
CHAPTER III

THE WORK OF DR. WM. THORNTON, ARCHITECT

THE execution of the modified plan of Dr. Thornton began immediately after the letter of Washington, July 25, as on September 2 the commissioners write that the Capitol was progressing favorably, and say: "The southeast is yet kept vacant for the corner stone which is to be laid on the 18th instant."^{1,2} At this period the building was under the superintendence of James Hoban. The contract allowed the commissioners to employ him in superintending any work on which they needed his services, and on September 23, 1793, he was officially appointed superintendent. During Hoban's rule as superintendent, with Hallet as assistant superintendent and draftsman, the corner stone was laid, September 18, 1793. This was done with considerable ceremony, as described in the History of the Alexandria Washington Lodge of Masons, from which I take the following quotations:

"The next important event of this kind was the laying of the corner stone of the United States Capitol, at the city of Washington, on the 18th day of September, 1793. The Masonic ceremonies were conducted by His Excellency General Washington, President of the United States, a past master of this lodge, which was present and holding the post of honor. Dr. Dick, elected worshipful master in 1789, still in office,

invited Washington to act as master on this occasion, in accordance with his own wishes and those of the public. The stone was deposited in the southeast corner of the building, instead of the northeast, as is now the custom. The inscription on the plate stated that Alexandria Lodge, No. 22, of Virginia, was present and participated in the ceremonies. The apron and sash worn by Washington on this occasion were the handiwork of Mrs. General Lafayette, and are now the property of this lodge."³

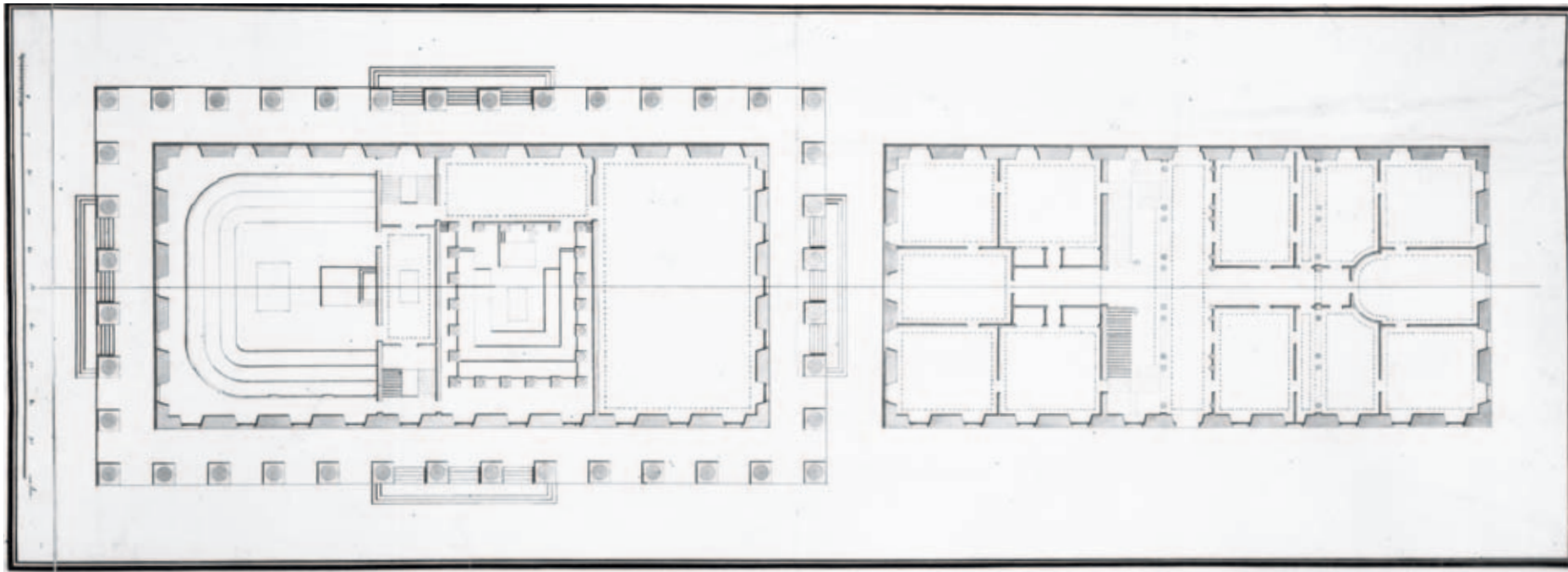
The following account of the ceremonies was published in the newspapers of that day⁴: "On Wednesday, one of the grandest Masonic processions took place, for the purpose of laying the corner-stone of the Capitol of the United States, which, perhaps, was ever exhibited on the like important occasion. About ten o'clock Lodge No. 9 was visited by that congregation so graceful to the craft, Lodge No. 22, of Virginia, with all their officers and regalia; and directly afterward appeared on the southern bank of the Grand River Potomack one of the finest companies of volunteer artillery that has been lately seen, parading to receive the President of the United States, who shortly came in sight with his suite, to whom the artillery paid their military honors; and His Excellency and suite crossed the Potomack, and was received in Maryland by the officers and brethren of No. 22, Virginia, and No. 9, Maryland, whom the President headed, preceded by a band of music; the rear brought up by the Alexandria Volunteer Artillery, with grand solemnity of march, proceeded to the President's Square, in the City of

¹ For the articles on which this chapter was based, see Glenn Brown, "History of the United States Capitol," *American Architect and Building News* 52 (May 23, 1896): 75–77 and (June 13, 1896): 99–102; and "The United States Capitol in 1800," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 4 (1901): 128–135. The later article was a public lecture delivered to the members of the Columbia Historical Society on April 2, 1900.

² Commissioners to President Washington, September 2, 1793, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

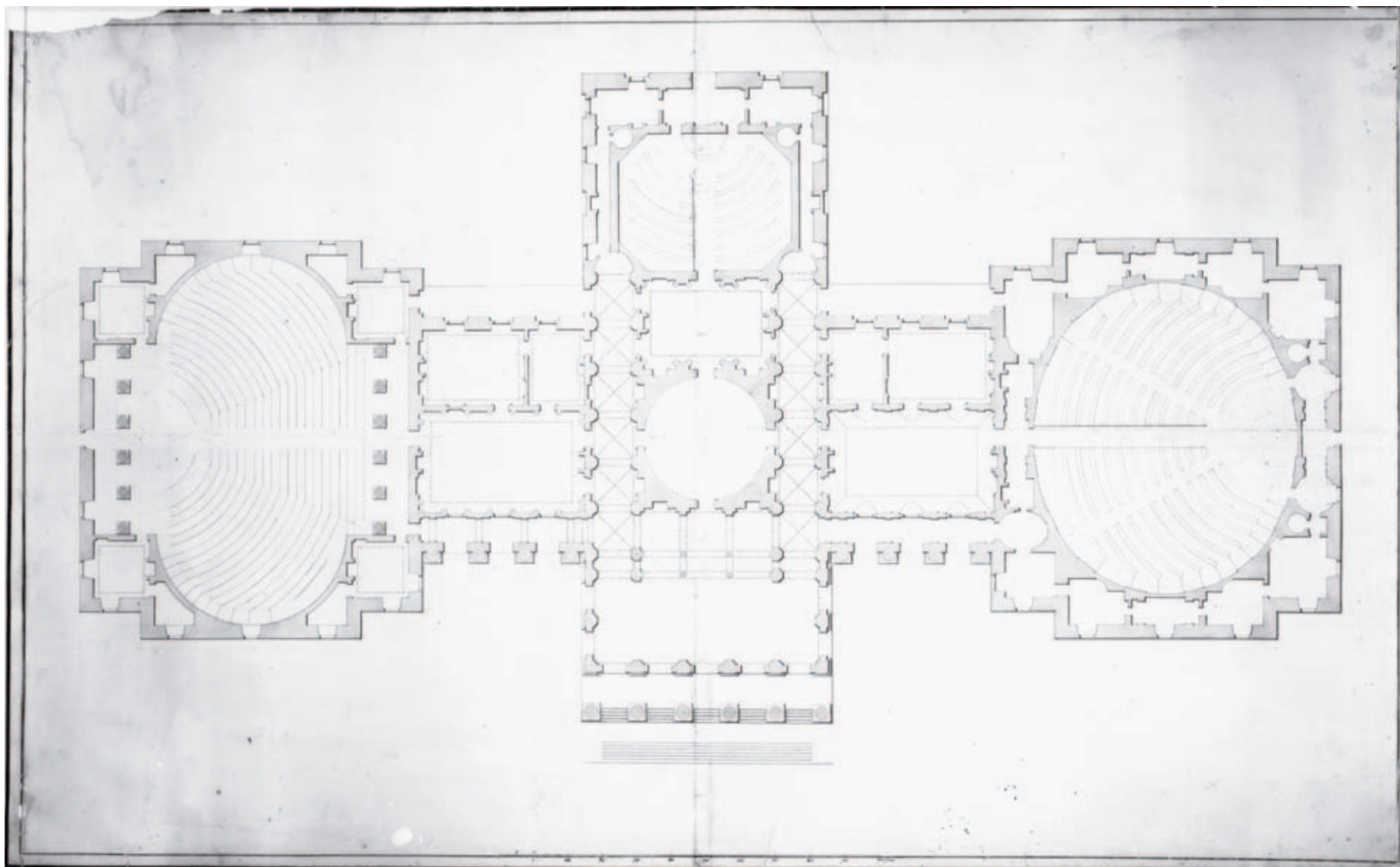
³ *History of the Alexandria Lodge of Free Masons* (1896), quoted in Brown, "History of the Capitol," *American Architect and Building News* 52 (May 23, 1896): 76.

⁴ *Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, No. 89, vol. I, September 25, 1793.



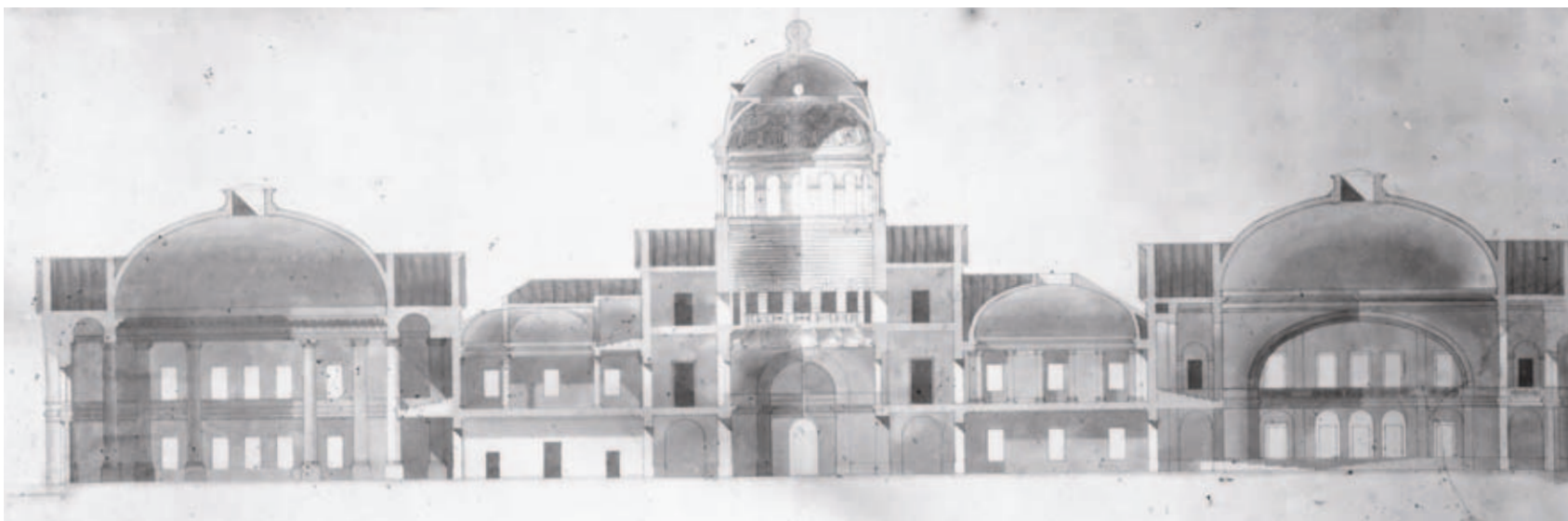
PLAN BY HALLET, SIMILAR TO HIS COMPETITIVE DESIGN.

Plan of the ground and principal floors of the Capitol, 1792. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



DESIGN OF HALLET 1793, PLAN.

Plan of the ground floor for the Capitol, 1793. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



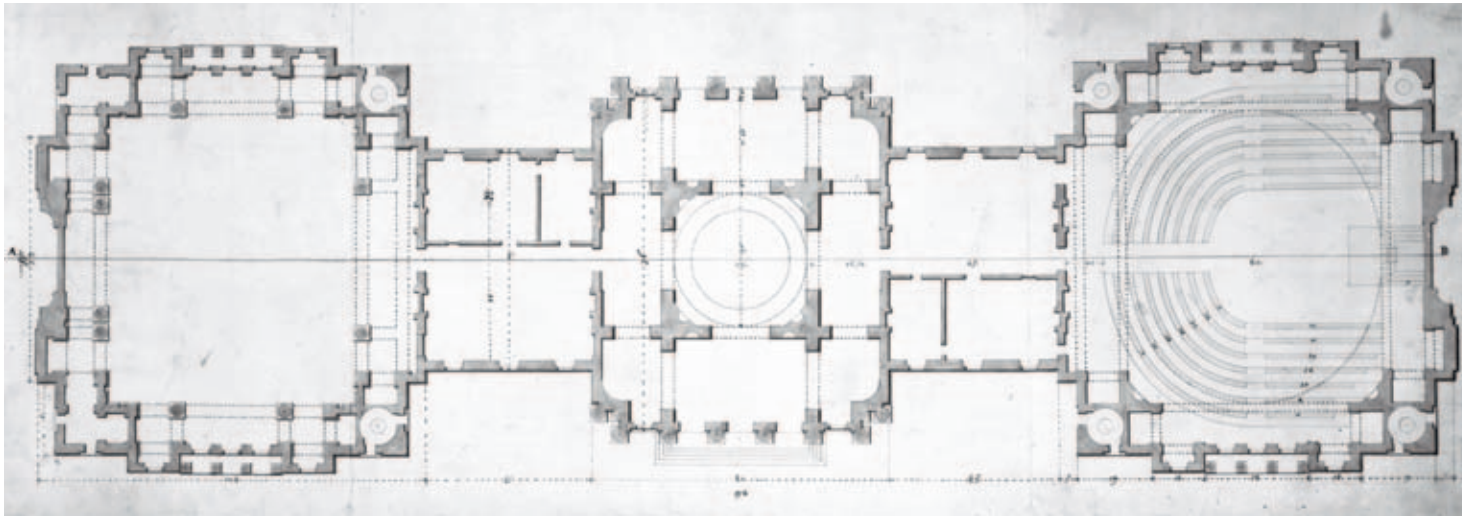
DESIGN OF HALLET 1793, SECTION.

Section of the Capitol, design C4, October 1792. Incorrectly dated by Brown. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



DESIGN OF HALLET 1793, ELEVATION.

Front elevation of the Capitol, design C3, October 1792. Incorrectly dated by Brown. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



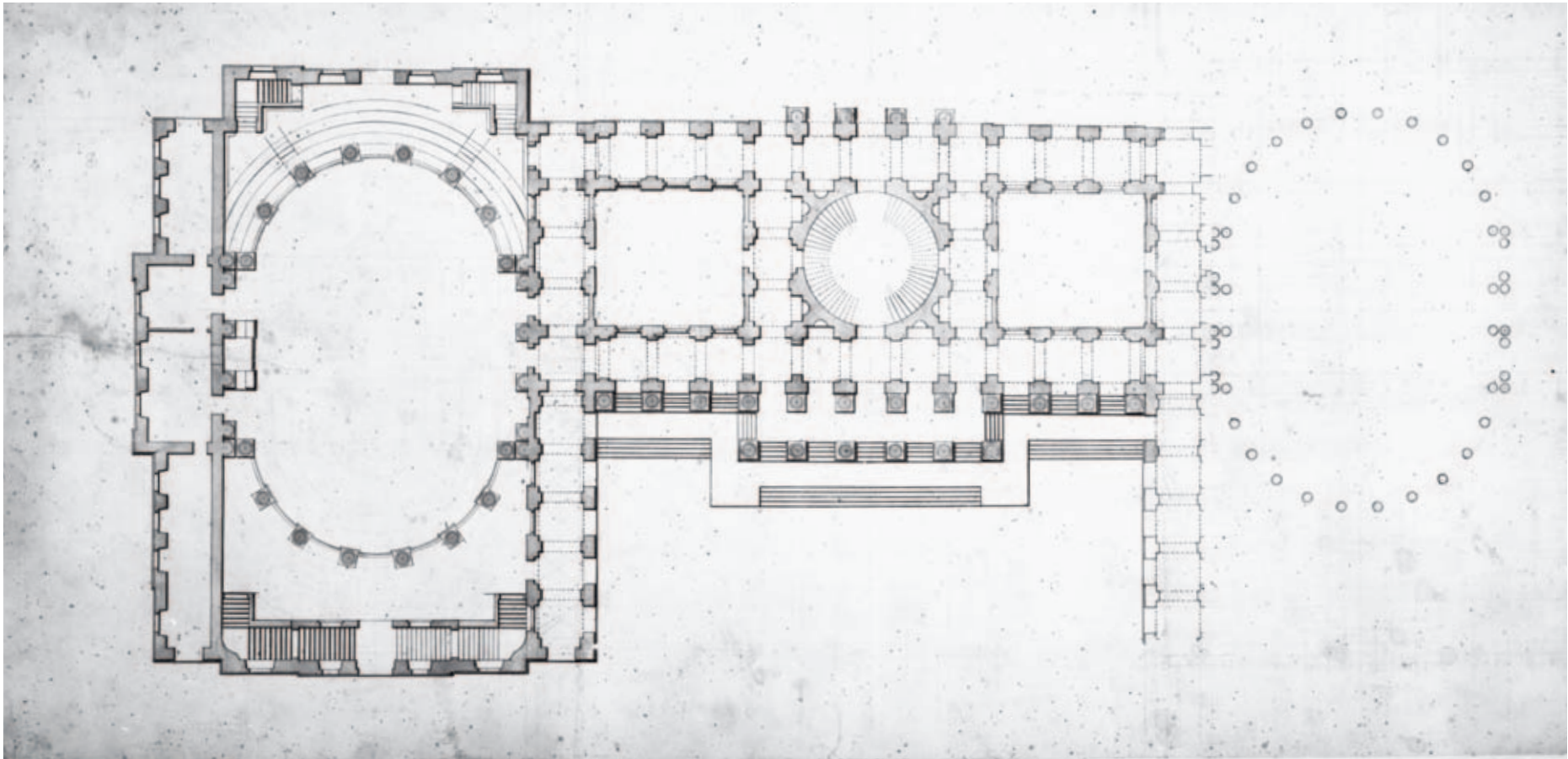
PLAN OF STEPHEN HALLET'S DESIGN 1793.

Plan of design C3 submitted to the District Commissioners, October 1792. Incorrectly dated by Brown. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



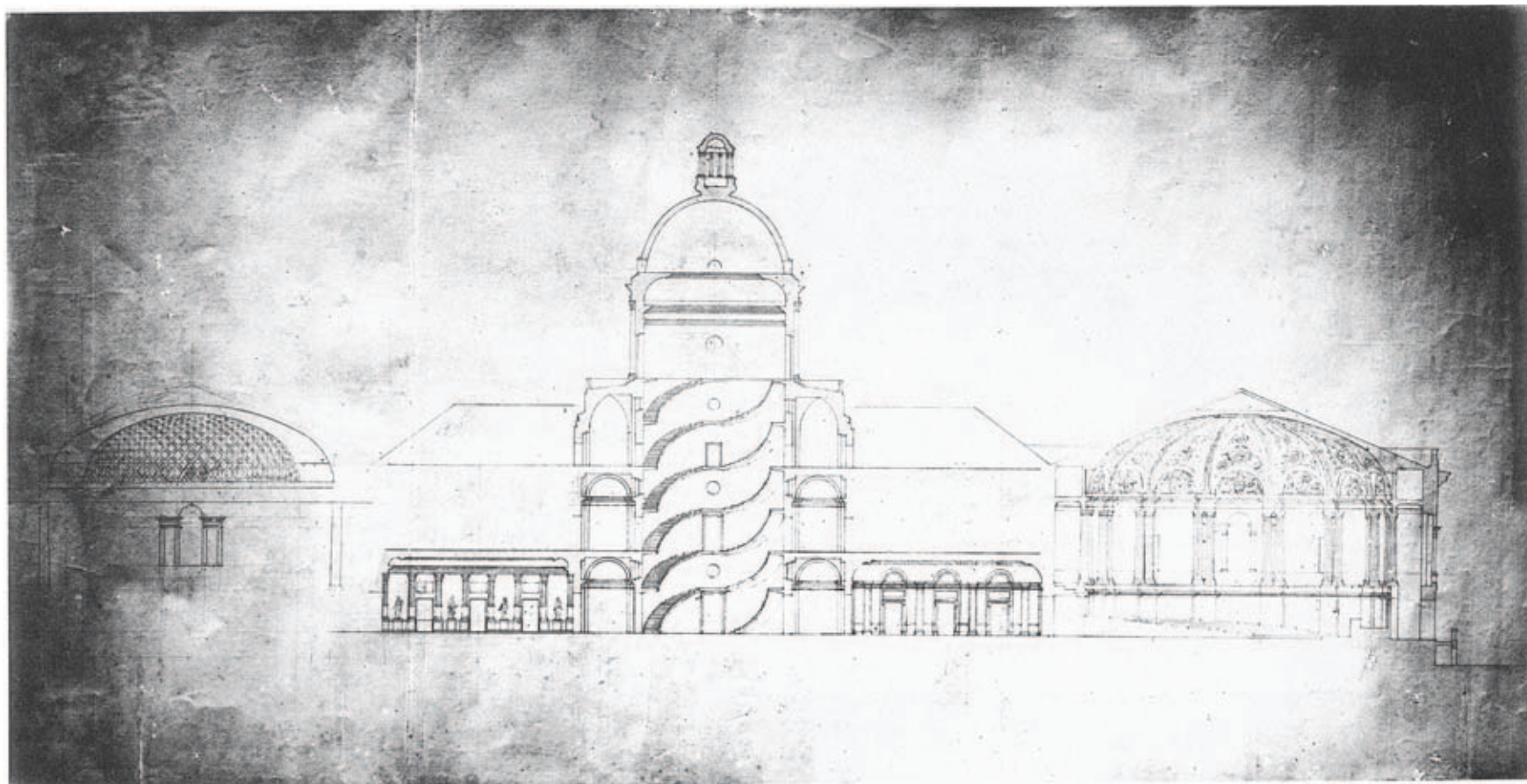
ELEVATION OF STEPHEN HALLET'S DESIGN 1793.

Front elevation of Hallet's 1791 pre-competition design for the Capitol, identified by the District Commissioners as the "fancy piece."
Incorrectly dated by Brown. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



PLAN MADE BY STEPHEN HALLET 1793.

Plan of the 1791 ("fancy piece") pre-competition design for the Capitol. Incorrectly dated by Brown. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



SECTION, STEPHEN HALLET'S DESIGN 1794.

Section, design D2, January 1793. Incorrectly dated by Brown. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



ELEVATION OF STEPHEN HALLET'S DESIGN 1794.

Front elevation, design D2, January 1793. Incorrectly dated by Brown. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*

Washington, where they were met and saluted by No. 15, of the City of Washington, in all their elegant badges and clothing, headed by Bro. Joseph Clarke, R. W. Grand Master, *pro tem.*, and conducted to a large lodge, prepared for the purpose of their reception. After a short space of time, by the vigilance of Bro. Clotworthy Stephenson, Grand Marshal, *pro tem.*, the brotherhood and other bodies were disposed in a second order of procession, which took place amid a brilliant crowd of spectators of both sexes, according to the following arrangement, viz:

“The Surveying Department of the City of Washington.

“Mayor and Corporation of Georgetown.

“Virginia Artillery.

“Commissioners of the City of Washington, and their attendants.

“Stone-cutters, mechanics.

“The Sword-bearers.

“Masons of the First Degree.

“Bible, etc., on grand cushions.

“Deacons, with staffs of office.

“Masons of the Second Degree.

“Stewards, with wands.

“Masons of the Third Degree.

“Wardens, with truncheons.

“Secretaries, with tools of office.

“Past Masters, with their regalia.

“Treasurers, with their jewels.

“Band of music.

“Lodge No. 22, of Virginia, disposed in their own order.

“Corn, wine and oil.

“Grand Master, *pro tem.*, Brother George Washington, and Worshipful Master of No. 22, of Virginia.

“Grand Sword-bearer.

“The procession marched two abreast, in the greatest solemn dignity, with music playing, drums beating, colors flying and spectators rejoicing, from the President’s Square to the Capitol, in the City of Washington, where the Grand Master ordered a halt, and directed each file in the procession to incline two steps, one to the right and one to the left, and face each other, which formed a hollow, oblong square through which the Grand Sword-bearer led the van, followed by the Grand Master, *pro tem.*, on the left, the President of the United States in the centre, and the Worshipful Master of No. 22, Virginia, on the right; all the other orders that composed the procession advanced in the reverse of their order of march from the President’s Square to the southeast corner of the Capitol, and the artillery filed off to a destined ground to display their manoeuvres and discharge their cannon. The President of the United States, the Grand Master, *pro tem.*, and the Worshipful Master of No. 22, taking their stand to the east of a large stone, and all the craft forming a circle westward, stood a short time in solemn order. The artillery discharged a volley. The Grand Marshal delivered the Commissioners a large silver plate with an inscription thereon, which the Commissioners ordered to be read, and was as follows:

“This southeast corner-stone of the Capitol of the United States of America, in the City of Washington, was laid on the eighteenth day of September, 1793, in the thirteenth year of American Independence, in the first year of the second term of the presidency of George Washington, whose virtues in the civil administration of his country have been as conspicuous and beneficial as his military valor and prudence have been useful in establishing her liberties, and in the year of Masonry, 5793, by the President of the United States, in concert with the Grand Lodge of Maryland, several lodges under its jurisdiction, and Lodge No. 22, from Alexandria, Va., Thomas Johnson, David Steuart and Daniel Carroll, Commissioners; Joseph Clark, R. W. Grand Master, *pro tem.*; Joseph Hoban and Stephen Hallate, architects; Collin Williamson, master mason.’

“The artillery discharged a volley. The plate was then delivered to the President, who, attended by the Grand Master, *pro tem.*, and three most Worshipful Masters, descended to the cavazion trench and deposited the plate and laid it on the corner-stone of the Capitol of the United States of America, on which were deposited corn, wine and oil, when the whole congregation joined in reverential prayer, which was succeeded by Masonic chanting honors and a volley from the artillery.⁵

“The President of the United States and his attendant brethren ascended from the cavazion to the east of the corner-stone and there the Grand Master, *pro tem.*, elevated on a triple rostrum, delivered an oration fitting the occasion, which was received with brotherly love and commendation. At intervals during the delivery of the oration several volleys were discharged by the artillery. The ceremony ended in prayer, Masonic chanting honors, and a fifteen-volley from the artillery.

“The whole company retired to an extensive booth, where an ox of 500 pounds’ weight was barbecued, of which the company generally partook, with every abundance of other recreation. The festival concluded with fifteen successive volleys from the artillery, whose military discipline and manoeuvres merit every commendation. Before dark the whole company departed with joyful hopes of the production of their labor.”

From the above description, as well as from the records, it is clear that the corner stone was laid in the southeast corner of the portion of the building now occupied by the Supreme Court, as this was the old north wing.

⁵Brown misquotes the original news account, which said “deposited the plate and laid on it the cornerstone” and not “laid it on the cornerstone.” His source may have been Duncan S. Walker, ed. and comp., *Celebration of the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Laying of the Cornerstone of the Capitol of the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1896), 121–123. This publication made the same error, which was important because it has created confusion over the years concerning the location of the original cornerstone, which had been presumed to be lost.

The inference has been drawn from newspaper description that Hoban and Hallet were Architects of the Capitol; as already stated, the records show that Hoban was appointed superintendent, on November 21, 1793.⁶ Stephen Hallet was appointed a superintendent as assistant to Hoban at the Capitol, with a salary of £400 a year, to be paid quarterly, payments to date from June, 1792. His services were supposed to have begun when he was put to work to dissect Thornton’s plan. During this period Colin Williamson, another competitor, was made superintendent of stone cutters, at a salary of £400, Maryland money, per annum. Thus, apparently, Williamson’s services were rated as equal to those of Hallet.⁷

The walls could not have been at any point above the ground on September 23, 1793, for on that date the commissioners resolved that the inner walls must be of hard brick and the facings of freestone.⁸ The foundation work did not progress very rapidly, for Washington did not agree to this change until the latter part of June, 1794. All the work done during the fall, winter, and spring was below the surface of the ground.

Although Hoban was nominally in charge of the Capitol at this period, he seems, as a matter of fact, to have devoted his whole time to the work on the White House, of which he was both designer and superintendent. Hence Hallet appears to have been left to manage the laying of the foundations according to his own will, and he had the boldness, or foolishness, to change the plans as accepted by the commissioners and the President and lay the foundations of the central portion of the building square instead of circular in accordance with his own ideas [Plate 25].

⁶ The correct date is September 23, as Brown noted in the first paragraph of this chapter.

⁷ Commissioners to Stephen Hallet, July 30, 1794, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

⁸ Proceedings, September 23, 1793, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

Several times in June, 1794, the commissioners urge Hallet to complete working drawings and reprimand him for carelessness and changes in Thornton's plans.⁹ The tone of their letters shows decided dissatisfaction and the drawings show a lack of appreciation, judging from the return to the original idea, of the good features of the plan and a total inability to grasp the refined design of the work given him for execution [Plates 25, 26, 27]. On June 26 the commissioners wrote a letter to Hallet which aptly describes the case at this period. This letter was in answer to a statement of Hallet's that he thought they had given him power to do as he saw fit. The commissioners say:

"In general, nothing has gone from us by which we intended or we believe you could infer that you had the chief direction of executing the work of the Capitol, or that you or anybody else were to introduce into the building any departures from Dr. Thornton's plan, without the President's or the commissioner's approbation.

"Mr. Hoban was employed here before our acquaintance began with you, more especially as chief over the President's House, of which he was fortunate enough to produce a plan which met with general, I may say almost universal, favor, and to extend his superintendence to any other public building we might require. We claimed his services as superior at the Capitol, and this was explained so fully last fall on the spot, with the addition that you were to communicate with him and be governed by his directions, that we flattered ourselves that the line of each was perfectly understood. It is painful to have these things to reiterate, and we do request that you will signify by letter your understanding of our agreement to this line, for we can not trust the same

piece of business to the direction of two heads capable of pursuing different wills. We shall soon separate. Hence a speedy answer will oblige.

"THOS. JOHNSON,

"DANL. CARROLL,

"DD. STUART,

*"Commissioners."*¹⁰

Hallet sent in his resignation because the commissioners insisted on his carrying out the adopted plans. This resignation was not accepted, although he seems to have ceased to perform his duties. Hallet refused to give up the drawings in his possession. November 15, 1794, Hallet was discharged because he laid parts of the foundations not in accordance with the accepted plans without the commissioners being able to get possession of the drawings. The last we hear of Hallet is the allowance of a small claim for services against the Government, June 10, 1795.¹¹

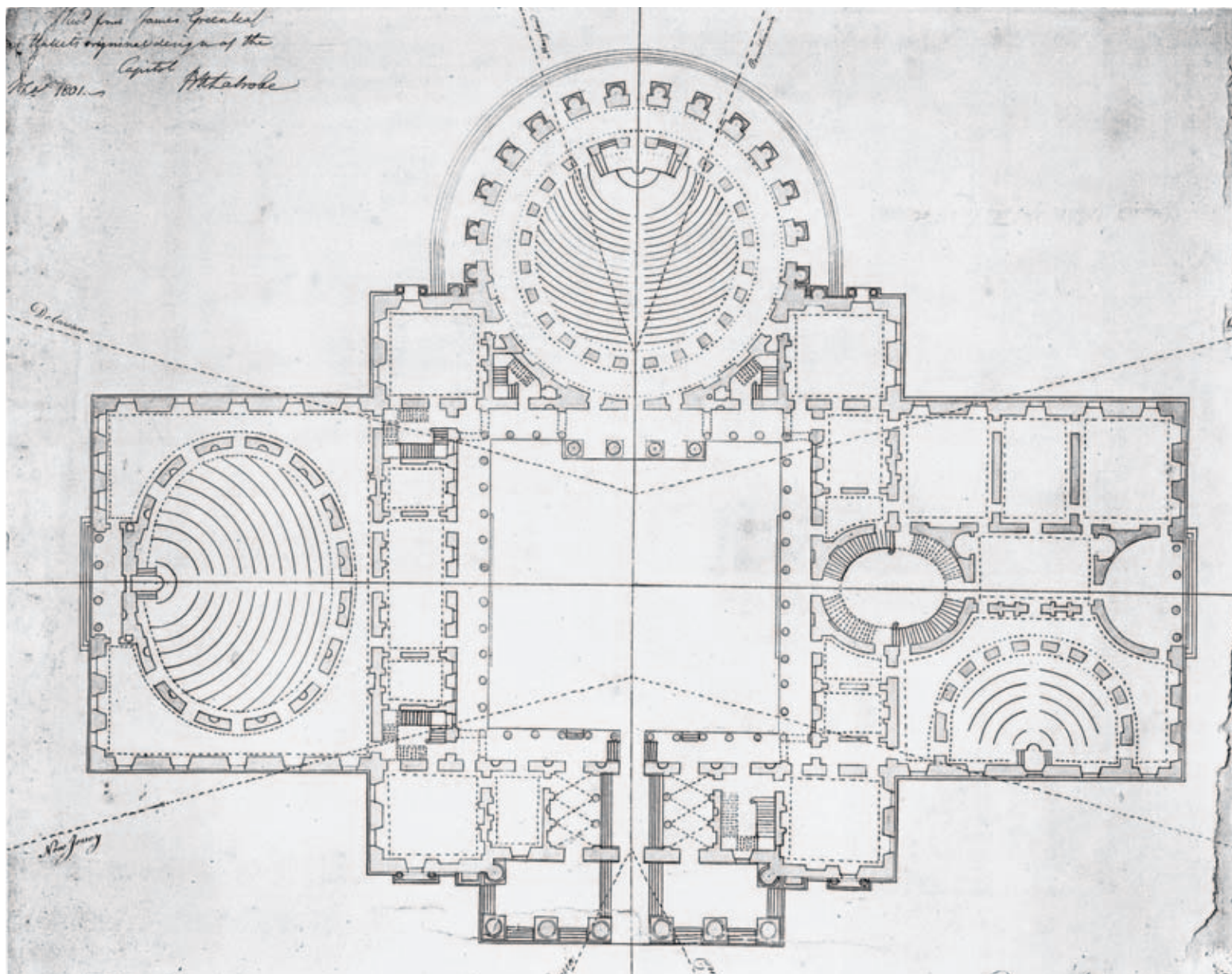
There has been in recent years a persistent reiteration of the statement that Hallet, and not Thornton, was architect of the old Capitol. This statement can be traced to G. A. Townsend's book, *Washington Inside and Out*, and to an article in the *International Review* by J. Q. Howard, published 1874.¹² The foregoing history, taken directly from the official record, proves: First, that Hallet after exceptional opportunities could not produce a satisfactory design; that the alterations he was allowed to make in Thornton's work consisted in reducing the scale; that he was employed only as an assistant superintendent and draftsman, and because he attempted to overstep these bounds he was

⁹ Commissioners to Hallet, June 24 and 26, 1794, RG 42, DCC, NARA. The commissioners did insist on Hallet's adherence to the agreed upon plan and on his subordination to Hoban, but Brown's charge of carelessness is exaggerated.

¹⁰ Commissioners to Hallet, June 26, 1794, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

¹¹ Hallet's discharge is discussed in *Proceedings*, June 22–28, 1794, and July 29, 1794, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

¹² A reference to George A. Townsend's *Washington Outside and Inside* and James Q. Howard's "The Architects of the American Capitol."

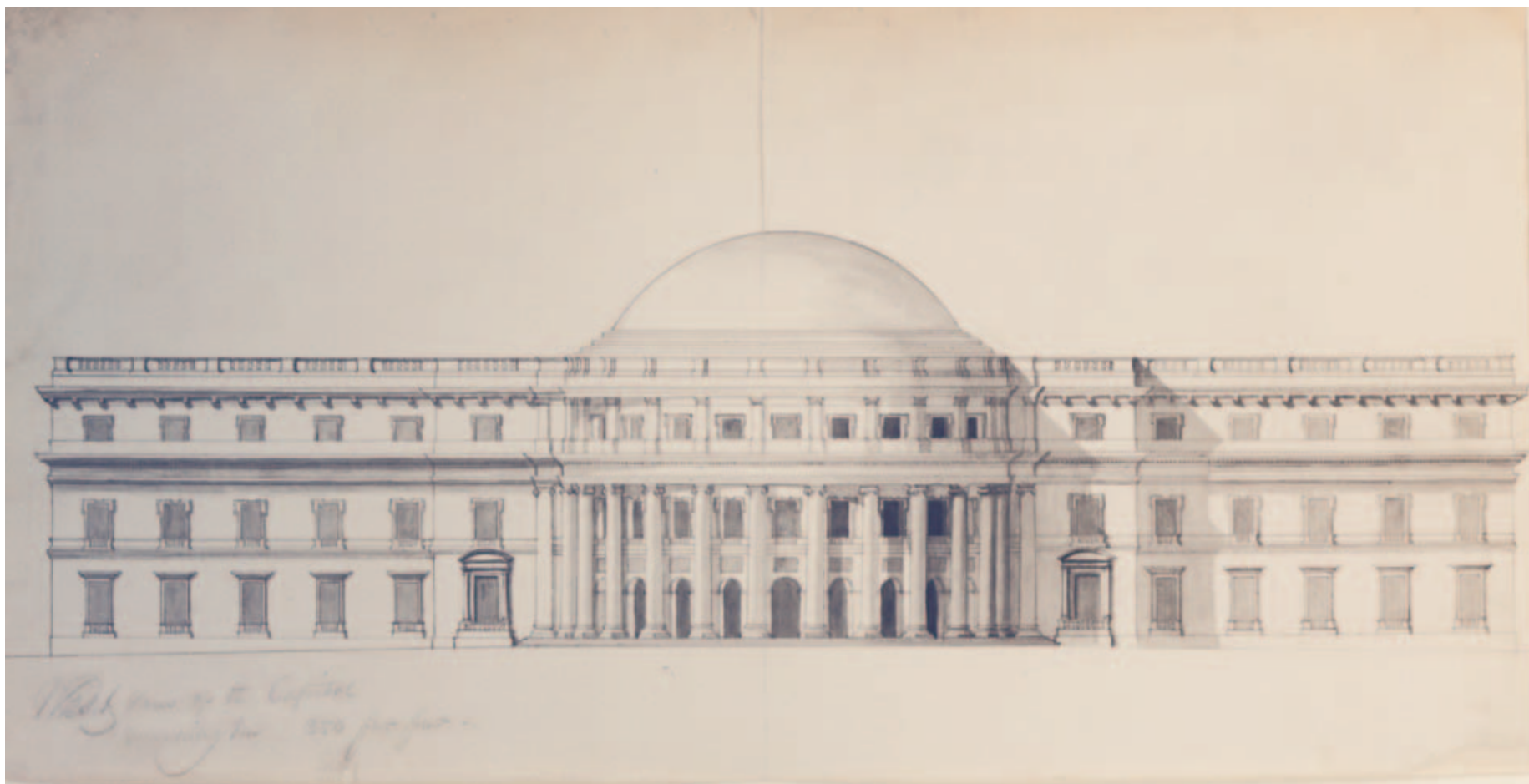


HALLET'S MODIFICATION OF THORNTON'S DESIGN, BY CHANGE IN CENTER PLAN.

Hallet's plan used for laying the foundation of the Capitol between August 1793 and June 1794. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



HALLET'S MODIFICATION OF THORNTON'S DESIGN, EAST ELEVATION.
Unsigned drawing, ca. 1795, sometimes attributed to Hadfield, of the east front of the Capitol. MHS.



HALLET'S MODIFICATION OF THORNTON'S DESIGN, WEST ELEVATION.
Unsigned drawing, ca. 1795, sometimes attributed to Hadfield, of the west front of the Capitol. *MHS*.

discharged. Thornton, in a letter, gives Hallet the credit of offering some “judicious suggestions,” which is more than the records show, “but in most of his attempts he did an injury.” “He diminished the Senate Chamber, which is now too small. He laid square the foundation of the center building [see Fig. 25] excluding the Dome, and when General Washington saw the extent of the alterations he expressed his disapproval in a style of such warmth as his dignity seldom permitted.”¹³

The President appointed Thornton to be one of the three commissioners in charge of the District of Columbia, September 12, 1794. At this period Andrew Ellicott, who was engineer in charge of laying out the streets and lots, congratulates Thornton and rejoices in the appointment, for the good of the streets and buildings, saying that the former commissioners were totally ignorant and easy prey. He warns Thornton to be on his guard. Washington when he made this appointment requested Thornton to restore the Capitol so that it would correspond with his original plan.

I have been fortunate enough to find several of Thornton’s drawings which relate to this period of the building. These plans Thornton, Washington, and Jefferson considered the original design which won the competition, modified in scale so as to reduce the cost.¹⁴ These drawings were given to Latrobe after he was appointed Architect and were not the working drawings, both Hallet and Hadfield when they

¹³ William Thornton to the Members of the House of Representatives, January 1, 1805, vols. 3–4, William Thornton Papers, Manuscript Division, LC. This letter describes Thornton’s involvement in the design of the Capitol. It was printed and circulated to the members of the House while Thornton was engaged in a dispute with Benjamin Henry Latrobe over major interior design changes.

¹⁴ Brown’s discovery and publication of Thornton’s Capitol plans, developed between 1796 and 1802, was a major contribution. However, his comment that the difference in Thornton’s original competition drawing, which was lost, and the modified plans actually built only applies to the design of the exterior walls of the Capitol’s original wings is incorrect. Significant modifications of the plans had been contributed by Hallet and Hadfield.

were discharged having taken the larger part of the working drawings with them.¹⁵ The following indorsements were put on these drawings by Latrobe:

“Plans of Capitol received from Dr. Thornton [Plate 28].

“H. B. LATROBE.

“APRIL, 1804.”

“Given to me by George Blagden as the only existing drawing of the Capitol [Plate 29].

“H. B. LATROBE.

“MAY 4, 1803.”

When Thornton again took charge the work was below the ground.¹⁶ He drew another elevation “presenting the general ideas, but making such alterations as the difference in dimensions of the ground plan rendered necessary. I improved the appearance and restored the Dome” [Plates 28 to 33].¹⁷

A drawing showing Thornton’s east elevation which belongs to these plans has been recently discovered in the Congressional Library [Plate 30], and one of the west front, on which Thornton was evidently

¹⁵ Correspondence between Thornton and his fellow commissioners concerning plans for the Capitol during James Hoban’s superintendence indicated that he expected the superintendent to prepare the working drawings, such as the sections Hoban requested and any future “decorative drawings.” See Gustavus Scott and Alexander White to William Thornton, April 17, 1799, and Thornton to Scott and White, April 17, 1799, William Thornton Papers, vols. 3–4, Manuscript Division, LC.

¹⁶ The District commissioners were responsible for supervising construction of the Capitol, not Thornton alone as Brown implies. All decisions required the approval of at least two commissioners. See “An Act for Establishing the Temporary and Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States,” 1 Stat. 130, July 17, 1790.

¹⁷ William Thornton to the Members of the House of Representatives, January 1, 1805, vols. 3–4, William Thornton Papers, Manuscript Division, LC.

making an alternate scheme for a dome in place of the simple Greek dome shown on the other drawing, as well as omitting the windows shown on plans for the west projection [Plate 31]. The author has made a restoration of the west front showing the dome similar to the dome shown on the east, and inserting the pilasters and windows which are shown on the plans [Plate 32].¹⁸

The view [Plate 33] is taken from the margin of a map by Robert King, published about 1803, although the exact date is missing. "East front of the Capitol of the United States as originally designed by William Thornton and adopted by General Washington, President of the United States," is the title of this engraving.¹⁹

This statement is an error, as this is not a reproduction of the original or competitive drawing, but it is the design made by Thornton after Hallet was discharged.

Plate 34 is reproduction of an enlarged drawing of the Senate wing by Thornton. Among Thornton's papers I found the following notes in his handwriting on this modification of the competitive plan. The sizes mentioned show that it relates to the building as it was finally erected. The drawing referred to in the descriptions was colored:

¹⁸ For an analysis and overview of past reconstructions of Thornton's Capitol design, see Don Alexander Hawkins, "William Thornton's Lost Design of the United States Capitol: A Study and Reconstruction," unpublished paper, Curator's Office, AOC. Based on an analysis of drawings and records, Hawkins challenges the accuracy of Brown's reconstruction. Brown's major errors included changing Thornton's orders for the columns, adding pedestal blocks, and introducing doubled pilasters at the inside corners where the wings and pavilions met. Brown probably erred in his reference to a "Greek dome" since Thornton's inspiration for the Capitol design was clearly a Roman temple. See C. M. Harris, "Classical Themes Inspired Design for U.S. Capitol," *Capitol Dome* 24 (February 1989): 1-3.

¹⁹ Brown was referring to Robert King's map of Washington, published in 1818, which included engraved views of the Capitol and the President's House. Engraved by C. Schwarz, Geography and Map Division, LC. The map is reproduced in John Reys, *Washington on View: The Nation's Capital Since 1790* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 67.

"GROUND PLAN.

- "A. Depository under Dome. [Thick wall.]
- "B. Room under antechamber. H, R.
- "C. Vestibule to Senate Chamber.
- "D. Under. E, D.
- "E, E, E, E. Offices, clerks' and committee rooms.
- "Suggests covered carriage way.
- "I, I, I. Platform. K, K. Stairs.
- "L, L, L. Windows in M, M, M, water-closets.
- "N, N. Niches. O, O. Fireplaces.
- "Q, Q, Q. Passage [illumination by transoms].
- "R. Recess.

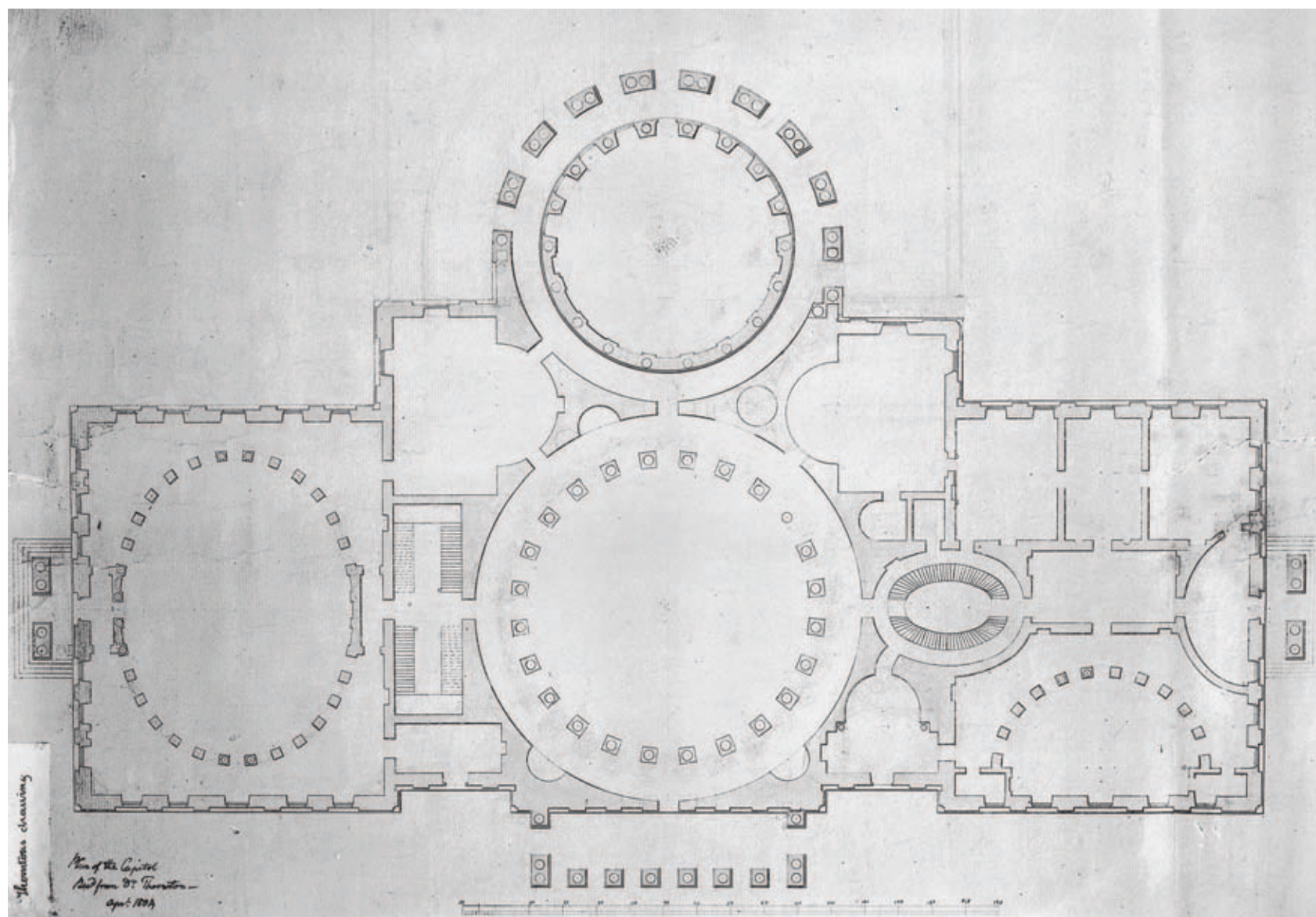
Feet.

- "The extreme length of plan is352
- "The extreme breadth of plan is221
- "Height of basement story20

"PLAN NO. 2.

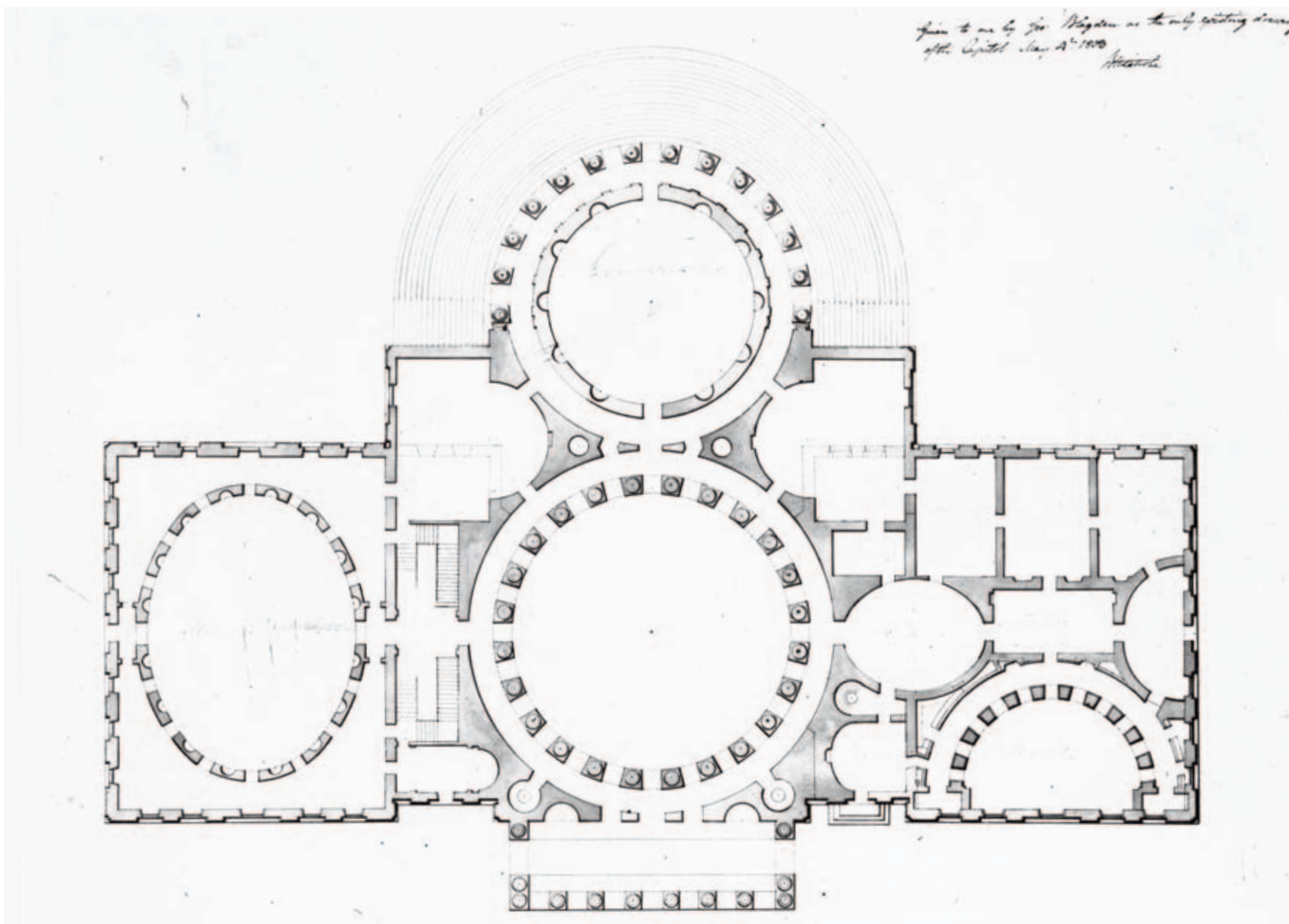
- "A. Center of Dome. Dome supported by columns 30 feet high.
- "All interior decorations should be of white marble. [No marble in this country yet of sufficiently good quality.] The very best workmanship and material should be used.
- "B, B. Landing of east stairs.
- "C. The Executive Department. [To be heated by two ornamental urns.]
- "D, D. Passages.
- "E, E. Closets.
- "F. Water-closets.
- "G, G. Great Conference room." ²⁰

²⁰ Thornton to the Commissioners, 1793, vols. 3-4, William Thornton Papers, Manuscript Division, LC.



THORNTON'S MODIFIED PLAN.

Double column plan of the Capitol, ca. 1796. Prints and Photographs Division, LC.



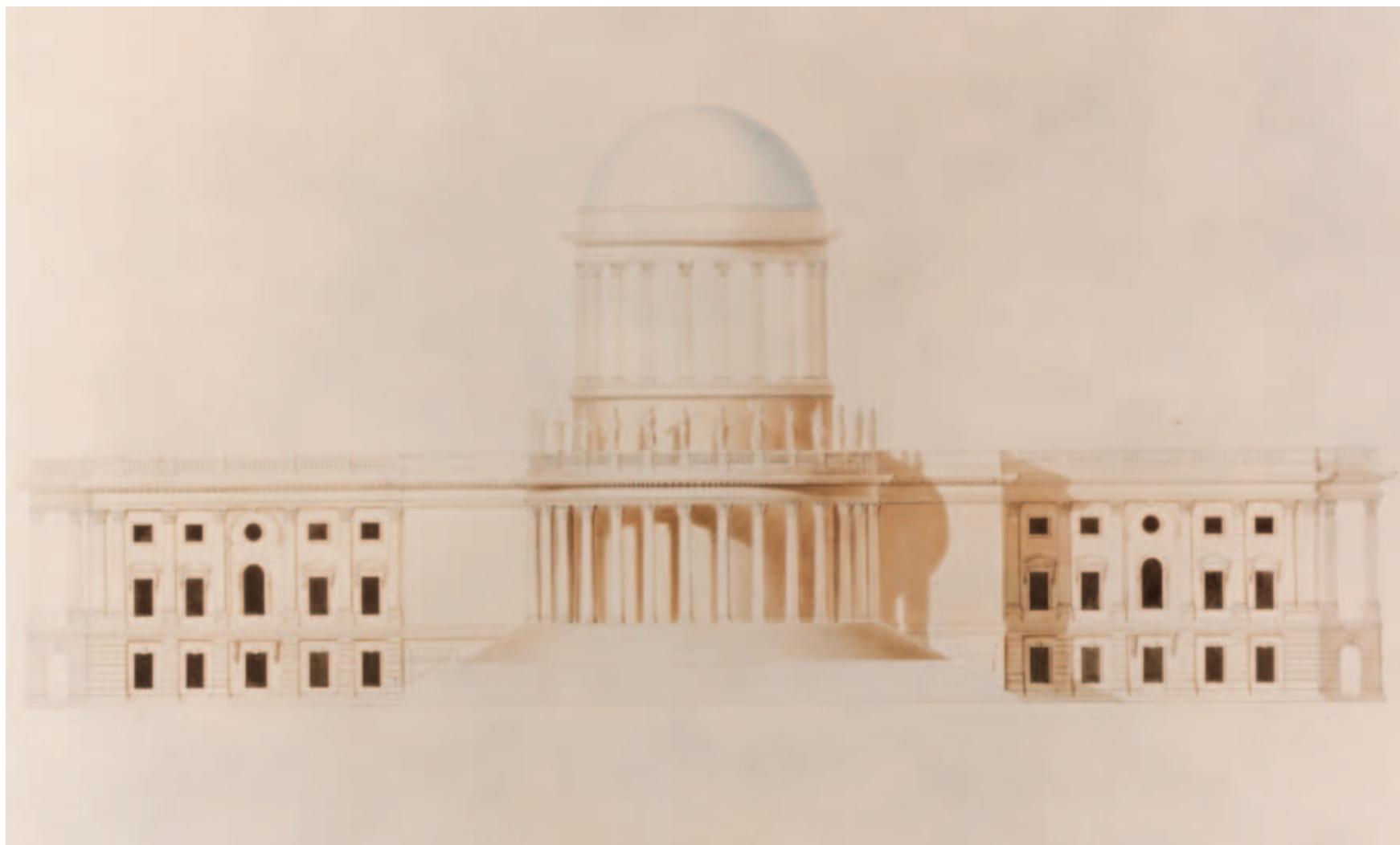
THORNTON'S MODIFIED PLAN.

Single column plan of the Capitol, ca. 1796. Prints and Photographs Division, LC.



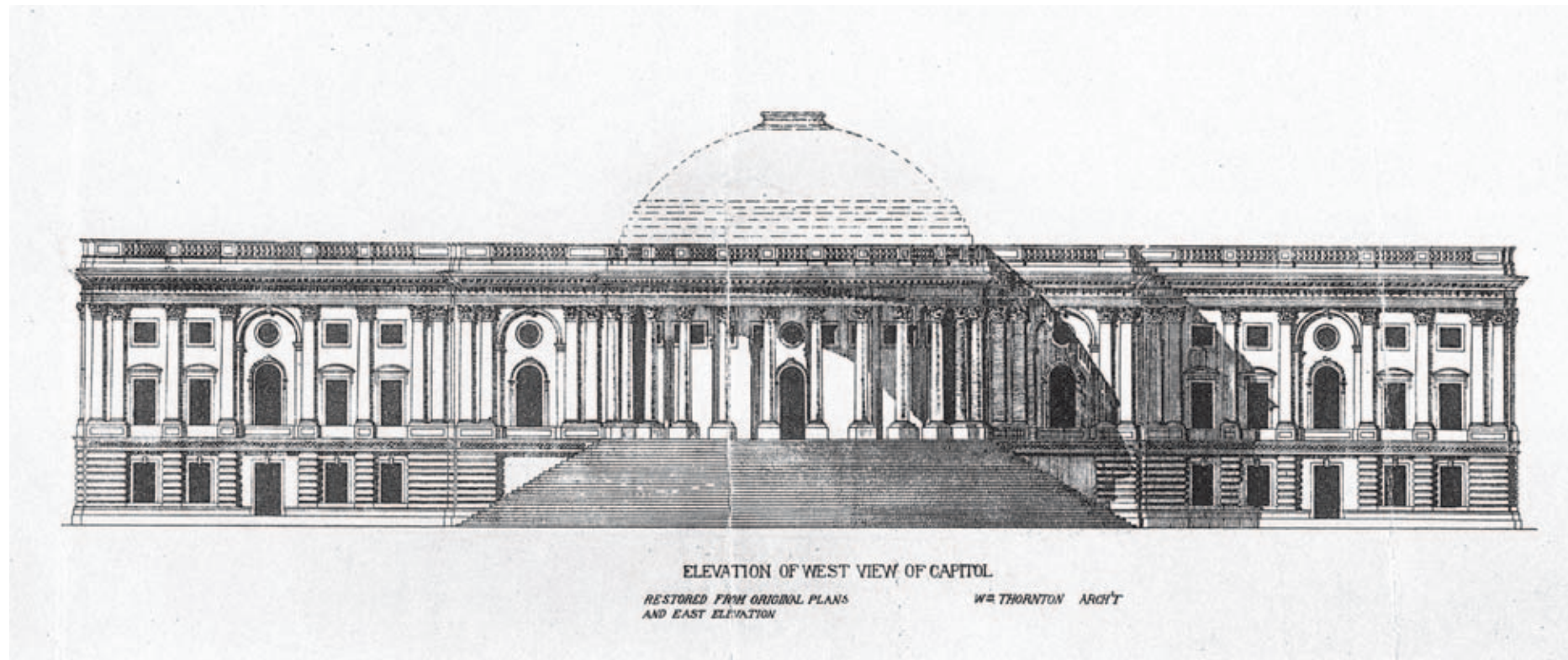
EAST ELEVATION, WM. THORNTON ARCHITECT.

Ca. 1796. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



THORNTON'S WEST ELEVATION, SHOWING ALTERNATE DESIGN FOR DOME.

Ca. 1796. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*



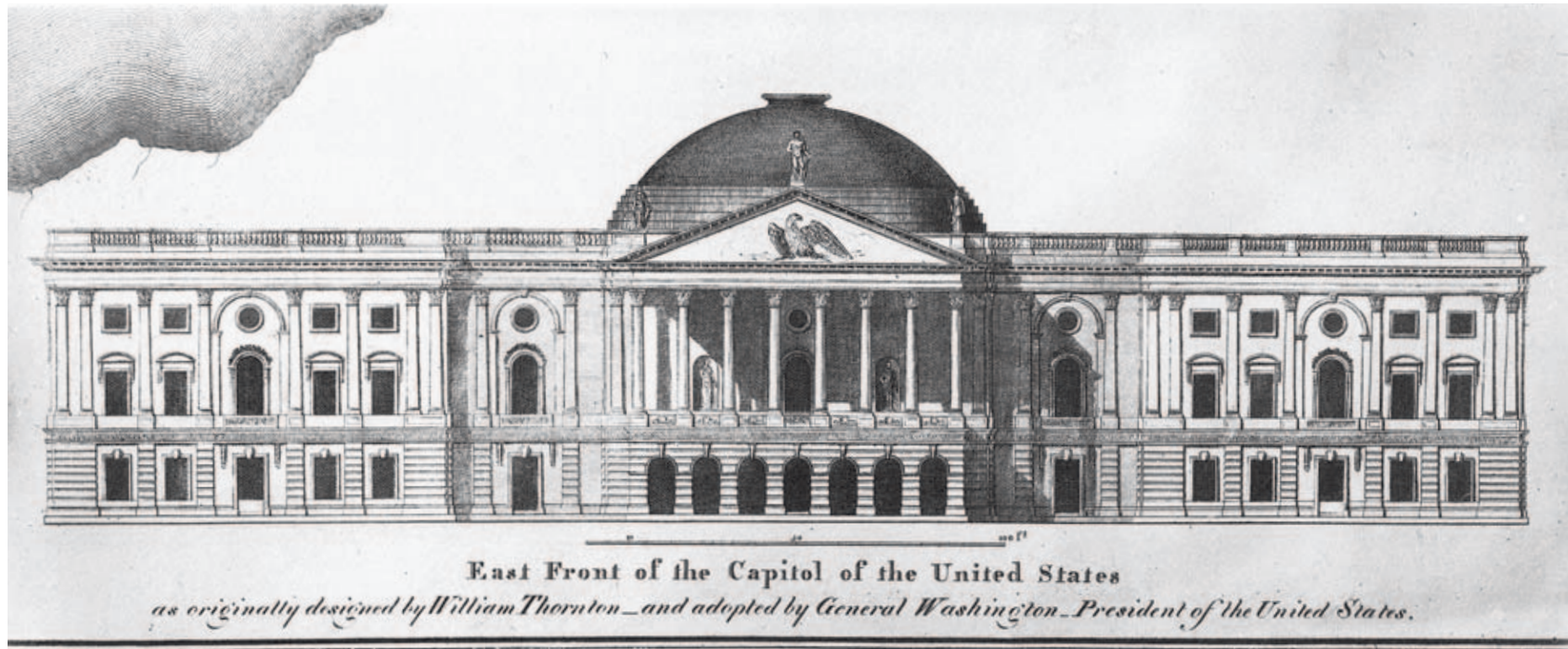
ELEVATION OF WEST VIEW OF CAPITOL

RESTORED FROM ORIGINAL PLANS
AND EAST ELEVATION

W. THORNTON ARCHT

WEST ELEVATION, THORNTON'S DESIGN.

Drawing of William Thornton's intended design for the west front by Glenn Brown, 1900. *Location unknown.*



EAST ELEVATION, BY WM. THORNTON.

Detail from a map of Washington, D.C., published by Robert King in 1818. *Geography and Map Division, LC.*



THORNTON'S DRAWING FOR EAST FRONT OF SENATE WING.

East elevation of the north wing of the Capitol, ca. 1795–96. *Prints and Photographs Division, LC.*

The square foundation laid by Hallet in the center of the building was removed, portions of this foundation being left as a base for the temporary structure afterwards erected to accommodate the House of Representatives [Plate 25]. In this way the last of Hallet's changes were obliterated.²¹

Under the management of Thornton as a commissioner of Federal buildings and Hoban as superintendent, the work progressed rapidly and satisfactorily. December, 1794, James Reid, James Smith, and George Walker contracted to furnish stone and James Dobson made a contract to lay the stone.²² In March, 1795, Thornton's fellow commissioners desired him to go to the President, "with whom he had many conferences with reference to this subject," and get a decision from him in reference to the cost and material to be used, their determination being to push the Capitol this season (1795) beyond other measures.²³ Hoban became restive under the continual calls made upon him for additional service without extra compensation. His letters and actions had always shown that he thought the commissioners were requiring too much in having him superintend both the President's House and Capitol. Consequently, on April 30, 1795, the following agreement was made: "The commissioners agree with James Hoban to take upon himself the superintendence of the said building [the Capitol] for the

whole of the present building season unless sooner discharged by the consent of the board. They also agree to allow said James Hoban 25 guineas per month extra wages for his attention to the Capitol, his wages to commence from this day."²⁴ June 3, 1795, Colin Williamson, master mason, was dismissed for inefficiency. In the autumn of 1795 the basement, or first story above the ground, of the north wing was about complete.

John Trumbull, United States minister to England, wrote to the commissioners, September 13, 1794, when he heard of Hallet's resignation, recommending George Hadfield as an architect of great merit. January 2, 1795, the commissioners—Thornton at this time being one of the board—offered Hadfield, through Minister John Trumbull, £300 and traveling expenses for his services "as superintendent of the Capitol." In this letter they state that "the conduct of Mr. Hallet was capricious and obstinate; his refusal to deliver up such sections of the Capitol as are wanting obliged the late commissioners to discharge him."²⁵ March 9, 1795, Trumbull gave Hadfield a letter of introduction to Thornton, in which he says: "I had before understood that your design had been generally adopted. I am glad to learn that I was rightly informed, as I should have been mortified to have known that so noble a plan had been passed by. . . I have known him [Hadfield] at least ten years and have seen in him nothing to diminish my esteem. He is modest, unassuming, and correct in his taste and judgment, and should any difficulties occur in the executive part of the plan he will state them with candor."²⁶ Developments in Hadfield's career show that Trumbull

²¹ The square foundation, laid for the central section of the building, was not used for the south [House] wing foundation as Brown implies. Both the "Oven," a temporary brick structure erected in 1801 as a meeting room for the House of Representatives, and a wooden passage 145 feet long connecting the temporary House Chamber to the north wing were razed in 1804 to clear the site for the construction of Latrobe's south wing. See Allen, *The United States Capitol: A Brief Architectural History* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1991), 5.

²² Proceedings, December 20, 1794, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

²³ Commissioners to Edmund Randolph, March 20, 1795, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

²⁴ Proceedings, April 27, 1795, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

²⁵ The quoted letter is to George Washington and not George Hadfield as Brown implies. See Commissioners to George Hadfield, January 2, 1795; Commissioners to President George Washington, January 29, 1795, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

²⁶ Trumbull to Commissioners, March 9, 1795, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

was sadly mistaken in his estimate of his friend's character. George Hadfield received his appointment October 15, 1795, as superintendent of the Capitol, and he had no sooner taken his place than he recommended numerous alterations and additions, among them being the addition of an attic story to the building.²⁷ November 18, 1795, Dr. Thornton and James Hoban opposed Hadfield's suggestions as impractical, and the matter was referred to the President.²⁸ Hadfield waited upon Washington, who received the suggestions with so little favor that Hadfield resigned. He soon reconsidered his resignation and was reappointed, a special stipulation being made "that he was engaged to superintend the execution of the plan without alteration." Hoban's services, except when called in consultation, ceased upon the appointment of Hadfield, Hoban acting as superintendent of the President's House and Hadfield as superintendent of the Capitol. Judging from orders, letters, and reports, they were considered to have positions of equal importance. Each had a salary of \$1,400 a year, paid in quarterly installments.

During the year 1795 the question as to the proper treatment of the terrace was under discussion, and Thornton recommended a flight of circular steps, conforming with his circular portico on this front of the Capitol.

May 31, 1796, the commissioners wrote that they can not guard against imposition, as they are not able at present, on account of lack

of houses, to live in Washington; therefore they must depend upon the superintendent and "undertaker" or builder.²⁹ Hadfield's early experience does not seem to have taught him discretion. On June 29 he informed the commissioners that he would quit the public service at the end of the three months' notice required by his contract. The commissioners seem to have been quite independent at this period, for they informed Hadfield that he could quit as soon as he pleased, and that they would pay him a sum equal to his passage to Europe.³⁰ Upon the receipt of this determined reply Hadfield withdrew his notice and agreed to attend to the Capitol according to methods approved by the President. The commissioners allowed him to stay on sufferance, retaining the advantage which he had given them by his serving three months' notice. From this time until the end of his service everything seems to have run with comparative smoothness. Orders and letters indicate simply an inspection of materials and workmanship and the making of reports, contracts, and estimates of the work as it progressed.

Contracts were made early in January, 1797, with Middleton, Belt, Bennett, Fenwick, and Marshall Waring to furnish brick and Alan Wiley to do all brickwork for the season. We also learn that brickwork in this year was discontinued as early as November.³¹

The commissioners determined to omit the ventilating flues for the galleries of the Senate, and Thornton records his dissent June 30, 1797.³² January, 1798, Thornton puts on record the following protest against the workmanship of the cornice, north front (this is in the

²⁷ Brown implies that Hadfield intended to make the Capitol a four-story building. In fact, Hadfield attempted to solve the design problem of Thornton's plan for locating the House and Senate Chambers on the ground level by adding an attic story and lowering the exterior architectural order to begin at the first floor. This gave the ground level first floor greater prominence. George Hadfield, Curator's Office, AOC.

²⁸ Commissioners to the President of the United States, November 18, 1795, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

²⁹ Commissioners to the President of the United States, May 31, 1796, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

³⁰ Commissioners to the President of the United States, June 29, 1796, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

³¹ Proceedings, January 25, 1797, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

³² Brown uses the term "ventilating flues" for fireplace chimneys. Proceedings, June 20, 1797, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

portion of the building where the present Supreme Court room is situated), “which includes the modillions, and which are now worked, but not put up—be rejected and worked anew on account of the irregularity of the present work, it being not in order but deviating from the true proportion, and, the board having given a negative to the same, I do hereby enter my protest against their proceeding, because this imperfection will remain a disgrace to the building, because it can be substituted without any loss of time, . . . and, finally, because it can never be renewed or corrected, but will forever remain a laughingstock to architects.”³³ Thornton was overruled in this as well as in another protest which he made, against the use of pine for doors—he desired mahogany. Thornton was always the advocate of good construction and material, but his confrères did not always uphold him when his plans caused an increase in the first cost. The errors against which Thornton protested were undoubtedly caused by the inefficiency or carelessness of Hadfield.³⁴

On May 10, 1798, the commissioners gave Hadfield another three months’ notice that they would discharge him.³⁵ He did not apparently wait for his three months to expire, for on May 28 the following letter was sent to Hoban: “Ordered that James Hoban take upon himself the superintendence of the Capitol, and that he remove to reside there as soon as possible, and, until possession can be had of the house now occupied by Mr. Hadfield, that the board will pay the rent of any house he may engage near the building.” They gave Hoban a double salary until June 9, “and until roof is on President’s House he is to receive in

³³ Proceedings, January 10, 1798, RG 42, DCC, NARA. Thornton’s criticism reflected a minor change in the design of the caissons between the modillions.

³⁴ Hadfield had no control over the funds for the building. Moreover, Brown attaches far more importance to Thornton’s criticism than seems warranted.

³⁵ Brown misdated this letter. Commissioners to Hadfield, May 18, 1798, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

addition to the \$1,400 for Capitol superintendence 100 guineas per annum for directing operations at the President’s House.”³⁶ Hadfield’s official discharge was made June, 1798. The reason given was that he refused to give up the drawings of the Executive offices.³⁷

In the latter part of 1798 the minor rooms in the old north wing were ready for plastering and the work in the principal rooms was progressing rapidly.

We constantly see it mentioned that Hadfield was one of the architects of the Capitol, but the records show explicitly that he was only employed to superintend the erection of Thornton’s design and plan, and although he made suggestions, none of them were adopted. Hadfield was, furthermore, inefficient as a superintendent. Among Thornton’s papers is a statement saying that Hadfield acknowledged that he had never superintended either a public or private building before his employment on the Capitol.³⁸ Thornton states that he (Hadfield) was entirely incompetent from a practical point of view. Some years later, when Latrobe wished to prove that Thornton’s plan had been materially changed, he wrote as follows to Hadfield: “If you could go over your drawings and ascertain what is his [Thornton’s] in the plan now said to be the original plan, I should be infinitely obliged to you, . . . if in any

³⁶ Commissioners to Hoban, May 28, 1798, and Commissioners to Secretary of State, June 25, 1798, RG 42, DCC, NARA. The tone of the letter to Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson was undoubtedly influenced by Thornton: “We believe Mr. Hadfield to be a young man of taste, but we have found him extremely deficient in practical knowledge as an architect so much so, that we have often been obliged to interpose with respect to his mode of carrying on the Building, and to spend much time in dispensing the measures which we deemed exceptionable.”

³⁷ Commissioners to Hadfield, June 1798, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

³⁸ Brown may be referring to an undated draft letter of 1798 in which Thornton wrote: “I asked if he [Hadfield] had ever undertaken any building, public or private, he answered no.” Vols. 1–2, William Thornton Papers (Microfilm Reel 1), Manuscript Division, LC.

way it can lead to the removal of the load of calumny with which you have been treated.”³⁹

What more advantageous opportunity could Hadfield have desired to present his claims? That there is no foundation for such assertions is proved by the fact that neither specific claims nor proofs were presented at this time. In the portions of a pamphlet published by Hadfield in 1819, which I have seen, he makes no claim in reference to having any of his own ideas incorporated in the plan or design of the building.⁴⁰ From this period until the office of commissioners was abolished the work progressed rapidly and satisfactorily.

April, 1799, Hoban called on Thornton for sections of the Capitol. All drawings in the hands of the commissioners were turned over to Hoban, and we learn from a letter of a later date that other drawings were made for him by Thornton. This proves that at this date, even while acting as commissioner, Thornton was still expected to make drawings for the building when the data were not sufficiently clear.⁴¹ There are records of several contracts being made at this period by men who in after years took a more or less active share in the completion of the old Capitol.⁴² January 23, 1799, George Blagden made a contract to

finish stonework of Capitol (this evidently referred to the nearly completed north wing) for the sum of £510 13s. 9d. January 12 Wilson Bryan was made superintendent of carpenters. In the same year Lewis Clephane entered into a contract for painting the Capitol. John Kearney was the plasterer. The above contracts refer to the completion of the north wing. In September, 1799, Clephane was ordered to give an additional coat of sand paint to the roof, and in May Peter Lenox, Wilson Bryan, and Harbaugh were requested to examine and report upon the roof of both the Capitol (north wing) and the President's House, “because they leak.”⁴³ In February, 1800, James Hoban was ordered to make details of the Capitol to “conform with drawings given John Kearney by Dr. Thornton, in the ancient Ionic style, but with volutes like the modern Ionic for the Senate Chamber.” The roof of the Capitol at this period was made of shingles and gave considerable trouble by leaking.⁴⁴

In 1797 President Washington, who had taken such an active personal interest in the Capitol, retired from the Presidency, dying two years later. John Adams, who succeeded him, did not, judging from his correspondence, take a similar interest in the building.

The year 1800 was fixed by law for the Government to take its permanent seat in Washington City. Accordingly, in that year, the latter part of May, the President and his Cabinet, with the different Executive Departments and the documents and other material of both Houses of Congress, were moved from Philadelphia to the Federal City.

From the data in my possession I have drawn plans of the building on an 8-inch scale, showing its condition in 1800 [Plates 35 and

³⁹ Benjamin Henry Latrobe to George Hadfield, April 28, 1804, *Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, microfiche edition.

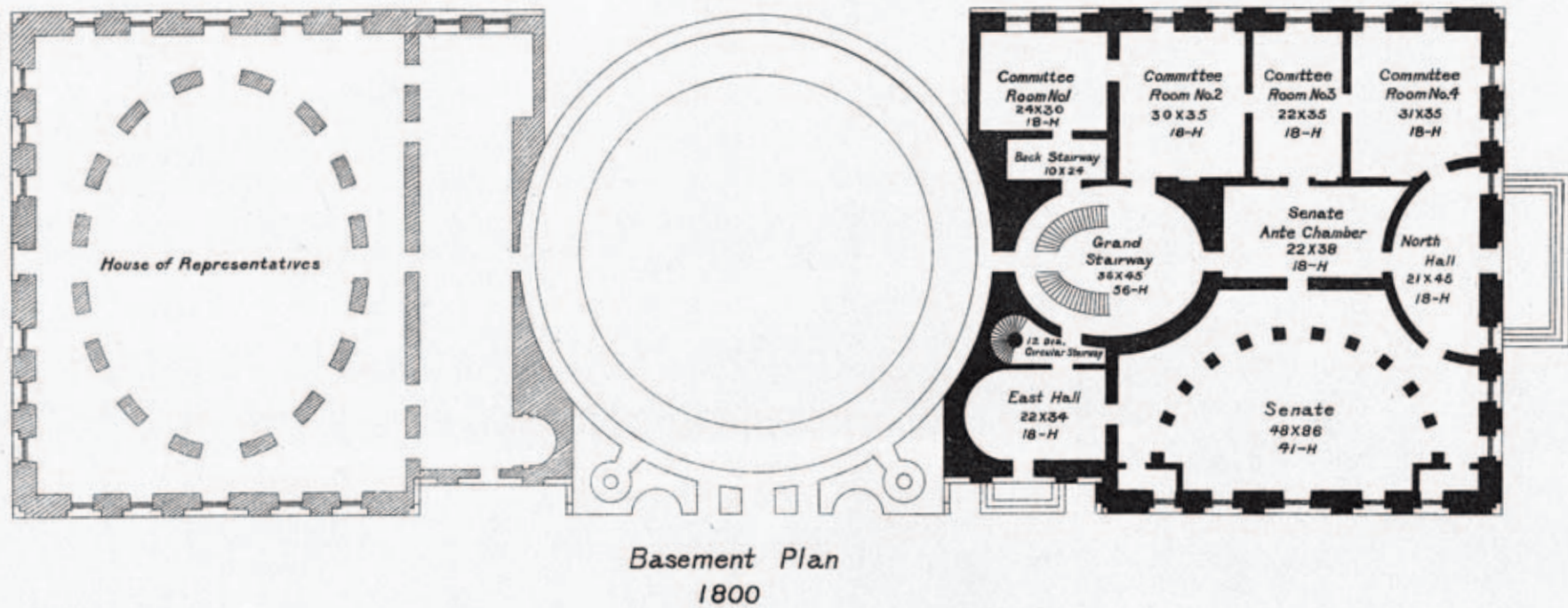
⁴⁰ Brown may be referring to a petition to Congress printed in a report made by a Mr. Wood. *Journal of the House*, January 19, 1821, 150.

⁴¹ Thornton was asked by fellow commissioners Gustavus Scott and Alexander White for these sections of the building at Hoban's request, but he failed to produce them and in his response said that any “practical Architect” should be able to prepare what was needed from his instructions. Thornton to Scott and White, April 17, 1799, vols. 1–2, William Thornton Papers (Microfilm Reel 1), Manuscript Division, LC.

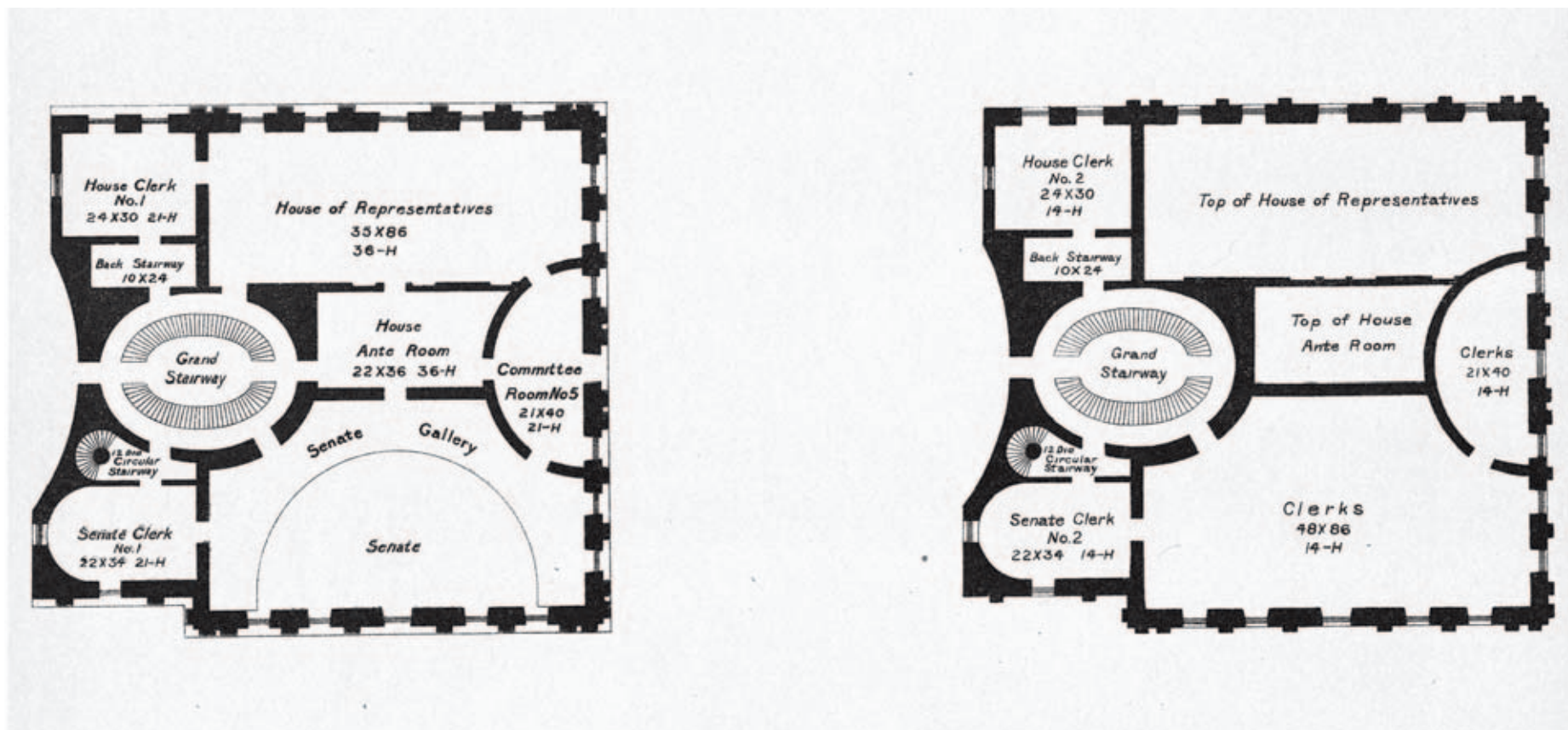
⁴² Proceedings, January 12 and 23, September 1799, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

⁴³ Proceedings, September 12, 1799, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

⁴⁴ Thornton's reference to drawings given to John Kearney may have been plates from architectural books. Proceedings, February 10, 1800, RG 42, DCC, NARA.



PLAN IN BLACK, SHOWING PORTION FIRST OCCUPIED BY CONGRESS, 1800.
Conjectural floor plan of the Capitol in 1800 by Glenn Brown, 1900. Location unknown.



PRINCIPAL STORY.

CAPITOL IN 1800. AS FIRST OCCUPIED BY CONGRESS.

ATTIC STORY.

Conjectural floor plans of north wing of the Capitol in 1800 by Glenn Brown, 1900. Location unknown.

36].⁴⁵ The north or Senate wing, now occupied by the Supreme Court, and ready for its Congressional tenants November 17, 1800, was finished. The minor partitions, floors, and roof were of wooden construction. It had a basement, first and second story. Portions of the foundations of the central portion of the Rotunda were in place, Thornton having removed the foundations for the square central court which Hallet had had the temerity to put in, and for which he was discharged by Washington.⁴⁶ The basement or first story above ground of the House wing, now Statuary Hall, was in process of construction.

Judging from the relative height of windows, as shown on the exterior, and allowing for thickness of floors, the basement should have been about 18 feet high, the first story from 20 to 22 feet, and the second story 14 or 15 feet. The total size of the completed structure was 126 feet by 121 feet 6 inches.

After making the enlarged plans of the basement and principal stories, on which are shown the arrangements of the walls, the shape and size of the rooms, the next step was to take the report of James Hoban, which the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, William Thornton and Alex. White, sent in 1799 to the Sixth Congress, then holding their first session in Philadelphia. This report gives the dimensions, in many instances the shape and character of finish, for the different rooms in the building, as well as mentioning the purpose for which

they were to be used. This report does not give the stories on which the rooms are placed or position in which they are located except in three instances. It is only by taking the floor dimensions and heights and locating the rooms where they will fit into the plan that we are able to tell with accuracy the position they occupied in the building.⁴⁷ First taking the basement plan shown [Plate 35].

A room 48 by 86 by 41 feet was provided for the Senate. The dimensions of the old Senate Chamber, or the present Supreme Court room, were found to fit these floor dimensions, and the height mentioned would carry the room through the basement and first story. We have felt assured that the Senate met in this room, as Thornton marked it on his early plan as the Senate Chamber, but this corroborative testimony fixes the meeting of this branch of Congress in the portion of the building assigned to it. While Thornton's plan shows only twelve columns, Hoban mentions sixteen. This increase was doubtless made in preparing the working drawings.

One point has developed in this investigation which I think is unknown at the present time. It has been assumed that the floor of the old Senate was on the principal or first floor—in other words, where the floor of the Supreme Court is at the present time. Three points—the height of the Chamber, the location and height of the Senate lobby, and the exterior steps, which are shown as leading up to the Senate floor on Thornton's plan, indicated at a distance of about 2 feet from the ground—when taken in connection with the dimensions of rooms as given by Hoban, show that the Senate floor was in the basement of the Capitol. I have three letters bearing upon this subject, one by Latrobe in 1802, criticizing the fact that the Senate was placed on the

⁴⁵ Brown probably based his conjectural drawings on James Hoban's construction report of November 1799, which was included in the third annual address of President John Adams, December 3, 1799. See DCC, 87–89. Brown's drawings were first presented and interpreted in a public lecture, probably accompanied by lantern slides, for the members of the Columbia Historical Society on April 2, 1900. See Glenn Brown, "The United States Capitol in 1800," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 4 (1901): 128–135. Brown frequently lectured on the plan of Washington and its major public buildings; he also prepared a traveling lantern slide show for the use of American Institute of Architects chapters.

⁴⁶ There was no stonework built above the foundation at this time. Brown was referring to Hallet's construction of the south wing that was abandoned in 1796.

⁴⁷ Commissioners Scott, Thornton, and White, *Report on the City of Washington*, December 5, 1799. Ex. docs., 6th Cong., 1st sess. [American Imprint Collection, Rare Book Division, LC, #34869].

ground floor, but commending the beauty of the design, and one from Jefferson in 1805 in reference to raising the floor level of the Senate. The third letter is one of Jefferson to Latrobe, July 25, 1808, in which he says: "Lay the floors [of the Senate Chamber] where the gallery floor now is to be the floor of the future Senate Chamber, open it above to the roof to give it elevation enough, leaving the present columns uninjured until we see that everything else being done and paid for, there remains enough to make these columns of stone."⁴⁸ The columns were made of wood covered by a plaster stucco.

Plate 37 shows a section of this Chamber restored by the author from drawings and descriptions.

Two compartments in the basement are easily located, the north hall, which Hoban says was semielliptical and 21 by 45 feet, 18 feet high, and the east hall, 22 by 34 feet, 18 feet high, which are fixed by the point of the compass as well as their floor dimensions and height, and the first one also by the form mentioned.

The antechamber of the Senate is given as 22 by 38 feet, 18 feet high, and the fact is mentioned that the room is lighted from above. We find a room with no windows just west of the Senate Chamber which fits these dimensions, and being in the most natural position for a lobby, it was undoubtedly the Senate lobby or antechamber. Taking the other rooms, which Hoban states were 18 feet high, and marked "Committee rooms," we find the dimensions are similar to the sizes of the rooms Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 4.

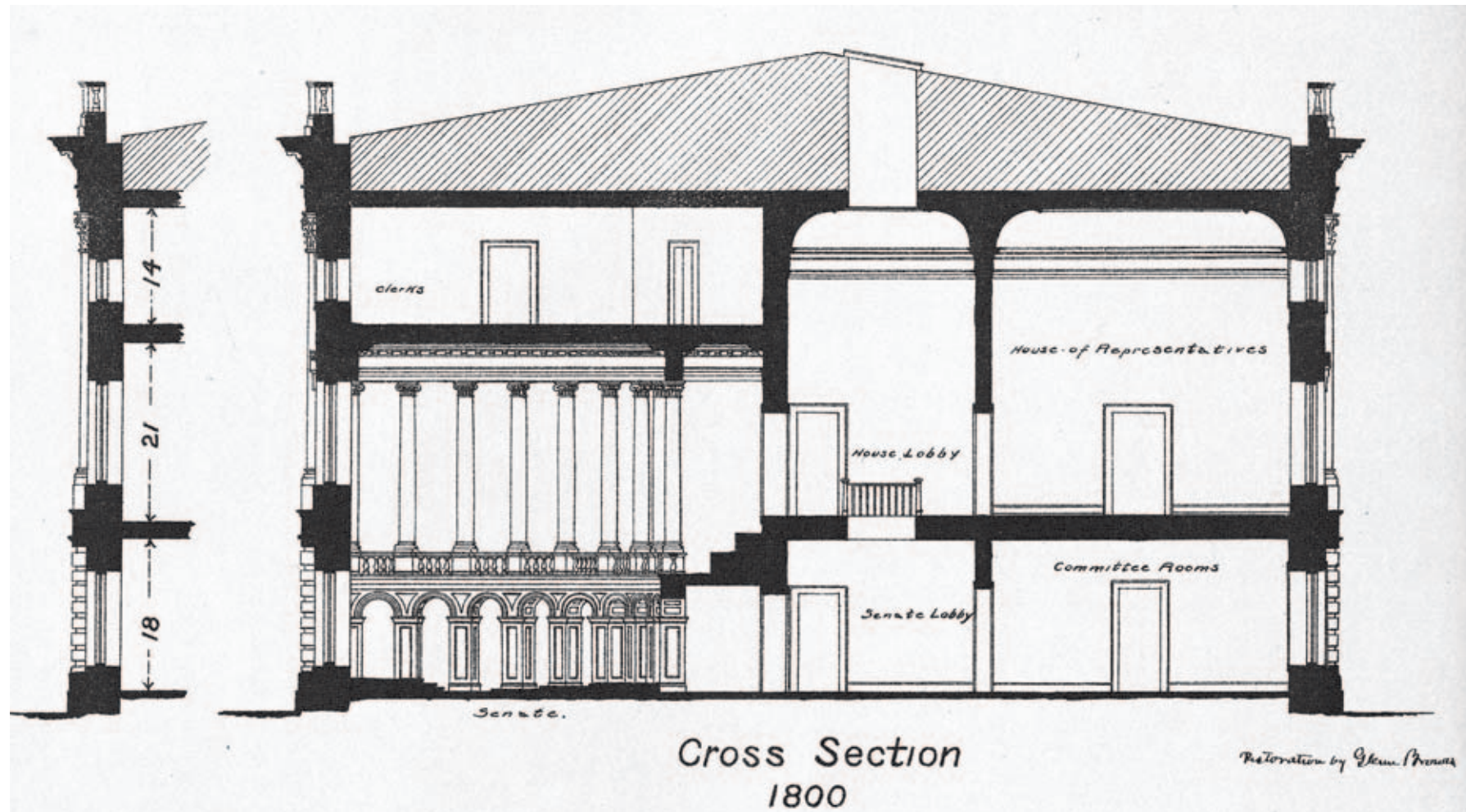
The halls and stairways on this floor are easily placed when we compare the plans and descriptions. First, the principal stairway, as

shown on the plan, is in accordance with Hoban's description, elliptical, and 36 by 45 by 56 feet in dimensions. The back stairway is 10 by 24 feet. The only space which approximates this dimension is on the west of the elliptical stairway, and the same space was afterwards, and is to-day, used for that purpose, although Thornton does not indicate a stairway on his plan. This stairway gave a private entrance for the members of the House of Representatives and their clerks. On the east of the principal staircase Thornton shows a circular one, and Hoban says the completed circular stairway was 12 feet in diameter. This diameter agrees with the dimensions of the plan. In a later report Hoban mentions these stairways as being in the southeast and southwest portions of the building, where we find them on Thornton's plan. He also mentions that the circular one leads to the offices of the Senate clerks in the stories above. This allotment occupies the space shown on the basement plan. As the south wing of the building intended for the House of Representatives was only a few feet above ground, it was necessary to locate the House in temporary quarters.

The principal story plan must now be considered [Plate 36].

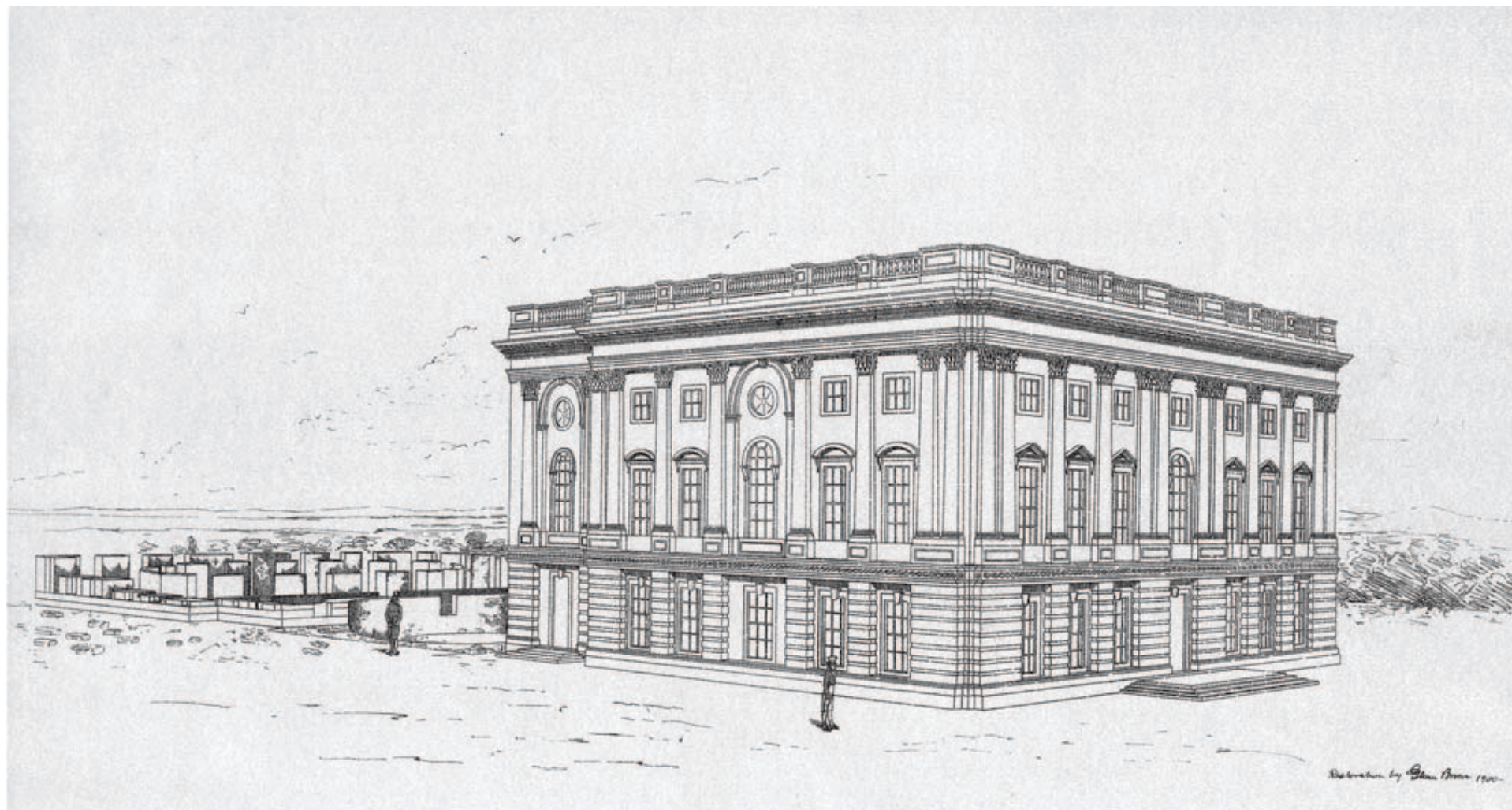
Hoban says the room prepared for the House was 86 by 35 feet, 36 feet high, with cove ceiling [Plate 37]. The only space where such a room could be placed is, as is shown by the plan, on the west front of the wing. This space was found, on scaling the plan, to be exactly 35 feet wide and a little over 86 feet long. By a more careful scaling of the original it was found to be within a few inches of 86 feet, and must, according to its height, have taken in the first and second stories. This room had a gallery, probably on the lines of the gallery used in the same room when it was changed to a library. As corroborative testimony, Congress, on December 18, 1801, after the House had moved into the "oven," as it was called—a temporary structure erected in the south wing—passed a resolution to use the room occupied by the House during the second

⁴⁸ Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Henry Latrobe, April 26, 1808, in Formwalt, ed., *The Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, vol. 2, 612. Brown erred in dating this letter July 25. For a discussion of how this letter reflected Jefferson's misunderstanding of Latrobe's design, see Talbot Hamlin, *Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 288.



SECTION OF THE SENATE WING 1800.

Conjectural drawing of the north wing of the Capitol in 1800 by Glenn Brown, 1900. Location unknown.



VIEW OF CAPITOL WHEN FIRST OCCUPIED BY CONGRESS 1800—THORNTON ARCHITECT.
Conjectural perspective view of the north wing of the Capitol in 1800 by Glenn Brown, 1900. *Location unknown.*

session of the Sixth Congress as a library, and we have the plan of Latrobe for fitting this room up as the First Library of Congress.⁴⁹

The letter of Latrobe, 1802, gives a sketch showing the room occupied by the House where I have located it on the plan. The House antechamber is mentioned by Hoban as 22 by 38 by 36 feet. We find a room just this width and length over the Senate antechamber. The fact that this space was lighted by a skylight, which also lighted the antechamber of the Senate, proves that one was above the other, the lower being lighted by a well, around which Hoban mentions putting a railing. The other rooms on the principal floor are easily developed from the description. Committee room No. 5, 21 by 40 by 21 feet, over the north hall, is given as the same as the hall, but a little less in length. As this is the only space which approximates the size of this committee room, we must assume, and it is the only instance where it has been necessary to make an assumption, that the elliptical shape of this room was squared up by wooden furring to make the wall surfaces more suitable for committee purposes.⁵⁰ One of the rooms for the Secretary of the Senate, 24 by 30 by 21 feet, fits in over the east hall, and one of the rooms for the Clerk of the House fits in over committee room No. 1. The staircase halls continue through this story and open on an entrance to the Senate gallery, which is an amphitheater 110 feet in circumference, the exact dimensions given by Hoban. On the third or attic floor [Plate 36] the clerks of the Senate and House have rooms over and of the same size as the rooms on the principal floor, except in height, which is 14 feet, and a large room for clerks, 48 by 86 feet by 14 feet

⁴⁹ Although Congress passed this resolution, the room was not used as a library but was temporarily occupied by the House as its hall. A reconstruction drawing of the "Oven" is in Allen's *The United States Capitol*, 5.

⁵⁰ Brown did not illustrate this change on his plan [Plate 36]. The semi-elliptical room over the north entrance was squared off on the west so that the library would not have an unsightly bulge in its northeast corner. Senate wing, RG 40, Subject Files, Curator's Office, AOC.

high, which could only be over the Senate Chamber.⁵¹ This was the room which Jefferson ordered removed when the floor of the Senate was raised to the principal floor, so as to carry the ceiling of the modified Chamber up to the roof line. Another room was provided for clerks on this floor over committee room No. 5. The above rooms account for all space which the building contained except the cellar.

From the different descriptions I have been able to make a drawing [Plate 37] showing the interior of the Senate Chamber. It was a room of dignity and refinement, consisting of an arcade encircling the Senate seats on the ground floor, with panel piers and molded caps and bases. On this arcade rested the gallery. The front of the gallery was treated as a semielliptical, almost semicircular colonnade of ancient Ionic columns, sixteen in number, surmounted by an appropriate classical entablature.

Nothing is given of the character of the gallery in the House, as it was at the time a temporary expedient. It was probably not in any way elaborate. The section shows the heights of the different stories, and how the Senate and House each were two stories high. The exterior of the building and the portion executed was a simple, refined, and dignified structure, being a very good example of Italian Renaissance. The building showed the north wing completed, three sides of it being built of Aquia Creek sandstone, while the south side had a combination of temporary brick walls, and a portion of the permanent walls for the Dome. The south wing was several feet above ground, and the foundations were laid for the Dome, as has been mentioned.⁵² The perspective

⁵¹ The room for clerks above the Senate Chamber was not finished; it was used for storage of building materials until it was torn out to accommodate Latrobe's 1808 plans. Senate Chamber, RG 40, Subject Files, Curator's Office, AOC.

⁵² Brown was mistaken because the foundation for the dome was not begun until Charles Bulfinch's employment in 1818; in 1800 the south wing was not above ground. Allen, *The United States Capitol*, 4-12.

shows the condition and appearance of the exterior when it was first occupied by Congress [Plate 38].

The second session of the Sixth Congress convened November 17, 1800, in the north wing. The first meeting did not have a quorum and Congress did not take formal possession of the building until November 21, on which occasion, in his opening speech, President John Adams said:

“I congratulate the people of the United States on the assembling of Congress at the permanent seat of their Government, and I congratulate you, gentlemen, on the prospect of a residence not to be exchanged. It would be unbecoming the representatives of this nation to assemble for the first time in this solemn temple without looking up to the Supreme Ruler of the universe and imploring his blessing. It is with you, gentlemen, to consider whether the local powers over the District of Columbia, vested by the Constitution in Congress of the United States, shall be immediately exercised. If, in your opinion, this important trust ought now be executed, you can not fail, while performing it, to take into view the future probable situation of the territory, for the happiness of which you are about to provide. You will consider it as the capital of a great nation, advancing with unexampled rapidity in arts, in commerce, in wealth, and in population, and possessing within itself those resources which, if not thrown away or lamentably misdirected, will secure to it a long course of prosperity and self-government.”⁵³

⁵³ “Address of John Adams to the Senate and the House of Representatives, 22 November, 1800,” in *Annals of the Congress of the United States: Sixth Congress* (Washington: Gales and Seaton, 1851), 723–724. Adams delivered the address on November 22, not on November 21, as Brown states.

The Supreme Court did not meet in Washington in the year 1800. Its first session in the Capitol was held in 1801, in the room marked No. 1 [Plate 36].⁵⁴

The House of Representatives evidently found its quarters too limited, for on May 28, 1801, Hoban was directed to make an estimate for a temporary chamber, to be located in the south wing of the Capitol, for the accommodation of the House of Representatives. This building or room was to be so arranged that the arcades and other work of the completed structure would not be interfered with, the Commissioners stating, “As much as possible of this building is to be so made as to form a part of the finished structure.” June 10 bids were asked for this elliptical room, which was to be built of brick and to be completed by December 1, 1801. Lovering & Dwyer were awarded the contract. They were to complete the room before November 1, 1801, for the sum of \$4,780, in accordance with plan and bill of particulars filed with the Commissioners.⁵⁵

Hoban reports, December 14, 1801, that this structure was ready for the meeting of the first session of the Seventh Congress. It was an elliptical brick structure whose axes were 70 and 94 feet and walls a little more than 18 feet high. Its interior consisted of sixteen niches and sixteen arches, which together formed an elliptical arcade. It also contained a semielliptical gallery. This room was connected with the Senate wing by a covered way 145 feet long, in which were two flights of steps that probably led to the gallery in the temporary House.

Thomas Jefferson was elected President in 1801. He felt a lively interest in the whole subject of architecture and a particular interest in the Capitol, as he was Secretary of State when the design was selected and during the early progress of the building, and upon taking his seat

⁵⁴ The Supreme Court first met in Room No. 2, depicted on Plate 35.

⁵⁵ Proceedings, December 1, 1801, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

as President he immediately showed an active and interfering interest in the work. The next step of importance in connection with the Capitol was the abolition of the offices of the Commissioners of the District of Columbia by act of Congress, May, 1802.⁵⁶

Mr. Thomas Munroe was appointed as superintendent, to perform such duties of the Commissioners as did not devolve upon the General Government. He received \$1,200 as superintendent, at the same time acting as postmaster for Washington City, with an additional salary. From the account it is not clear whether he received \$2,000 in all or \$2,000 in addition to his salary as superintendent, but presumably the former amount.⁵⁷ With the end of his term as commissioner, Thornton's supervision and Hoban's superintendence of the Capitol practically ceased, although both were called in consultation in reference to the work at subsequent periods. Just before his retirement Thornton informed Jefferson that certain changes the President wished to make "would not be in consonance with his [Thornton's] plans." There is nothing to show whether this caused his further services in connection with the Capitol to be dispensed with. No further work apparently was done on the Capitol in 1802. James Hoban is always mentioned as one of the architects of the Capitol. The records show that he acted only as superintendent in times of emergency. He made no effort to incorporate any of his own ideas as to plan or design in the construction of the building. He and Thornton remained friends during the period of ten years in which they were thrown together in work connected with the Capitol. Hoban was first made superintendent, with Hallet as assistant. Hallet received \$1,066 per annum, Hoban receiving his salary as super-

intendent of the President's House. Hadfield and Hoban held equal positions, one as superintendent of the Capitol, the other as superintendent of the President's House, each receiving \$1,400 per annum. Finally Hoban was given \$1,866.66 by special contract to superintend the Capitol and President's House. The records simply give him the title of superintendent. June 24, 1801, Hoban received the title of inspector of Government works, at a salary of 300 guineas per annum, "to continue as long as his services were needed."⁵⁸ The duties of this position included inspection of roads, bridges, and buildings. This office was abolished with the dissolution of the board of commissioners. Thomas Jefferson mentions him in his letters of later date as surveyor of public buildings, at a salary of \$1,700 per annum. Neither of these titles indicates a designer, but from them one would infer that Hoban executed other men's designs. It is clearly shown by the records that he never made designs for any of the public buildings except the President's House.

From the beginning to this period in the history of the Capitol, it will be clearly seen that Thornton had been the only architect—the man who originated in design and plan. The other so-called architects or assistants had been merely draftsmen or superintendents. Although Hallet in the second competition worked directly under the instruction of the commissioners, and he had a second and third trial, still Thornton's first plan was so meritorious that it immediately commended itself to President Washington, Secretary Jefferson, and the Commissioners of the District as the best one submitted. To reduce the expense, this plan was made smaller by changing the scale, not the arrangement nor the design. Soon after Hallet was discharged Thornton threw out the changes Hallet had attempted to introduce and brought the plans back to their original shape. In making these changes Thornton drew new elevations incorporating some improvements. When Thornton retired

⁵⁶ Act of May 1, 1802, c. 41, 3 Stat. 175.

⁵⁷ Thomas Munroe was postmaster in Washington, D.C., from 1799 to 1829. See Wilhelmus B. Bryan, *A History of the National Capital*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1914), 345–346. His total salary for both positions was \$2,000. RG 40, Subject Files, Commissioners and Superintendents, Curator's Office, AOC.

⁵⁸ Proceedings, June 24, 1801, RG 42, DCC, NARA.

the north wing was complete (this is the portion now occupied by the Supreme Court), the foundation for the central Rotunda and Dome was in place, and the foundation and basement story of the south wing were partially built.⁵⁹ The exterior of these portions of the building is still in the form designed by Thornton. The plan of the north wing, or Supreme Court portion of the Capitol, is in practically the same form as it was when left by Thornton's hands. Parts of it have been replaced by brick and stone where it was originally wood, and the interior of the old Senate Chamber was altered, the original being in the form shown in Plate 37. A comparison of Thornton's designs and plans with others in this article will show the changes made from the original. Thornton's design made after Hallet's dismissal is shown in Plates 28 to 34.⁶⁰

All through the transactions of the commissioners we find Thornton on record as desiring greater magnitude and better and more ornamental material than he was allowed to use. He wished the exterior and the principal portions of the interior to be of marble, and he went to the extent of saying it should be imported marble. He protested against reducing the size and number of rooms. He wanted mahogany doors and fittings. In fact, he appreciated the future wants and needs of the American people more fully than did many of his contemporaries. Upon retiring from his position of commissioner, Thornton was placed

⁵⁹ The foundation for the central Rotunda and dome and basement story of the south wing were not in place until 1818. Only the "Oven" was there at this time. See Allen, *The United States Capitol*, 4–12.

⁶⁰ Brown's interpretation that Thornton alone deserves credit for the design of the Capitol is no longer accepted. Scholarly writing on the history of the Capitol since the 1920s has developed a much more complex analysis of the design evolution of the building and the contributions of the early architects.

in charge of issuing patents. In this position he remained until his death. Three papers read before the American Institute of Architects by P. B. Wight, Adolf Cluss, and J. H. B. Latrobe, the article before referred to by Mr. Howard, and G. A. Townsend, in his book on Washington, do not give Thornton the credit to which the records and letters of such shrewd men as Washington, Jefferson, and contemporary writers show him to be entitled.⁶¹ These articles make him simply a dilettante, who endeavored to use others' ideas for his own advantage, and one who was constantly maneuvering to throw worthy men out of their positions. The records show that he made no protest until the different superintendents endeavored to misuse his plans. Thornton declined the position of superintendent, but accepted the commissionership, so that he could have a supervision of the building. Hallet was discharged because he insisted on changing Thornton's plan. This was before Thornton became commissioner. Hadfield was appointed directly through Thornton's influence, and was discharged because of his inefficiency as a superintendent. Hoban and Thornton remained friends from their earliest connection with the Capitol until the act abolished the office of the commissioners, when both ceased their services on this building.

⁶¹ Peter B. Wight, "Government Architecture and Government Architects," *American Architect and Building News* 1 (1876): 83–85; Adolf Cluss, "Architecture and Architects at the Capitol of the United States from its Foundation until 1875," in *Tenth Annual Proceedings of the American Institute of Architects* (Boston: Franklin Press, 1876); John H. B. Latrobe, "The Capitol at Washington at the Beginning of the Present Century," in *An Address by John H. B. Latrobe Before the American Institute of Architects* (Baltimore: William K. Boyle, 1881).