boondoggle has now survived three times, and the idea doesn't improve with revival. . . . This is a proposal so unequivocally bad as economics, art history and planning, that one marvels at its apparent immortality.⁴¹

National news magazines wrote of the controversy as a classic struggle between the House and the Senate, between sentimental citizens and a handful of powerful politicians. *Newsweek's* story was entitled “The Facade of Power,” while *U. S. News and World Report* called its piece “Uproar over the West Front.” Diagrams and floor plans gave readers a sense of the magnitude of the proposed addition and what it would do to the architecture of the Capitol. Neither article took sides, but the publicity did not help the proponents of the extension.

On July 20, 1977, a conference committee made up of members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees agreed to postpone a decision on the west front until an estimate could be made of the cost of a restoration. Drawings and specifications for a restoration were needed in order that a fair comparison might be made. Money was an important issue, but the lawmakers also wanted to compare the time required for each project, the probable disruption to the workings of Congress, and other factors. Using an appropriation of \$525,000, the architect of the Capitol hired Ammann & Whitney of New York City to prepare plans and cost estimates for a restoration. Their report was finished in March 1978.

For four years nothing was done with either proposal for the west front. In March 1983, the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation began another round of hearings that seemed no more auspicious than its predecessors until a section of lower west wall fell to the ground on April 27, 1983. Suddenly, the issue came to a head and there was no way to ignore the problems facing the Capitol's west front any longer. On May 18, the House Appropriations Committee approved more than seventy million dollars for an extension. Eight days later the Senate approved forty-eight million dollars for a restoration. By a wide margin (325 to 86), the full House disagreed with its committee's recommendation, deleting money for the extension, and substituting forty-nine million dollars for a restoration. On July 19, 1983, the House and Senate agreed in conference to fund the restoration with an appropriation of forty-nine million dollars. The legislation was approved by President Ronald Reagan on July 30, 1983.



Restoration of the West Front
1984

After layers of paint were removed from the walls, each block of stone was categorized according to its condition. About 40 percent of the stone was replaced with Indiana limestone. Dating from the 1790s, the west wall of the old north wing is shown here.

Although it had taken more than twenty years, the most recent attempt at a west front extension was finally overpowered by the hue and cry of ordinary citizens, letter-writing architects, and noisy preservationists. For the first time since the British burned the building in 1814, forces outside of the Capitol altered the course of its future. To be sure, there were those in Congress who were instrumental in the effort to restore the west front, but the final outcome was determined by a powerful lobbying effort with roots reaching across America. It was a well-earned victory for those who valued the architectural legacy of the Capitol and were determined not to entomb the west elevation behind yet another marble addition. Arguments about space and money rang hollow against the names of Washington, Jefferson, Thornton, Latrobe, Bulfinch and Olmsted. At this point in the



West Front Restoration
1984

While the restoration was under way, the old sandstone walls were hidden behind a scaffold.

The West Front

*T*he restoration returned the west front to a state of structural stability. (1997 photograph.)



West Courtyard Prior to Infill

*F*rederick Law Olmsted intended to plant the courtyards between the Capitol and the terrace as winter gardens. His plans never materialized and the courtyards were generally used as work areas. (1991 photograph.)



Courtyard Infill

*C*onstruction of new offices and meeting rooms was completed within the west courtyards in 1993. The new structures were tied to the old walls by a continuous skylight. (1994 photograph.)



Capitol's evolution, American history became more precious than office space. And with that victory, historic preservation came of age in America.

By the first of February 1984, all the paint had been removed from the Aquia Creek sandstone on the west front. Bids were received from general contractors for the structural reinforcement and stone repair phase of the project, and on May 2 the Charles H. Tompkins Company was awarded the general restoration contract. Cement grout was injected into spaces within the foundations and behind the walls, and stainless steel rods were installed to strengthen the masonry arches and vaults. The portico was dismantled above the columns and rebuilt. Severely cracked or damaged sandstone was replaced with Indiana limestone, which was found to share many important physical characteristics with the original sandstone. Ultimately, about 40 percent of the old stone was replaced. The original cornice was replicated with the subtle variations of detail found in the old work. After a protective coating was applied to the new and old stone, the walls were repainted. The restoration was completed in November 1987, substantially under budget.

In 1986, the architect of the Capitol received permission to use funds remaining from the restoration to study the structural condition of the Olmsted terraces. Ammann & Whitney discovered weakness in parts of the terrace, as well as evidence of extensive failure in the waterproofing system. While repair documents were being prepared, a well-known Washington architect, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, was retained to design new structures to be located within the courtyards separating the terrace from the Capitol. The one-story structures (8,000 square feet each on the House and Senate sides) would provide additional meeting rooms and offices and extend Olmsted's terrace with new paving and additional plant cases. On March 7, 1991, the Charles H. Tompkins Company was awarded the construction contract (worth \$11.3 million), and the terraces were closed to the public two months later. As work progressed, unforeseen structural problems were uncovered, making it necessary to commit an additional \$2.8 million to the project. Work was finished on January 15, 1993, just five days before the inauguration of President William J. Clinton.



Inaugural Luncheon for President John F. Kennedy 1961

*F*rom the time the Supreme Court left in 1935 until its restoration in 1975, the old Senate chamber was a popular place for luncheons, cocktail parties, and meetings.



Old Senate Chamber 1970

CAPITOL SHRINES

*A*s the twin sagas of the east and west front extensions played out on Capitol Hill during the 1960s and 1970s, the fates of some of the Capitol's historic interiors were also under discussion. In the spring of 1960, Senator John Stennis of Mississippi spearheaded a movement to restore the old Senate and Supreme Court chambers as a tribute to the great men and deeds associated with those historic rooms. He was distressed to see the old Senate chamber playing host to endless rounds of luncheons, receptions, and cocktail parties. In his opinion, the room should be cherished as a shrine to American history, not degraded by the lingering odors of finger food, liquor, and cigars.

In an address delivered on May 10, 1960, Stennis lectured his colleagues about the scandalous

condition of the sacred room where their predecessors met from 1819 until 1859 and where the Supreme Court met from 1860 until 1935. He asked the architect of the Capitol to look into the cost of restoring the room as well as the chamber below, which had been home to the Supreme Court prior to 1860. The lower room, over which Chief Justices John Marshall and Roger Taney had once presided, had since been subdivided into four offices occupied by the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. Latrobe's beautiful and bold vaulting was hidden by a suspended acoustical tile ceiling, while Franzoni's figure of Justice was buried behind sheets of protective plywood. But once the east front project was finished, the committee relocated to new quarters and the old chamber stood ready for restoration.

The idea of restoring the two chambers was not original to the junior senator from Mississippi. At the end of 1932, David Lynn had been approached by Frederic A. Delano, who expressed an interest in seeing the rooms preserved or restored to their early nineteenth-century appearances. A man of considerable influence, Delano was chairman of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, president of the American Planning and Civic Association, and a favorite uncle of the president elect, Franklin Delano Roosevelt.⁴² The idea of preserving the historic rooms had, in turn, been brought to Delano's attention by Mrs. John Lord O'Brian, the widow of a high-rank-

ing official in the Department of Justice. A conference was held in the offices of Attorney General Seth Richardson, with Lynn, Delano, Mrs. O'Brian, and a few others in attendance. There this ad hoc committee drafted a resolution calling for preserving the old Senate chamber and keeping it open to the public once vacated by the Court. On February 6, 1934, Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas introduced the resolution in the Senate. David J. Lewis of Maryland introduced it in the House two weeks later. Soon the resolution was amended to include the old Supreme Court chamber on the first floor. It passed on May 28, 1934.

Although it had been in effect for more than twenty-five years, the resolution calling for the preservation of the two chambers was not strong enough to satisfy Senator Stennis. The old Senate chamber remained either locked or in use for parties or meetings. The press referred to it as the "Senate's Rumpus Room." Common offices still cluttered the old Supreme Court chamber, which was in no condition to be shown to the public. While the restoration was being studied, Stennis wanted the 1934 resolution toughened to prohibit the old

Supreme Court Chamber Prior to Restoration

1961

While it was occupied by the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, the old Supreme Court chamber was divided into staff offices and a meeting room. A glimpse of Latrobe's magnificent ceiling and the Doric arcade may be seen in this view.



Supreme Court Chamber Prior to Restoration

1961

Sandstone columns and acoustical tiles were odd architectural companions when the old chamber was occupied by a committee.

Senate chamber from being used for “any other purpose than a reminder of the Capitol’s history.”⁴³

Using estimates supplied by Stewart’s office, Senator Stennis introduced an amendment to the 1961 Legislative Appropriations Act providing \$400,000 for the restoration of the old Senate chamber and the old Supreme Court chamber. The restoration would afford the American people an opportunity to appreciate two chambers that witnessed much of the nation’s early history.⁴⁴

The funds that Stennis inserted into the appropriations bill caught his counterparts in the House off guard. In conference, the House insisted that the money be removed until the matter could be fully digested. The Senate conferees, however, vowed to try again the following year.

Throughout September 1961, *The Washington Daily News* carried a series of articles and editorials highly sympathetic to Stennis’ proposed restorations. In one article, which called the historic Senate chamber a “Cocktail Party Site,” readers were told of a disturbing scene in the venerable room where a “young lady jiggled her martini—and it dribbled on the floor where Daniel Webster stood in his greatest debates.”⁴⁵ A subsequent article noted that the parties held in this “stately night club” were so secretive that the sergeant at arms refused to reveal the “bookings.”⁴⁶ According to one editorial, the use of the chamber for these purely social events was a “Misuse of a National Shrine.”⁴⁷

As time passed, the restorations were endorsed by Democratic leader Mike Mansfield of Montana and Carl Hayden of Arizona, chairman of the Committee on Appropriations. They held a news conference on April 1, 1962, announcing the Senate’s intention to “kick out the cocktail parties” by restoring the chambers.⁴⁸ Still, more detailed cost figures and architectural information were needed before the project could proceed. Accordingly, on April 30, 1962, the architect of the Capitol asked for \$37,500 to develop plans, specifications, and cost estimates for the restorations, but the funds were again removed by the House. Members of the House Appropriations Committee did not like the idea of restoring the old Senate chamber because they would lose a favorite place to hold their conferences with the

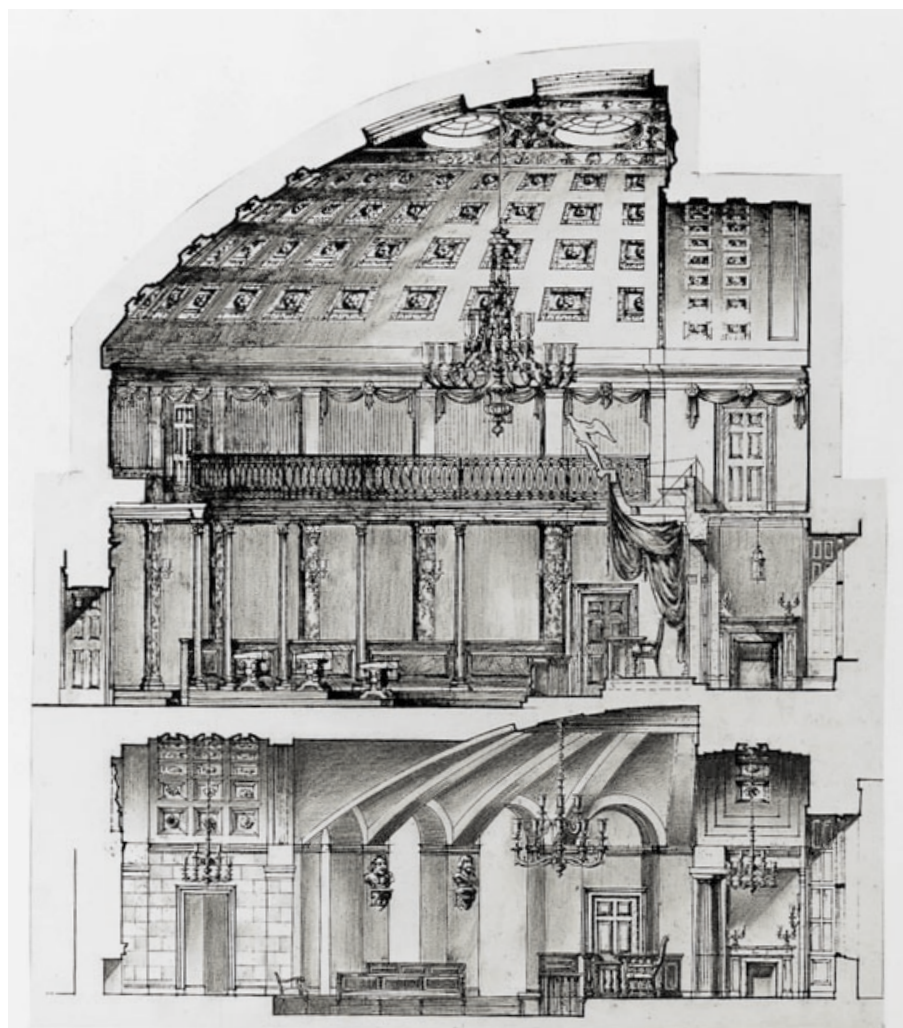
Senate. The following year, however, they relented and planning funds were approved.

On March 6, 1964, Stewart hired DeWitt, Poor & Shelton to plan the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court chambers. The firm was enjoying a string of successful engagements with the architect of the Capitol, including the east and west front extensions and a vast new building for the Library of Congress. With more than five million dollars in fees paid since 1955, there were charges of favoritism in the press. Aside from the near monopoly the firm had on Capitol Hill projects, it was also noted that Stewart’s chief assistant, Mario Campioli, once worked for two of the firm’s partners. To answer the charges, Stewart claimed that the DeWitt, Poor & Shelton firm was among the few in America practicing “traditional” architecture, a claim which the AIA later characterized as “hogwash.”⁴⁹

Section of the Old Senate Chamber and Old Supreme Court Chamber

by DeWitt, Poor & Shelton, 1965

*T*his rendering illustrates the relative position and height of the two rooms as well as an early suggestion for chandeliers in the Supreme Court chamber, which was later dropped for lack of documentation.





Supreme Court Chamber

*P*erhaps Latrobe's finest interior design was the Supreme Court chamber. The difficulties encountered in vaulting the one story space resulted in a dramatic ceiling structure that is unique in American architecture. (1996 photograph.)

Funding was held up year after year by the House of Representatives. George Mahon of Texas, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, was the principal stumbling block. He viewed the old Senate chamber as a perfectly good meeting room and wanted to delay the restoration until the west front project was finished, when more conference rooms would become available for his committee's use. Since the Senate was holding that project up, he felt the restoration should wait as well. One of his colleagues on the committee, Robert Casey of Texas, did not favor the Senate restoration, but felt it was wrong to tie the two projects together, especially considering

that the west front extension was a vastly more expensive endeavor.

During the impasse, the cost of the restoration tripled, from about \$400,000 in 1961 to \$1.2 million eight years later. Upon taking office in 1971, the new architect of the Capitol, George M. White, was asked to investigate the possibility of using the old Senate chamber and the old Supreme Court chamber as meeting rooms after the restorations were completed. Plans were drawn showing that such an arrangement was possible in the Court room, and this was used to help win Mahon's support. White was also asked about dividing the project into phases so one room might be used while work on the other was under way. Such an approach, White reported, would drive the project costs to one and a half million dollars, but this scheduling advantage was considered to be worth the money.

During this period the press, including the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, carried stories about the classic impasse between the House and Senate over the extension and restoration projects. In 1972, the deadlock finally ended when Mahon received a phone call from Lady Bird Johnson supporting the restoration. At the same time, Speaker Albert convinced him to drop his objection in exchange for a promise from Senator Mansfield to use his influence with William Proxmire to drop legislation designed to kill the west front project. The deal worked and funds for the restorations were provided in the Legislative Appropriations Act for 1973.⁵⁰ It seemed appropriate that the latest chapter in the history of the two chambers was decided by a legislative compromise nurtured by a gentle nudge from a well-respected former first lady.

To oversee these restorations and other matters relating to its history and patrimony, the Senate created a Commission on Art and Antiquities in 1968. The commission directed much of the research and hired many of the nationally known consultants used in the documentary phase of the project. Others in the architect of the Capitol's office conducted research as well. The commission was dissatisfied with the architects hired for the restoration because of their lack of experience in the field of historic preservation. White convinced the commission it would be unfair to hire a new firm to implement the designs of another. The



Supreme Court Chamber

Carlo Franzoni's allegorical group representing Justice and Young America occupies the place of honor over the west fireplace. (1996 photograph.)

argument prevailed, and while DeWitt, Poor & Shelton remained project architects, the Senate promised to scrutinize their work carefully.

The first phase of the restoration work, focusing on the old Supreme Court chamber, was finished in the spring of 1975. Partitions and the dropped ceiling were removed and the space was opened to its original configuration. Thinking that it was not an original treatment, restorers removed paint from the stone columns, leaving them bare. The room's three original fireplaces, two of which had been closed in 1936 and used as air-conditioning ducts, were reconstructed. New mantels were designed, drawing on the room's Doric order for inspiration. An 1854 guidebook gave restorers the chamber's general layout, showing that the justices originally sat with their backs toward the east windows. A portrait of John Marshall documented the color and design of a carpet used in the chamber and was the basis for the reproduction floor covering. Much of the original furniture, including desks, chairs,

benches, and tables, was returned to the room from private collections and from the Supreme Court itself. Simon Willard's wall clock, made in 1837, was returned to its original position below Franzoni's figure of Justice. Busts of the first four chief justices of the United States were placed on brackets affixed to the arcade.

The old Supreme Court chamber was dedicated and opened to the public on May 22, 1975. A year later the restored old Senate chamber was ready for public inspection. The work in that space had involved removing what little was remaining from the period when the Court used the chamber and building a new terraced floor covered with wall-to-wall carpet. Reproductions of the 1819 desks, chairs, and sofas originally made by the New York cabinetmaker Thomas Constantine were put into place. The visitor's gallery, designed by Charles Bulfinch in 1828 and removed by the commissioner of public buildings in 1860, was replicated using historic views as guides. Two pairs

Old Senate Chamber

The Senate chamber of 1816–1819 is one of America's great neoclassical interiors. (1996 photograph.)



of mantels remained in the room, one of statuary marble designed by Giovanni Andrei and a much simpler one in verd antique and Potomac marbles. Although the second pair may have been in the chamber since 1819, they were not considered original and were replaced by two reproduction mantels matching the Andrei design. Reproduction iron stoves were placed in the niches flanking the principal entrance into the room. Also reproduced was a gilt chandelier with twenty-four oil-burning lamps, originally made by Cornelius & Baker of Philadelphia in 1837 and modified to burn gas in 1847. The canopy sheltering the president's chair reused the original gilt eagle and shield, while a reproduction crimson drapery was hung from a new mahogany valance. Rembrandt Peale's portrait of George Washington, purchased by the Senate in 1832 and removed from the chamber in 1859, was returned to its place of honor above the east gallery.

On June 16, 1976, the Senate convened in its restored chamber and was welcomed by Vice President Nelson A. Rockefeller, who presided over the dedication ceremony. In a short speech Rockefeller opened the room as a "new shrine of American liberty." Senator Mansfield was impressed with the splendor of the chamber and its furnishings and remarked that the modern Senate was not as beautifully accommodated as it had been in the past. He noted that the "Senate has lost some of its elegance over the past century and quarter. One might say that the peacock plumage has been plucked not only from the nest but from its occupants." But despite the different style of accommodation, Mansfield declared that

what moved Senators yesterday still moves Senators today . . . It is to remind us that the Senate's responsibilities go on, even though the faces and, yes, the rooms in which they gather fade into history. With the Nation, the Senate has come a long way and, still, there is a long, long way to go.⁵¹



Statuary Hall

Statuary Hall was refurbished in 1976 with crimson draperies, a new paint scheme, and a reproduction of the original oil-burning chandelier. These improvements recalled the time when the room served as the hall of the House. (1988 photograph.)

THIRD SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

In 1972, the Senate's 1909 office building was named in honor of Senator Richard Brevard Russell of Georgia and the 1958 structure was named for Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois. In the same year, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration asked the architect of the Capitol to survey the space occupied by senators and their staff and report on their work environment. In the decade and a half since the Dirksen Building had opened, the number of persons working for the Senate had grown from 2,500 to 7,000. This growth resulted in overcrowded conditions, leading some resourceful staff to fashion offices in toilet rooms and improvise meeting rooms in passageways. It was discovered that the average Senate employee occupied a meager sixty-seven square feet of space, less than half of the minimum government standard of 150 square feet.

On October 31, 1972, Congress approved funds to enlarge the Dirksen Building with a rear addition as a means to ease overcrowding. It was

first thought that the project would involve merely constructing a mirror image of the existing building, doubling its capacity and replicating its appearance. But as the requirements for the new building grew in the minds of those in charge, it became clear that an entirely new structure was called for, one that might be physically attached to the old building but would be separate in every other sense. (For instance, after it was decided to move fifty senators into the new building, it became clear that it would need to be significantly larger than the older structure.) The new building was to be a contemporary design with proportions sympathetic to surrounding classical buildings, but without any direct reference to classical detail. Its interior environment was to be sunny, cheerful, healthful, and flexible. Historic preservation and energy conservation were two new concerns that were also to be incorporated into the building's design. An important early nineteenth-century residential structure located on the corner of the site, the Sewell-Belmont House, was to be preserved rather than bulldozed as it most certainly would have been only a few years earlier.

Under the direction of the Senate Office Building Commission, White interviewed sixteen nationally known architects for the "Dirksen Extension," which was soon renamed the Philip A. Hart Senate Office Building after the much-admired senator from Michigan. The designers of the old building, successors to the firm of Eggers & Higgins, were among those eager to be considered for the project. On April 19, 1973, however, *The Washington Post* announced that John Carl Warnecke, a longtime friend of the Kennedy family, had been selected. The announcement assured readers that with Warnecke as architect, the new Senate office building "will bear no resemblance to the Kennedy Center," a gratuitous reference to the new and controversial performing arts center that now vied with the Rayburn Building as the structure Washingtonians most loved to hate. Warnecke, it

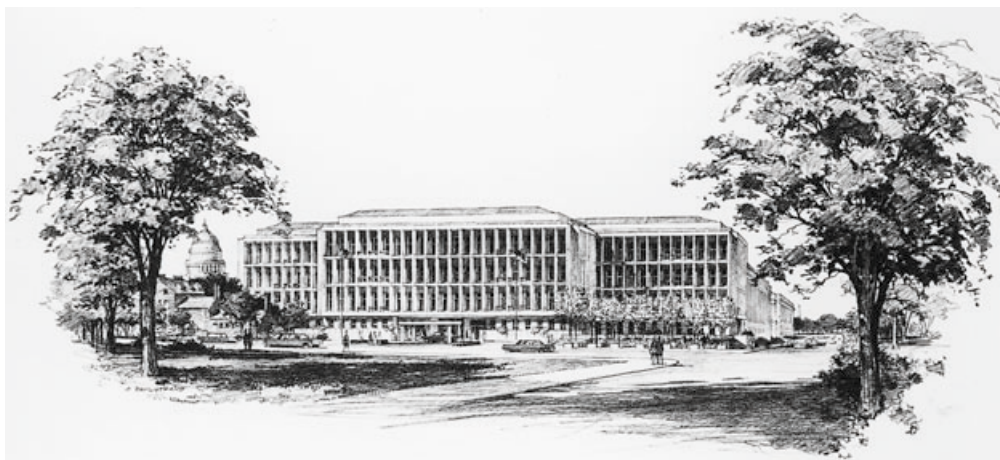
confided, “detests the white marble monument to JFK.” It continued with praise for Warnecke’s designs for the executive office buildings on Lafayette Park, opposite the White House, and mentioned his design of Kennedy’s grave at Arlington National Cemetery. The president’s widow had selected Warnecke for that important work, as well as for the Kennedy library at Harvard.⁵² Now it seemed part of the Kennedy mystique was about to rub off on Capitol Hill.

The new building that emerged from Warnecke’s drafting room added more than a million square feet to the Senate’s inventory of office and support space. Fifty senators would have suites, which would range in size from 4,000 to 6,000 square feet. A public hearing room would be equipped for the electronic and written press, while facilities for food service, parking, physical fitness, police, mail, and maintenance needs were also provided. The most novel aspect of the plan was its flexible offices. All the older office buildings provided offices in rooms strung along one side of a corridor, putting a considerable distance between staff members. For the new building, Warnecke devised a totally new scheme. Each suite would occupy an envelope of space on two floors. The senator’s personal office would have a ceiling height of sixteen feet, and staff areas with ceilings eight and a half feet high would be grouped around it. Within the staff space, partitions could be rearranged anywhere along a five-foot grid. Each office could be laid out with ease according to the management practices of an individual senator.

Rendering of the Philip Hart Senate Office Building

by John Carl Warnecke
1975

The simplicity of the Hart Senate Office Building, its human scale, and its uncomplicated and regular fenestration helped to disguise its bulk—over a million square feet. It was the first building on Capitol Hill subjected to preliminary design review by neighborhood residents and professional critics.



After the preliminary plans were finished in the spring of 1974, the chairman of the Senate Public Works Committee, Jennings Randolph of West Virginia, made an unusual announcement. Through a press release, Randolph invited “Architects and others with experience in building design and urban planning” to discuss the exterior design of the proposed building:

‘It is especially important that the City of Washington—and particularly Capitol Hill—be reflective of the best America has in planning, architecture, and construction,’ Randolph said. ‘Poor design occurs in many buildings after it is too late for correction.’⁵³

Clearly, lessons had been learned from the perception of secrecy surrounding the design of the Rayburn Building, and there was no wish to repeat past mistakes. White sent letters to six nationally prominent architects, including I. M. Pei, Pietro Belluschi, and Hugh Stubbins, asking them to help evaluate Warnecke’s design. A similar letter was sent to J. Carter Brown, director of the National Gallery of Art and chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts. The unprecedented public hearing on the design was held on June 5, 1974, with generally positive reviews coming from the design community. The architecture critic for *The Washington Post*, Wolf Von Eckardt, wrote:

The building as now designed is classic in the sense that it is a kinetic building. As you see it from one side, it is almost a solid wall, and then when you start walking, the columns open up, the spaces between the columns—in this case between the fins—become larger so that the building changes in appearance and becomes alive. I like that. I like it very much. The quality and, yes, even excellence in this building rests on the right proportions. They are pleasing, they are good. We can’t ask for more.⁵⁴

On August 8, 1974, the design for the Hart Building was approved by the Senate Office Building Commission and the Committee on Public Works. The first construction contract was awarded on May 20, 1975, with excavation beginning in December. Work proceeded in a total of six phases before the first occupant moved in during November 1982. Construction took place during a period of unprecedented inflation in which the national index of construction costs jumped 76 percent. With costs rising daily, interior work worth about twenty-four million dollars was deferred in

order to save money. Still, the building's final cost ran to more than \$137 million, bringing down a storm of criticism from those who noted that the original estimate was around forty-seven million dollars. But the original estimate contemplated a much smaller building, and one built without inflation's debilitating effects. White pointed out that the cost per square foot (ninety-eight dollars) compared favorably with that in the better class of corporate buildings of the period.

The Senate's first nonclassical building opened in 1982 to mixed reviews. Some thought it was a refreshing change from the old-fashioned type of building—endless corridors lined with locked doors. Others missed the classical grandeur of the Russell Building, with its incomparable rotunda and caucus room. Yet few failed to appreciate the strides made in planning, circulation, and adaptability by the architects of the Hart Building. Those comparing it to the Rayburn Building viewed this newest congressional structure as a polite and modest addition to Capitol Hill. Critics comparing it to the East Wing of the National Gallery (a much different and smaller structure that coincidentally cost about the same), found that the “architectural benefits to Washington are not comparable.”⁵⁵ But the benefits to the architectural development of Capitol Hill were significant. The Hart Building reinvented and redefined the congressional office building: it provided a modern, workable environment promoting the efficiency, health, and happiness of its occupants and at the same time signaling a break from classicism as the official language of Capitol Hill architecture. It remains to be seen if the break is permanent.

PLANNING AHEAD

*I*n 1959, Senator Thomas C. Hennings, Jr., of Missouri introduced a joint resolution to create a commission to plan a memorial to James Madison, Father of the Constitution and fourth president of the United States. The commission would be empowered to accept gifts, hold hearings, organize contests, and otherwise oversee the development of a permanent memorial to Madison in the capital city. It would also be instructed to study the feasibility of reusing

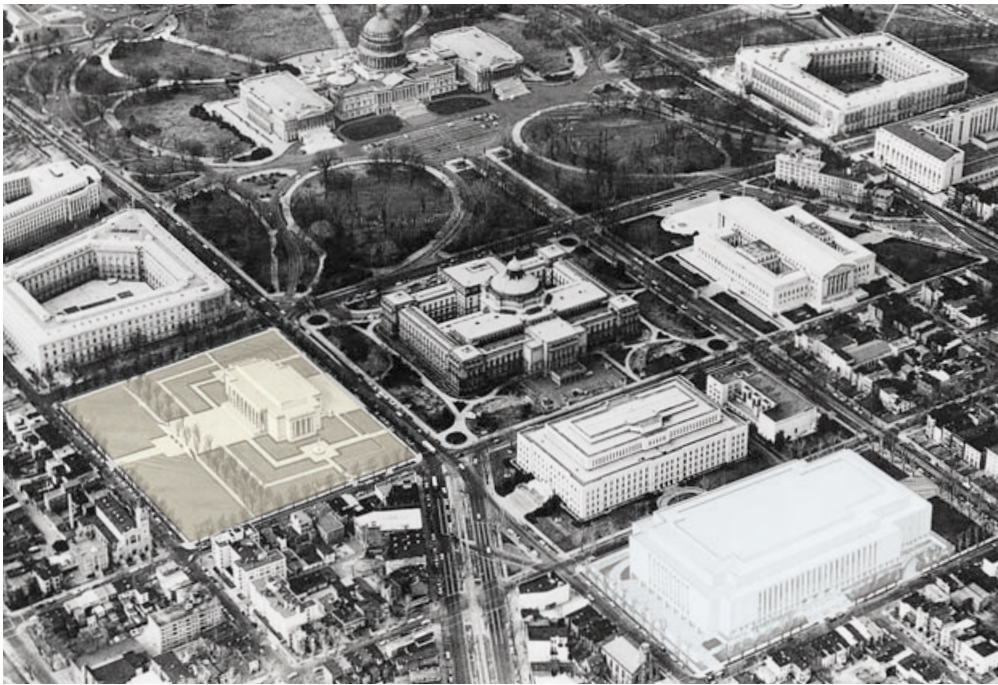


Atrium in the Hart Senate Office Building

*I*nterior offices were provided with a view of the light-filled atrium, which also furnished a dramatic setting for Alexander Calder's sculptural composition called *Mountains and Clouds*. (1987 photograph.)

the columns recently removed from the east front of the Capitol. (That idea was later dropped.) After the legislation was approved on April 8, 1960, the commission met to discuss what form the Madison Memorial might take. They soon hit upon the idea of incorporating the memorial into a new building for the Library of Congress, noting that Madison first proposed a library for use by the Continental Congress in 1783. They also noted that the library needed more space and that plans were already afoot to provide a second annex. It seemed especially appropriate to memorialize Madison in a library because his achievements seemed to lie in the area of intellectual pursuits.

The site for the Madison Memorial was the next topic for consideration. A square of land on Independence Avenue, near the Library of Congress and the Cannon House Office Building, had recently been acquired by the government and was being cleared of its residential and commercial structures. Because property owners had been given little warning about the government's intentions for their land, the architect of the Capitol was again accused of keeping plans secret. But to the memorial commission, the site seemed perfect.



Capitol Hill with Proposed Buildings
1961

*T*his aerial view was overlaid with sketches showing two new buildings: a large annex for the Library of Congress and a smaller building for the James Madison Memorial. Eventually the two buildings were merged.



James Madison Memorial
by DeWitt, Poor & Shelton, 1961

*T*he original design for the Madison Memorial consisted of a stripped-down classical building containing a hall for a statue of the fourth president. It was to be surrounded by exhibit spaces, study carrels, a library, and offices. Archival space for presidential papers was planned for the space beneath the plaza.

Already at work on the design of the library's third building, DeWitt, Poor & Shelton quickly sketched a memorial building standing on a large plaza. For a time the architects considered using the Folger Shakespear Library or Madison's home, "Montpelier," for inspiration, but they settled instead on a plain rectangular structure that was devoid of ornament except for Corinthian porticoes on each of the four elevations. On July 20, 1961, the general design was approved by the commission.

The site for the new library annex was to be behind the library's existing annex (now called the John Adams Building), an area containing four blocks of residential structures and a church. Alarmed at the prospect of losing yet another significant piece of their Capitol Hill neighborhood, citizens gathered to condemn the proposed action as "extravagant vandalism," totally at odds with their efforts to restore the historic architecture of the area.⁵⁶ They also disapproved the design of the Madison Memorial itself, criticizing it for a lack of taste and imagination. These problems were resolved in October 1965, however, when Congress approved a proposal to merge the Madison Memorial building and the new library annex into a single building sited on vacant land already owned by the government. A memorial hall with a statue of Madison would occupy an alcove off the main entrance to the annex. Seventy-five million dollars was appropriated for planning and construction. Thus, the Library of Congress James Madison Memorial Building reconciled the objectives of the commission with the library's space requirements, while saving four blocks of historic Capitol Hill architecture from needless destruction.

After twelve years of planning, construction of the Madison Building began on May 1, 1971, soon after George White became architect of the Capitol. There were well-founded rumors that the House of Representatives was planning to take the building from the library to convert it into an office building for its own use. Such a move was not without reason, White thought, because the building's location on the south side of Independence Avenue seemed to indicate that it "belonged" to the House of Representatives rather than to the Library of Congress. The more White thought about the matter, however, and the more he learned about the way building sites were selected, the more it



**Rendering of the
James Madison Memorial Building
of the Library of Congress**

by DeWitt, Poor & Shelton, 1967

*M*easuring 500 feet wide and 400 feet deep, the Madison Building is the largest library structure in the world. (It encompasses 1.5 million square feet of space.) The undecorated colonnades attempt to echo classical columns while remaining faithful to canons of modern design.

became apparent that there was no logic to the way Capitol Hill had developed in the past. It seemed to him as if a game of darts had been used to select where buildings were placed on the map of Capitol Hill. The haphazard approach would doubtless continue unless logic, order, and reason were imposed in a master plan, a blueprint to guide future growth. Only two plans had ever been made for Capitol Hill: L'Enfant's 1791 city plan locating the Capitol alone on Jenkins Hill, and the McMillan plan of 1902 showing the Capitol surrounded by uniform classical buildings. Both plans were important in the Capitol's history, but neither could help guide its future.

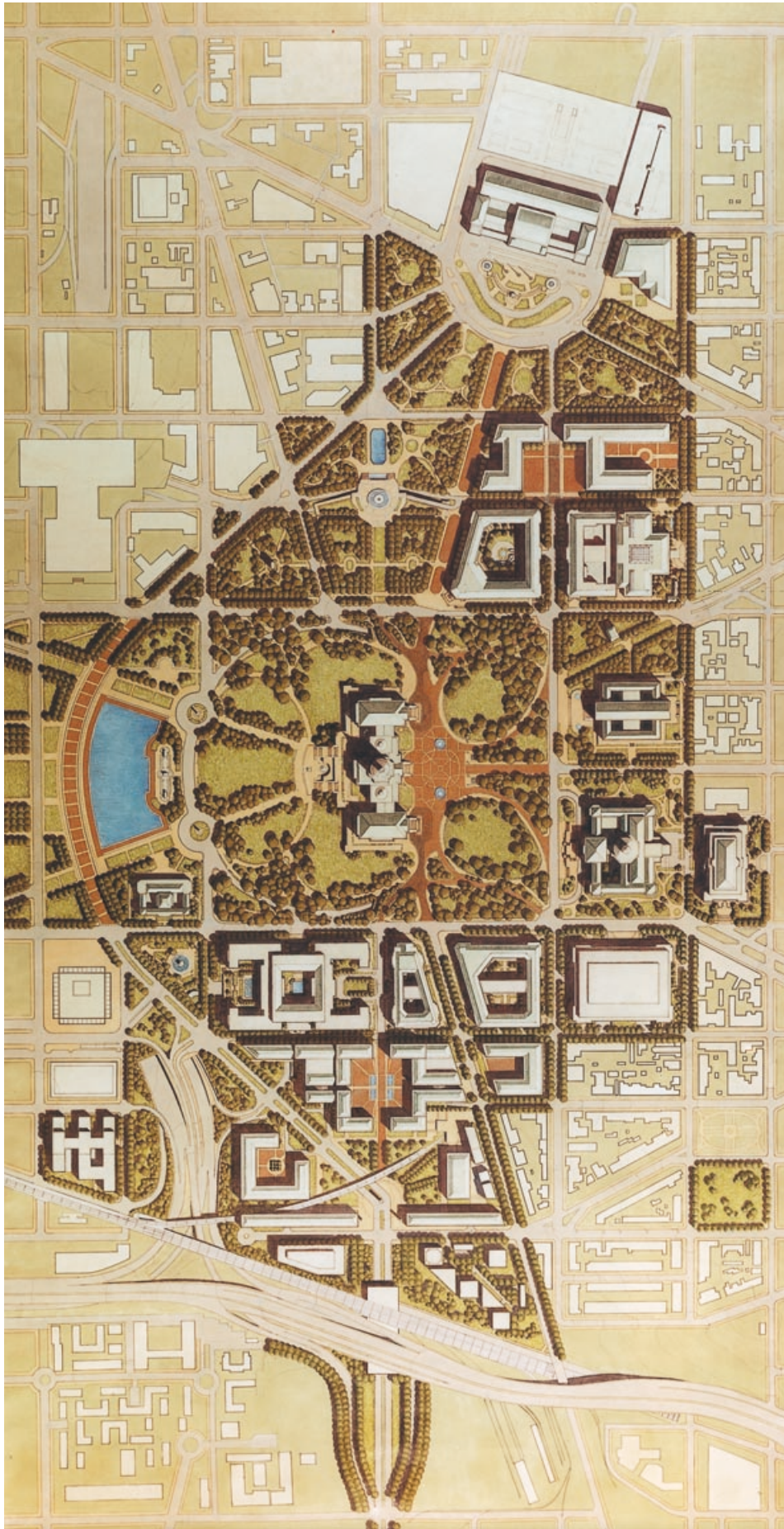
To address the complicated issues surrounding the long-range development of Capitol Hill, White secured an appropriation of \$350,000 in 1975 to prepare the "Master Plan for Future Development of the Capitol Grounds and Related Areas." He assembled a team of professionals—representing the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, ecology, civil engineering, urban and social planning, economics, transportation, and historic preservation—to assist him in developing not only a comprehensive plan, but one of excellence and stature. Promising that the planning process would take place in full public view, White proposed a thorough analysis of historic patterns, current conditions, and a broad spectrum of future scenarios. A plan for rational growth could improve the relationship among existing buildings and provide a coherent and perceptive vision for those to come. The distinguished Philadelphia architectural and

planning firm of Wallace, McHarg, Roberts & Todd was retained as the principal consultant.

Phase I of the Master Plan, a "plan for a plan," was published in August 1976. It traced the history of development of Capitol Hill, defining the principal focus of the initial effort as the creation of a framework for rational decision making. Three major problems were identified and examined in detail: space needs, movement problems, and visual disruption. The document also presented an extensive outline for the future study of many aspects of Capitol Hill's natural and physical environment.

The planners looked at each of the major tenants of Capitol Hill—the House and Senate, the Library of Congress, and the Supreme Court—to assess future space needs and offer logical places for future expansion. Without encroaching on historically sensitive residential neighborhoods, most of the areas available for expansion lay north and south of the Capitol core. Growth on the Senate side was thought best targeted to the squares immediately north of the Russell, Dirksen, and Hart Buildings, thus preserving the open space between the Capitol and Union Station. In the opposite direction, development of the House side was envisioned along the axis of South Capitol Street, which had become a hodgepodge of nondescript commercial structures, highway and railroad bridges, and ramps that could benefit from thoughtful development and beautification.

One of the plan's controversial recommendations was to relocate the Supreme Court to its own precinct off the Hill. The planners thought the



**The Master Plan
for the United States Capitol
1981**

*T*his drawing illustrates several aspects of the Master Plan, including suggested location of future buildings.

Court's location was one of the few mistakes made by the McMillan Commission and concluded that this should be corrected. A "Judicial Campus," symbolically equivalent to the Capitol Hill campus with its own monumental identity, should some day be created for the Supreme Court. In the meantime, growth of the Court could be accommodated on nearby sites. When the Court left Capitol Hill, planners thought, its former home could be adapted for special use by the Library of Congress.

Facts about visitors' experiences were gathered and analyzed. It was increasingly obvious that the Capitol was more than a legislative center. It was also a museum of American history and art, attracting almost four million tourists a year. Visitors had been coming since the building opened in 1800, but the numbers increased dramatically after World War II. The inadequacy of existing restaurant facilities, restrooms, and parking was acknowledged, and part of the solution seemed to lie with a new visitor's center proposed for Union Station—then a vast, deteriorating, and underutilized building. After parking their cars at the station, or so the reasoning went, visitors could travel to points throughout the Hill via a "people mover," using a part of the tunnel built originally to carry southward-bound train traffic. (These suggestions did not anticipate the future restoration of Union Station, or a later idea for an underground visitor center attached directly to the Capitol.) Parking would be prohibited on the plaza in front of the Capitol. Since sites available for future parking lots seemed limited, the planners recommended ways to encourage the use of mass transit by staff and tourists alike.

Future intrusion by Congress in the residential neighborhood of Capitol Hill was considered unwise for historic preservation and urban design

reasons. The suggestion was made, however, to create a buffer zone between the monumental core of the Hill and the purely residential neighborhoods only a few blocks away. In the “Periphery and Historic District Transition Areas,” the federal government would have jurisdiction over building facades, landscaping, fences, lamp posts, and other items of “street furniture.” Area residents and the architect of the Capitol would jointly determine the best treatment of the architecture, while the government would provide uniform maintenance of sidewalks and outdoor lighting. Although the neighborhood might be domestic in design and scale, the standard of its maintenance would be worthy of its location so near the Capitol.

The Master Plan was transmitted to Congress in 1981. It was a heavily illustrated document brimming with facts, ideas, and proposals. Like the plans by L’Enfant and the McMillan Commission before it, the Master Plan did not suggest designs; rather, it designated specific sites for unspecified buildings. Its basic message was: “If a new building is needed in the future, build it here.” In other areas of investigation, the Master Plan’s message became entangled in the theory and rhetoric of design. Esoteric discussions focused on such issues as the “genius loci” of Capitol Hill, the “axial linkage” of buildings, and the “hierarchy of open space.” Despite its occasionally stilted language, which few outside the design profession appreciated, the Master Plan’s copious illustrations and free-ranging ideas continue to stimulate thought and discussion.

The first building sited in accordance with the Master Plan was the Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building, an administrative center for the federal court system. Its location, adjacent to Union Station, completed the “spacial enclosure” of Columbus Circle and was considered a long overdue complement to the city’s train station and post office. In 1985, the architect of the Capitol was authorized to study the possibility of providing a facility for the courts, in consultation with the chief justice among others. White invited the country’s leading architects and developers to submit proposals for the new building; they were to present ideas combining architectural solutions with creative financing options to “minimize or eliminate initial capital investment by the United

States through the use of public-private partnerships or non governmental sources of financing.”⁵⁷ The invitation was an innovative scheme to provide the judicial branch with a first-class building without resorting to the usual appropriation process. Financial and real-estate consultants were retained to advise the architect of the Capitol in matters relating to market analysis, cost evaluation, business deal structure, and implementation. Forty-three development firms were contacted, of which nineteen indicated an interest in the project. From this list, five developer-architect teams were asked to submit proposals. A jury unanimously selected the team of Edward Larrabee Barnes/John M. Y. Lee & Partners as the architects and Boston Properties as the developer. Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist approved the selection on January 13, 1989.

By the terms of the innovative financing package, the architect of the Capitol agreed to lease the site to the developer for thirty years. He also agreed to lease the finished building for thirty years, at which time it would revert to the government at no cost. Rents would be used to amortize the privately raised debt. Not since the 1790s, when the board of commissioners attempted to finance the Capitol and White House through the sale of city lots, had such unconventional financing been tried on a federal construction project. Unlike the commissioners’ bungled efforts, however, this financing scheme proved entirely satisfactory.

Ground was broken for the Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building on April 4, 1990, and tenants began to occupy the finished building on October 1, 1992. It cost \$101 million, providing more than 600,000 square feet of rentable space within its overall million-square-foot interior. Entrance is through a glass atrium planted with bamboo. The Massachusetts Avenue elevation was designed to recall the columns and arches that are conspicuous elements in Union Station, its neighbor to the west. Nowhere are classical moldings or carvings to be found, but the scale, rhythm, and sculptural qualities of the granite facade and its low dome (actually a mechanical penthouse) suggest a polite and deferential relationship with its grand neighbor.



**Thurgood Marshall
Federal Judiciary
Building**

A glass atrium occupies the space between two stone-clad wings and acts as the principal entrance into the building. (1996 photograph.)

**Bicentennial
Ceremony**

1993

To honor the 200th anniversary of the Capitol's first cornerstone, a ceremonial cornerstone was laid during a program held on September 18, 1993. Among those participating in the event was the architect of the Capitol, George M. White (b. 1920).



**THE CAPITOL
BICENTENNIAL**

September 18, 1993, was the 200th anniversary of the day George Washington came to the heights of Jenkins Hill to lay the cornerstone of the Capitol. Under clouds and light rain, Masons from Federal Lodge No. 1, Potomac Lodge No. 5, and Alexandria-Washington Lodge No. 22 held a simple ceremony to commemorate the building's bicentennial. About 300 Masons from around the country also participated in the ceremony. There were none of the artillery salutes, parades, nor barbeques that marked the original event, nor were there such choral or carillon performances as marked the centennial celebration 100 years later. During the short program, contemporary Masons simply laid a ceremonial cornerstone. While the bicentennial was observed in historical exhibits, symposia, and publications, the small, soggy Masonic ceremony on the west front was the only event held on the actual anniversary. It served as prelude to a larger, more festive bicentennial celebration accompanying the return of the statue of Freedom to its place atop the dome.

The impetus for *Freedom's* brief sojourn on the ground was a 1991 study by bronze conservation specialists hired by the architect of the Capitol to assess her condition. They found the surface extensively pitted and corroded. The joints between the statue's five sections had been caulked numerous times, leaving disfiguring lines that were visible from the ground. In addition, the cast-iron pedestal was cracked and rusted. Following an investigation addressing conservation and logistical issues, it was decided to remove the statue from the dome and place it on the east plaza while restoration was under way. This gave conservators easy access to the statue and afforded the public an opportunity to inspect the progress of the work. With *Freedom* secured in a harness and the bolts loosened, the statue was removed by a jet-powered Skycrane helicopter early on the morning of May 9, 1993.

Pressurized water was used to clean the surface corrosion and more than 700 bronze plugs were used to fill holes and pits. The metal was repatinated to "bronze green," the term used to

describe the statue's color when it was new. After coating the surface with a corrosion inhibitor, conservators applied lacquer and wax. During a festive and dramatic congressional celebration in honor of the Capitol's 200th anniversary, the statue was returned to its place on top of the dome on October 23, 1993. President Clinton was among those who greeted the return amid the roar of thousands of cheering voices.

The cost of the statue's restoration (\$780,000) was paid for by the Capitol Preservation Commission, a congressional leadership group that raises money for projects relating to the stewardship of the Capitol and its contents. In 1994, the commission provided the architect of the Capitol with \$2.55 million to develop plans and estimates for a new underground visitor center based on a 1991 conceptual study by the architectural firm RTKL Associates. The center would provide an educational introduction to the history and work of Congress and to the history, architecture, and art of the Capitol. Amenities such as food service and rest room facilities would be included. In addition, the underground location presented an opportunity to redesign the east plaza and remove parking, as had been recommended in the Master Plan. Security concerns and precautions could also be better handled in a new visitor center rather than in the Capitol itself. An underground loading dock would eliminate the need for trash trucks and other service vehicles to drive onto the plaza and mar the view. The center was authorized and funded in October 1998.

Planning for the Capitol Visitor Center was one of the last projects begun during White's tenure. Under the provisions of the Legislative Branch Appropriation Bill for 1990, Congress for the first time established a ten-year term for the architect and made the appointment subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. Under the new law, names of at least three potential appointees would be submitted to the president by a congressional panel comprising the chair and ranking member of each of the numerous committees with oversight of the architect's office. These were the first reforms to the way the architect's appointment was handled since the agency reached its modern form. Under the terms of the legislation, White retired from office on November 21, 1995, after nearly



Statue of Freedom

*V*isitors to the Capitol were able to watch the progress of the statue's restoration taking place within a fenced yard on the east plaza. (1993 photograph.)

twenty-five years of service. During his time as architect, White restored the office to a position of trust among the various communities it served. Professionalism and openness helped restore faith in an agency once known for secrecy and cronyism. The quality of architectural design was greatly improved and, for the first time, preservation and restoration became objectives in the care of Capitol Hill's historic buildings. And with the Master Plan, a sensible blueprint for growth was left for future generations to follow.

Upon White's retirement, the office was run by the assistant architect of the Capitol, William L. Ensign, until a successor was named. The AIA gave Congress a list of candidates it thought suitable for the job. Among others, the institute recommended Alan Hantman, who had been vice president of Facilities Planning and Architecture for the Rockefeller Center Management Corporation. President Clinton nominated Hantman to be architect of the Capitol on January 6, 1997, and the Senate confirmed the choice on January 30. He entered upon his duties on February 3, 1997.

EPILOGUE

When Dr. William Thornton came to the Capitol on November 22, 1800, to hear President John Adams welcome Congress to its permanent residence, his wife Maria was taken with the stately portraits of the king and queen of France hanging in the Senate chamber. Ever since that day, visitors have come to Washington to observe the operations of the House and Senate and to have a look around. Art, history, and politics permeate the building's every fiber, and coming to the Capitol is one of the best ways Americans can see and understand themselves, their country, and their government. Few buildings have been begun under less favorable circumstance, and fewer still enjoy greater architectural success than does the United States Capitol. Luck, grit, and determination played parts in the story, along with the brawn and brains of thousands of workers. A few key people played disproportionately significant roles. Two amateur architects, William Thornton and Thomas Jefferson, and two professionals, B. Henry Latrobe and

Charles Bulfinch, shaped the Capitol during more than three decades of trial and error. Thomas U. Walter transformed their efforts into the powerful and majestic Capitol that today commands the world's respect. Countless senators and representatives wielded political influence over the Capitol's destiny, bringing to it all the wisdom and foolishness at their disposal. Two dozen state capitols, built after the Civil War, have been based upon the federal Capitol, making the genre a uniquely American contribution to world architecture. The Founding Fathers invented a new building type accommodating a new form of government. It was George Washington's vision that established the scale, extent, and style of the Capitol. His reputation fueled the project during his presidency and his memory continued to do so long after his death.

As the Capitol evolved, unforeseen and unpredictable forces affected its course, influencing its development in ways Washington could never have imagined. In this regard, fire and fireproofing had a potent impact on the Capitol's history. The conflagration of 1814 still divides the Capitol into "pre-fire" and "post-fire" periods, while the fear of fire drove the idea to replace the wooden dome with one made of cast iron. Similarly, the development and growth of congressional committees affected the Capitol's history. There was only one standing (i.e., permanent) committee in the House and none in the Senate when the 1792 advertisement for the Capitol's design called for twelve rooms for committees and clerks. Latrobe's effort to build an "office story" for the House of Representatives; his 1816 plan to alter the north wing for the accommodation of the Senate's first permanent committees; Bulfinch's endeavor in 1818 to find space for committees, thereby saving the rotunda; and the replacement of Walter's revolutionary iron library with committee rooms in 1900 were major episodes in the Capitol's history driven by the demand for more meeting rooms. Reforms mandated in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946, and the dramatic staffing increase that followed, brought about new office buildings designed around the new, more modern and professional committee system. In addition to fireproofing and space problems, questions about acoustics, ventilation, and heating challenged



The East Front
1997

Floor Plans

*T*wo additions built after the second World War—the east front extension and the courtyard infill project—added 147,200 square feet of floor space to the Capitol, resulting in a total of 774,700 square feet.

succeeding generations and their resolutions left imprints on the Capitol's fabric. Throughout the years, each improvement built upon a general idea that the Capitol should be useful as well as beautiful.

What would Washington think if he were to return today and look upon the city he founded and the Capitol he began? He might not recognize them at first. The city has spilled out beyond the boundaries shown on L'Enfant's map, appearing much larger and more beautiful than any city he had known. Turning to the Capitol, he might look at the dome in wonderment, perhaps gazing in disbelief at the masses of marble, or marveling at its sheer size. Yet he would probably recognize the basic design that so pleased him. Doubtless, too, Washington would be gratified that the Capitol still houses the Congress in great style, magnificently presiding over the capital city on his beloved Potomac River.

