

THE CAPITOL DOME

IN THIS ISSUE:

ICONIZATION OF THE BILL
OF RIGHTS

THE FIRST
MISS
LIBERTY

THE
CAPITOL
BRONZE
SHOP

VIGNETTES
OF THE
CAPITOL

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FROM THE EDITOR:

The Capitol Dome has stood as an architectural expression of national unity and an icon of representative government for 150 years. *The Capitol Dome* you hold in your hand has served as the United States Capitol Historical Society's quarterly newsletter for the last 53 of those years. In 2003 its first semi-annual "Special Edition" appeared. Expanding beyond the scope of a traditional newsletter, it sought to deliver the most recent, scholarly, insightful, and engaging articles possible to the Society's varied membership—all in living color. The vividly illustrated art and architecture of the Capitol have understandably occupied center stage in these pages, but readers could also expect articles on political culture, institutional history, and some of the remarkable personalities that have populated the Capitol since 1800.

As the Society's Chief Guide Steven Livengood reminded a recent audience, the history of the Capitol's additions and remodeling reflects Democracy's own bumpy journey through constant reformation towards an ever-elusive perfection.

Like the Capitol, the *Dome* stands poised to change yet again. The existence of this "Letter from the Editor" is itself a sign of those changes. Other examples that the reader will notice over time include more political history and historical narratives, some new features, and an expanded treatment of some features that already exist. "The Documentary Record," for example, will continue to show how a historical document sheds light on an episode of congressional history. But future entries will reach beyond the traditional definition of "document" to illustrate how artifacts also can be "read." "Society News" will continue to appear, but the newly relaunched USCHS website (www.uschs.org) is now the principal go-to resource for information about the Society's public programming and membership events. *The Dome's* primary purpose will be to highlight not the Society's goings-on but the Capitol's stories and their many players.

The four articles in this issue address topics that are either little known or not typically thought of in connection with the Capitol or congressional history. Richard Chenoweth opens with his imagined recreation of a statue that has not been seen in more than two hundred years. His look at "the very first Miss Liberty," which once presided over the Speaker's chair no less dramatically than the Speaker presided over the House, is a fitting sequel to his article on Latrobe's first, pre-1814 House chamber, "The Most Beautiful Room in the World?" (*The Capitol Dome*, v. 51, 3[Fall 2014]:24-39). As he did in that article, Chenoweth brings his scholar's sense and his architect's sensibilities to tracing the tradition of aesthetics behind one of the first major iconographic statements incorporated into the interior design of the Capitol—a building distinguished for its iconography.

We chose this year's quasibicentennial (!) of the U.S. Bill of Rights to reflect on the sesquicentennial seventy-five years ago, in the dark days immediately preceding our nation's entry into World War II. It seems a fitting occasion for addressing the various historical relevancies of one of the most important documents ever produced by Congress. Dr. Kenneth Bowling, a leading historian of the Congress that passed the first ten amendments to the Constitution, brings the story forward 150 years to show how a "Charter of Freedom" devised to solve a civil rights crisis in 1789 was co-opted to help fight a human rights crisis in 1941. Look to a future issue of the *Dome* for Bowling's follow-up investigation into the fate of the physical copies of the Bill of Rights originally sent out to the thirteen states for ratification.

Over the course of just four years, the Capitol's bronze foundry produced some of the most striking examples of mid-nineteenth-century decorative art to be seen today. Their principal difference from a display piece in a great museum like London's Victoria and Albert is that the works produced by the Capitol bronze shop are still serving the everyday functions for which they were intended—as handrails, door handles, etc. As Jennifer Blancato (from the Office of the Curator for the Architect of the Capitol) explores, the foundry's ultimate "boss" was Capt. Montgomery C. Meigs, the supervising engineer who made sure that the Capitol Extension of the 1850s and '60s showcased the very latest designs and techniques available. Guides direct the visitors' gaze upward to the cast iron Dome for proof of Meigs's success, without always considering the more quotidian evidence hidden in plain sight all around them.

Other views of the Capitol hidden in plain sight are the engravings that pass through our hands every day in the form of U.S. currency. Margaret Richardson, Collections Manager for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, tells this story in a heavily illustrated article that includes biographical profiles of the relatively unsung engravers. Their vision is literally imprinted in transactions that take place daily by people across the globe—although readers will undoubtedly lament that they don't get to see the artwork on the \$50 bill nearly often enough!

Look to upcoming issues of the *Dome* for stories about one of the newest and most unusual acquisitions of portraiture in the Senate collection, the Republic of Texas's "legation" to Congress (1836-45), and George Washington's empty tomb in the Capitol. We hope every issue of the *Dome* finds a welcome and permanent home on your bookshelf—or if, on your coffee table, it attracts the attention and admiration of guests, we hope you will encourage them too to subscribe by becoming a member of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society.

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Cover: Detail, doors to the House Chamber. See “The Little-Known History of the Capitol Bronze Shop,” beginning on page 16, for more on the bronze elements in the Capitol.



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Fig. 1. Author's recreation drawing of the House chamber before it was destroyed in August 1814

THE VERY FIRST MISS LIBERTY: LATROBE, FRANZONI, AND THE FIRST STATUE OF LIBERTY, 1807-1814

by Richard Chenoweth, AIA

When the U.S. Capitol burned on 24 August 1814, its principal chambers were gutted and a colossal masterpiece of American neoclassical sculpture, the nation's first Statue of Liberty,¹ was completely destroyed. The Liberty is not well known because, in its brief lifetime, no artist ever stopped to record it. All that remains are descriptions in letters of its design development and its placement in the famous Hall of Representatives (also known as the House chamber in the South Wing of the Capitol [fig. 1]; today, the site of the National Statuary Hall). Architect of the Capitol B. Henry Latrobe designed the Liberty in large part by giving instructions to the sculptor Giuseppe Franzoni, who carved her in plaster. Latrobe's goal was to copy the plaster model into Vermont Marble, but the opportunity never arrived. Liberty presided over the Hall only until that summer night in 1814, in the midst of a fire so intense that even Vermont Marble would have been reduced to lime.

Latrobe was in charge of the Capitol's design and construction from 1803-1811, a period charged with idealism and allegory as well as with scandal and misfortune.² The Liberty was organic to the architectural experience of the complete House chamber—it was not an afterthought and not mere sculptural decoration. Latrobe wrote: "The Statue is indeed essential to the effect of my Architecture."³ Latrobe's and Franzoni's Statue of Liberty represents the successful culmination of a long effort by early American designers to create a monumental personification of Liberty within a major public space.

ICONOGRAPHY AND EARLY ATTEMPTS

The idea of an American symbol of freedom was not new in 1805 (the year Latrobe first mentioned in his letters the idea of a Liberty sculpture for the Hall). Since colonial times, allegorical figures of American freedom were common (fig. 2). Usually personified as a female Native American in head-dress, she was known as *Liberty*, *Freedom*, or *Columbia*. Liberty evolved toward a Greco-Roman personification in the later eighteenth century, as interest in neoclassicism and archaeology increasingly influenced the arts.

Late in 1788, French architect Peter Charles L'Enfant was asked by the New York City government to renovate its City Hall for the first session of the First Federal Congress in April 1789. (Its predecessor, the Confederation Congress, had been meeting there since 1785.) The renovated building, thereafter known as Federal Hall, had two principal legislative chambers and a second story balcony for public events. The balcony's broadside overlooked the important intersection of Broad and Wall street, with its short side aligned axially with Trinity Church at the west end of Wall Street. It was considered a state of the art facility and was the nation's first building specifically designated for federal business. Federal Hall was demolished in 1812, and in 1842 the marble Greek Revival building now on the site was built—the New York Customs House.

L'Enfant's elegant additions and renovations of the interior were well received and described in print, but were



Fig. 2. Cartoon showing American Indian maiden Liberty embracing Britannia (ca. 1780-83), by Thomas Cooley

PRINTS DEPT., BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY

not recorded as pictures or engravings. He established an early standard for the hierarchy and decoration of an important federal building, which included no small degree of iconographic representation, including a sunburst pediment. L'Enfant planned for a Statue of Liberty to be placed behind the Speaker's chair in Federal Hall but there is no record that this occurred.⁴

Only two sessions of Congress met in Federal Hall, but the important Residence Act of 1790 was passed here, creating the District of Columbia. The third session of Congress met at Congress Hall, Philadelphia, in December 1790, and would remain there until the removal of the government to Washington, DC, in 1800.

The Residence Act gave the president unprecedented oversight over every aspect of the relocation of the capital, and in early 1791 George Washington asked L'Enfant to design the new federal city. L'Enfant developed a plan of radiating avenues connecting salient higher elevations interwoven with a grid of smaller streets (fig. 3). By these formal devices the plan emphasized a hierarchical and symbolic expression of the new government, particularly of the rela-

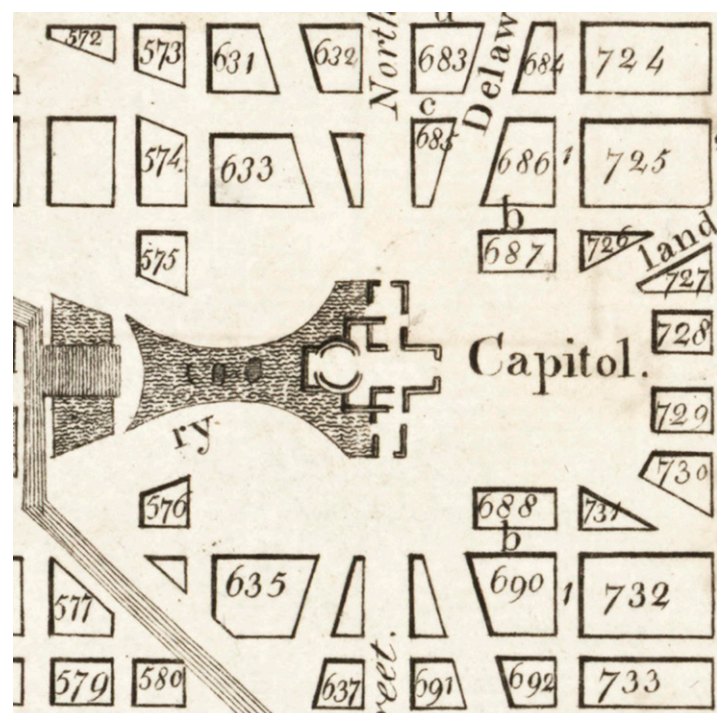


Fig. 3. Capitol Hill (detail of map by Samuel Hill, 1792)

CARTOGRAPHY DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

tionship between the legislative and executive branches. In a letter to George Washington dated 22 June 1791, L'Enfant describes Jenkins Hill, an elevation of about ninety feet above sea level overlooking vast wetlands to the west and his choice for the site of the Capitol, as a "pedestal waiting for a monument." He suggested placing below the crest of the hill a "grand Equestrian figure," a reference to the bronze statue of George Washington that Congress had approved on 7 August 1783.⁵ The concept of Washington's equestrian statue became the core of the next serious attempt to personify an American Liberty.

Also in 1791, the Roman sculptor Giuseppe Ceracchi (fig. 4) arrived in America, "filled with a volcanic enthusiasm for Liberty and the Rights of Man."⁶ Ceracchi was fresh from Europe, where he had struggled mightily to establish himself as a top-tier sculptor of political leaders and political monuments. His busts and portraits were often excellent; his larger compositions, with their metaphors and allegories, were often complicated. Previous work included allegorical sculpture at London's Somerset House for Sir William Chambers, busts of a cardinal, a pope, and a field marshal, and a complex monument to Dutch liberty fighter Baron Joan Derk van der Capellen. Ceracchi's monument to van der Capellen was only partially executed, but three drawings from a private collection indicate his powers of triangulation

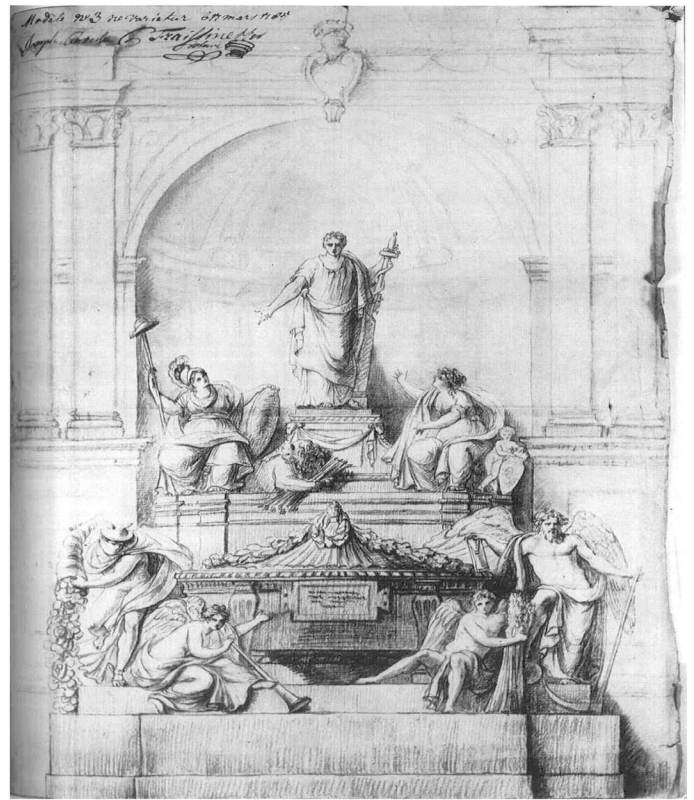


Fig. 5. Modèle No. 3 of van der Cappellen monument (1788), by Giuseppe Ceracchi

ART QUARTERLY 27[1964]:483



Fig. 4. Giuseppe Ceracchi (ca. 1792), by John Trumbull

MORRIS K. JESUP FUND, 1936, METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

and allegory. The three figures that were executed are strong and animated in the Baroque fashion, but the figures never left Rome, and are now in the Borghese Gardens (fig. 5).

In a fluid, synthetic attempt to both bring glory to the revolutionary spirit in America, as well as invigorate his own career, Ceracchi proposed to Congress a "Monument designed to perpetuate the Memory of American Liberty." Based on Ceracchi's verbose description, his American national monument proposal was, in spirit, similar to the van der Capellen monument, and was topped by a fantastic personification of Liberty.

Ceracchi proposed his concept to Congress in 1791 and then again in 1795. Most likely, the statue was to be erected below Capitol Hill, at the base of what would become the West Front. In his opening paragraph (fig. 6), Ceracchi writes: "The Goddess [of Liberty] is represented descending in a car drawn by four horses, darting through a volume of clouds, which conceals the summit of a rainbow. Her form is at once expressive of dignity and grace. In her right hand she brandishes a flaming dart, which, by dispelling the mists of Error, illuminates the universe; her left is extended in the attitude of calling upon the people of America to listen to her voice. A simple *pileus* covers her head; her hair plays unconfined over her shoulders; her bent brow expresses the energy of her character; her lips appear partly open, whilst her

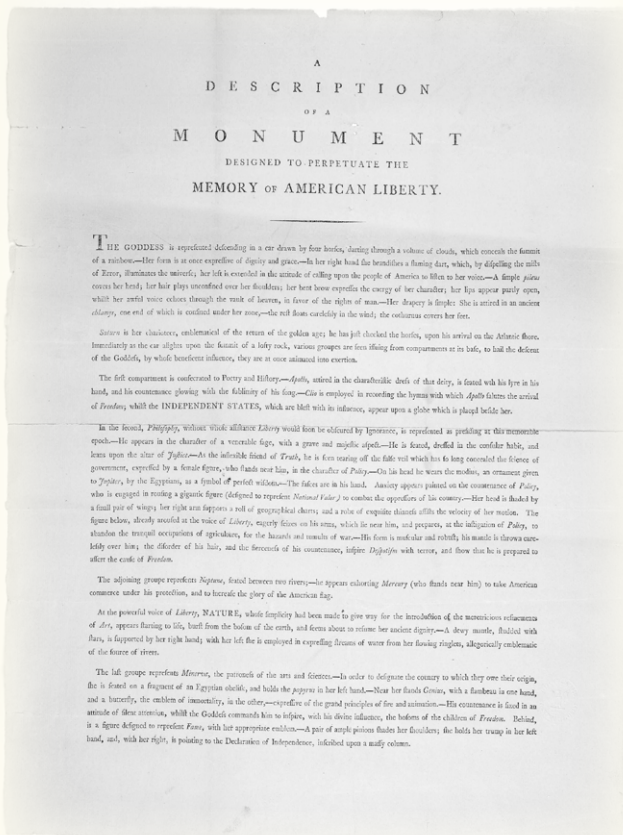


Fig. 6. Description of Giuseppe Ceracchi's proposed monument to the American Revolution (1795)

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awful voice echoes through the vault of heaven, in favor of the rights of man." Ceracchi's animated Statue of Liberty was the crowning piece of a monument that was to be, overall, sixty feet high, about fifty feet in diameter, and comprised of four more giant allegorical groups surrounding the original bronze equestrian statue of Washington. His six foot drawing of the monument was exhibited in public in a Philadelphia tavern in 1791, but is now lost.⁷

Ceracchi never had the opportunity to carve his grandiose monument to American Liberty. After a vain attempt to win the favor of leading members of the Washington Administration and of Congress by carving their portraits (fig. 7), followed by a return to Europe, an exile from Rome, and another trip to America, his subscription plan to finance the ambitious monument failed.⁸ Ceracchi's technical approach to carving the sixty-foot high monument is not known, but it is difficult to imagine the complexity of carving the baroque Liberty descending through volumes of marble clouds and a rainbow in a horse-drawn chariot at a time when the construction of the Capitol was not yet even begun. His hyperbolic vision of American Liberty died in 1795, and a

handful of years later so did he. Marked by as great a passion and hubris as exemplified his time in America, he lived his remaining years in Paris increasingly disenchanted with Napoleon's despotic usurpations, until he was implicated in an alleged assassination attempt against the "First Consul" in 1800. Perhaps some version of his chariot for the Capitol survived after all, in the triumphal chariot—said to be of his own design—that carried him to the guillotine early the next year.

While on his first American venture, Ceracchi did carve in terracotta a colossal bust, *Minerva as the Patroness of American Liberty*, nearly six feet tall, which was placed behind the Speaker's dais in Congress Hall in 1792. Whether the *Minerva* was meant to be the Liberty is not clear, as in his own words, his *Minerva* figure occupied a lower place in the gigantic monument. Nor is *Minerva* integral to the design of this chamber. Because of its colossal scale, the bust was most likely intended to demonstrate the artist's ability to execute his giant monument. The composite photograph by the author (fig. 8) shows the *Minerva*, in scale, as it might have appeared in the House chamber. *Minerva* (fig. 9) was given to the Library Company of Philadelphia when Congress moved to Washington in 1800, and it remains there today.

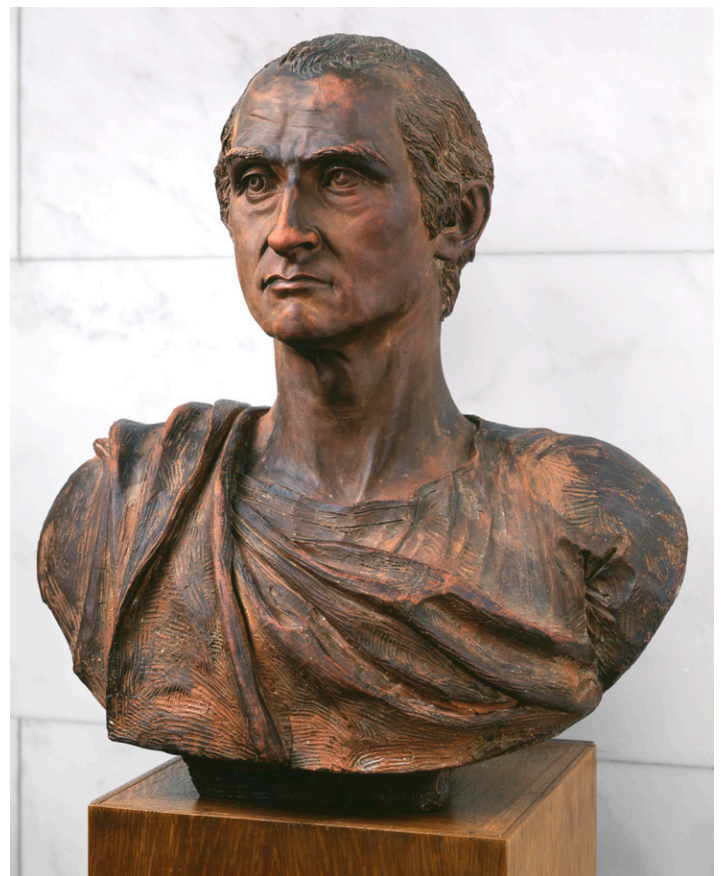


Fig. 7. John Jay (terracotta, 1792), by Giuseppe Ceracchi

COLLECTION OF THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES



Fig. 8. Author's composite depiction of Giuseppe Ceracchi's Minerva as it would have appeared in Congress Hall, ca. 1792

ART IN EARLY AMERICA

In his 6 March 1805 letter to Philip Mazzei, Jefferson's confidante in Italy, Latrobe stated that "the Capitol was begun at a time when the country was entirely destitute of artists." From Latrobe's perspective as a classically educated European, this was true; painting, sculpture and architecture were fledgling arts in 1792. In 1811, in a formal address in Philadelphia to the Society of Artists of the United States, however, he expressed his optimism that in a free republic, it is inevitable that the arts will flourish. "The days of Greece may be revived in the woods of America," he predicted, "and Philadelphia become the Athens of the Western world."⁹

In the same address, Latrobe identifies architecture as the most advanced of American arts in the year 1800. First, he lauded Samuel Blodgett's First Bank of the United States (1797), in Philadelphia, for its use of marble. Secondly, he lauded his own client Samuel Fox for having the vision and courage to build The Bank of Pennsylvania. Latrobe shyly neglects to mention that this latter masterpiece was his own design. The Bank of Pennsylvania, the first Greek revival building in America, built of white marble, was innovative for any modern city in 1800. Masonry-vaulted, naturally lit, unencumbered of ornament, and sleekly elevated by elegant Greek angles, it must have been breathtaking to see in the context of brick-red Philadelphia.

In painting, Latrobe suggests that America was on the cusp of greatness, but that America's painters lacked good commissions and Europe valued our great painters more than we did. Latrobe thought that America rivaled Europe in portraits, most likely referring to Gilbert Stuart and John Trumbull. Though personally slighted by the brilliant and profligate Stuart, Latrobe held his work in high esteem.

In 1800, America languished in sculpture. American figurative sculpture in the late eighteenth century mainly consisted of decorative woodcarving, such as in the making of nauti-

cal figureheads, or the decorative carving of fine furniture. Stone carving in the eighteenth century mainly consisted of the carving and incising of gravestones.

America's best figural sculptor of the period was William Rush of Philadelphia, who, with Charles Willson Peale, founded the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Rush (1756-1833), a wood-carver, made figureheads for ships, which Latrobe regarded very highly and considered an art form in and of itself. Rush carved the allegorical *Water Nymph and Bittern* that stood as the center landscape feature in Centre Square, Philadelphia, directly in front of Latrobe's Greek-style pump house of the Water Works. Today, this site is occupied by Philadelphia's City Hall.

Latrobe did not call Rush to duty, however, when hiring sculptors for the Capitol, although Rush was a mere one hundred forty miles north of Washington. Latrobe stated quite simply that Rush's medium was wood; and though extremely talented, he was never considered for work on the Capitol. Rush's carved wood figure of George Washington (1814, fig. 12) demonstrates great talent. It is a sophisticated sculpture, alive and animated in contrapposto.



Fig. 9. Minerva (terracotta, ca. 1791-92), by Giuseppe Ceracchi

AUTHOR



Fig. 10. Left to right: Minerva models, Giuseppe Ceracchi, for the van der Capellen monument (1788); Johann Gottfried Schadow, for the Brandenburg Gate (1792); and by B. Henry Latrobe, for the Capitol (c. 1810)

ART QUARTERLY 27[1964]:483; COURTESY OF DEMETRIUS CHRYSSIKOS; PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

SOME OF LATROBE'S ARTISTIC INFLUENCES

Latrobe deeply admired the sculpture of Englishman John Flaxman (1755-1826) from his London days, as well as that of the world's top sculptors working in Rome. Charles Brownell has pointed out that Latrobe emulated Flaxman figures in his own sketches on at least two occasions.* Besides Latrobe's admiration of the artistry of Flaxman, Canova, and the Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen (ca. 1770-1844), he certainly saw and admired other neoclassical sculptors in Europe prior to coming to America in 1796. He must have known the work of Germany's leading neoclassical sculptor, Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764-1850). Schadow's model for Minerva at the Brandenburg Gate (1792), when reversed, is strikingly similar to Latrobe's drawing of a Minerva for the Capitol from about 1810 (as well as his drawing of Liberty), and similar also to Ceracchi's Minerva from the van der Capellen monument (fig. 10). He certainly knew Jean-Antoine Houdon's masterful busts of Jefferson and Franklin and the full standing figure of Washington in Virginia's statehouse, which Latrobe would have seen when he toured Richmond immediately upon arriving in America the year the statue was unveiled.

A large and striking image of a sitting Liberty was painted by Samuel Jennings (active 1789-1834), a native Philadelphian who worked mostly in England (fig. 11). “Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences” was commissioned by the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1792 for its new building, and remains in its possession to this day. Jennings’s Liberty is very similar in style and allegory to Latrobe’s small sketch in the Library of Congress from a dozen years later, but with the addition of its powerful abolitionist theme. Given Latrobe’s long tenure in Philadelphia beginning in 1799, it is very likely he knew this painting.

**Latrobe Correspondence 1:164. For Flaxman’s influence on Latrobe, see Charles Brownell, “An Introduction to the Art of Latrobe’s Drawing,” in Edward C. Carter II, John C. Van Horne, and Charles Brownell, eds., *Latrobe’s View of America, 1795-1820* (New Haven, Conn., 1985), pp. 17-24, 29.*



Fig. 11. Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences (1792), by Samuel Jennings

THE LIBRARY COMPANY OF PHILADELPHIA

THE LATROBE-FRANZONI SITTING LIBERTY

Latrobe first mentioned the idea of a Statue of Liberty in his 6 March 1805 letter to Philip Mazzei (fig. 13), requesting assistance in hiring sculptors in Italy to work on the Capitol. Latrobe wrote to Mazzei at President Jefferson's behest. Mazzei and Jefferson had maintained a varied and robust correspondence over the decades since Mazzei left America; he cheerfully referred to America as his adoptive country and was glad to assist his American friends in the effort to build the Capitol.

In the letter, Latrobe asked Mazzei to recruit "*a good Sculptor of Architectural decorations*" for the south (House) wing. He also asked Mazzei to obtain a bid price from Antonio Canova, one of the most celebrated sculptors working in Rome, to carve the "sitting figure of Liberty" for the House chamber. On 12 September 1805 Mazzei responded that hiring Canova was impossible due to the artist being overbooked. Mazzei also had requested a price from the esteemed Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen, also working in Rome, but the price was exorbitant. Then Mazzei told of the young sculptors whom he did hire, Giuseppe Franzoni and his brother-in-law, Giovanni Andrei. Mazzei backed up his selection with the claim that Franzoni "will soon be a second Canova." The two new hires departed Italy by ship with their families in November 1805 bound for the United States.¹⁰

THE DESIGN AND CREATION OF THE SITTING LIBERTY

On 28 March 1806, the two Italian sculptors Franzoni and Andrei arrived from Rome. In Mazzei's estimation, Franzoni's "masterful strokes [*strokes*]" would make him a first rate sculptor of the figures, and Andrei would be a first rate sculptor of the flora and decorative pieces. On 29 May, in a letter to Mazzei, Latrobe lamented that Franzoni must carve the large eagle in the frieze before he can even "*think much of our Statue of Liberty.*" For the time being, "I have distributed the department of *animals* to Franzoni, and of *vegetables* to Andrei." Based on this letter, no model existed of the Statue of Liberty as of 29 May 1806.¹¹

But, on 2 June 1806, a model was underway, or so it seemed. Latrobe wrote to his brother Christian: "Flaxman is I think one of the first Sculptors in the world. Franzoni was his pupil. He is engaged in modeling for me a figure of Liberty, sitting, of colossal size. It promises to be a classical Work. This is one of many efforts I am making to introduce into this country something superior to the mean sti[le] brought hither and spread by English joiners and measurers, and to the absurd impracticalities of American book architects."¹²



Fig. 12. George Washington (painted wood, 1814), by William Rush

COURTESY OF INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Latrobe's letters provide key dimensions and parameters of the figure itself and its accoutrements. Subjectively, Latrobe's letters muse about his favorite sculptors, his proclivities in art, and his emotional response to stylistic ideas and elements. Both the parameters of his design and his aesthetic vision are important. When Latrobe puts pencil to paper, his ideas are clear. Therefore, the one design drawing of Liberty that exists (fig. 14), although of small scale, is detailed and informative.

In his first (March 1805) letter to Mazzei, Latrobe described the Liberty as 9'0" tall while seated. The only existing sketch of her appears in a drawing that was delivered to Jefferson prior to August 1805. It is a south-looking, east-west section of the Hall demonstrating the extreme angles of light rays entering the chamber. At the scale of 1/8" to 1'0", the Sitting Liberty is shown exactly 1 1/2" high, therefore 12'0" tall per the drawing's scale, including her plinth. The drawing demonstrates the powerful image Latrobe developed in his mind of entering the chamber from the north, and seeing the colossal Liberty opposite, framed by 26-foot columns and crimson drapery.

Even at small scale, details about Latrobe's intentions for the Sitting Liberty are obvious. She wears a Greek style gown with décolletage and a high waist, a large ornament at her breast, and her hair piled up with a tiara—a very fashionable look for 1805 (fig. 15). Her left arm holds a liberty pole with the Phrygian liberty cap. Her right foot is raised. An eagle in repose, with an outward look as though in a defensive stance, is on her right. Two books are resting on her left, possibly a reference to the two books in Gilbert Stuart's famous Landsdowne portrait of Washington (thought to be the *Federalist Papers* and the *Congressional Record*), a painting well known to Latrobe.

Writing to Mazzei on 19 December 1806, Latrobe expressed some confusion whether Thorvaldsen had actually been commissioned to carve the statue. If Mazzei had commissioned him, it was without Jefferson's approval of the high price. Latrobe also told Mazzei he had already given the work to Franzoni. Latrobe wrote that Franzoni "will not disgrace us by his Sculpture, but that Canova, probably Thorvaldsen, and Flaxman are his superiors to a great degree."¹³

Latrobe apparently did not approve of the direction of development of Franzoni's model. In a letter of 31 December 1806, to his Clerk of the Works John Lenthall, Latrobe expressed misgivings about the model: "Lady Liberty... seldom behaves much like a Lady." Franzoni had sculpted allegorical elements that Latrobe thought inappropriate or heavy-handed: a club and doves nesting in a helmet. "It may be correct *Symbolology* . . . to give Dame Liberty a Club or Shelelah, but we have no business to exhibit it so very publicly."



Fig. 13. Filippo Mazzei (ca. 1790), by Jacques-Louis David

LOUVRE, PARIS

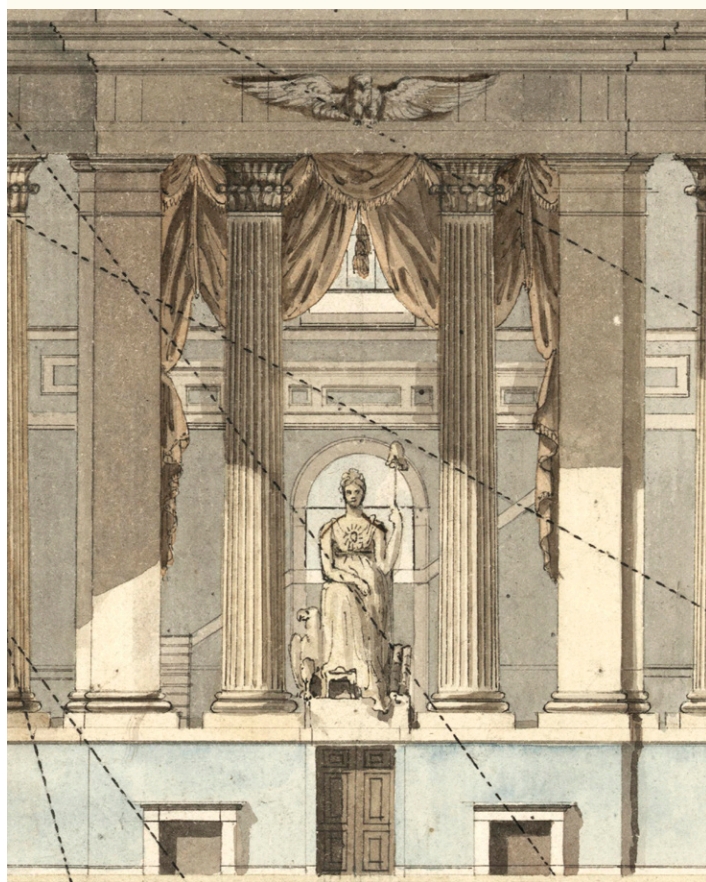


Fig. 14. Hall of Representatives (detail of watercolor on paper, 1804-05), by B. Henry Latrobe

PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS DIVISION, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



Fig. 15. *An example of a fashionable lady: Madame Raymond de Verninac (1799), by Jacques-Louis David*

LOUVRE, PARIS

Latrobe instead demanded one arm close in to her body, resting in her lap, and one arm raised, resting “on a Wig block, or *capped stick* (which is as much more honorable than a Wig block as the cap is more honorable than the Wig.) *for ought I care*.” (This is essentially the torso arrangement shown in Latrobe’s own sketch.) In this letter Latrobe pondered reducing Liberty to 7’0” in height. Though often beset by his own scathing and sardonic wit, Latrobe maintained exactly the right balance of allegorical propriety he thought proper for the chamber, and continued to steer Franzoni in the design of the Liberty.¹⁴

On 1 September 1807, Lenthall’s men took down the scaffolding around the Speaker’s Chair, revealing two finished columns and the sitting Statue of Liberty (fig. 17). Latrobe wrote Jefferson later that day: “the figure of Liberty, which, tho’ only a Model, is an excellent work and does Franzoni infinite credit.” She was in service from that day.¹⁵

Almost two months later, in a report on the south wing of the Capitol solicited by the editor of DC’s premier newspaper of record, the *National Intelligencer*, Latrobe described the complete tableau of the House chamber:

Between the two columns opposite to the entrance, behind the Speaker’s Chair, sits on a pedestal a colossal figure of liberty. The present figure is only a plaister model hastily executed in three weeks by Mr. Franzoni, but has great merit. It is proposed to place a marble figure of the same size in its room. . . . The figure, sitting, is 8’-6” in height. By her side stands the American eagle, supporting her left hand, in which is the cap of liberty, her right presents a scroll, the constitution of the United States. Her foot treads upon a reversed crown as a footstool and upon other emblems of monarchy and bondage.¹⁶

In the course of her design in the first nine months of 1807, Liberty’s eagle shifted from her right side to her left (from east to west), and her pole and liberty cap were replaced with a more relaxed arrangement with a cap and constitution.

Latrobe described the scene at entry and the viewer understands at once that the architecture and the sculpture are integral and essential to the sequence: “One large ample curtain is suspended in the space between the columns opposite the entrance, and being drawn in easy folds to each pilastre, discloses the statue of Liberty. The effect of this curtain of the statue and of the Speaker’s chair

and canopy... is perhaps the most pleasing assemblage of objects that catch the eye in the whole room.” Latrobe adds that, “To give an adequate idea of a building by a description unaccompanied by drawings, is always a vain attempt, and no one who has not seen the Hall of Congress can, from what I have said, understand exactly the effect and appearance of the room.”¹⁷



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topics as well as the architecture and landscape of Washington, DC, where he lived for nearly 20 years. His design for the Washington, DC Metro canopy program has been replicated numerous times around the Washington region. Richard’s research into the Jefferson-Latrobe era Capitol (1803-1814), which resulted in a detailed interactive digital reconstruction of the Capitol, was supported in part by two U.S. Capitol Historical Society Fellowships. His first article on the subject was published in the Fall 2014 issue of *The Capitol Dome*. An earlier version of this paper was published in the French journal *Le Libellio d’Aegis*, v. 8, 2 (Summer 2012):67-74.

AUTHOR’S INTERPRETATION OF THE LATROBE-FRANZONI SITTING LIBERTY:

My project to recreate the Jefferson-Madison Capitol, the one that was burned in 1814 and was never visually depicted or recorded, required that I include the Statue of Liberty that was in the House of Representatives chamber.* Based on the parameters from the drawing and letters, ideas of dress and style, and a deep understanding of Latrobe’s aesthetics, I sculpted this first Statue of Liberty myself. It was scanned three-dimensionally by a computer science professor from Princeton University.

*See Richard Chenoweth, “The Most Beautiful Room in the World? Latrobe, Jefferson, and the First Capitol,” *The Capitol Dome*, v. 51, 3 (Fall 2014):23-39.



Fig. 16. Author’s recreation of Sitting Liberty (clay, 2011)



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Fig. 17. Author's recreation drawing of the House chamber (1814), from the entry looking south

Notes

1. The term “Statue of Liberty” connotes for many people the actual size and stance of the later statue by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, *Liberty Enlightening the World*, conceived in the early 1870s and finally installed in New York Harbor in 1886. The term is also sometimes applied, mistakenly, to Thomas Crawford’s “Statue of Freedom” installed on top of the Capitol dome in 1863. (Crawford never saw it raised. He died in 1857 before the plaster version was shipped from his studio in Rome.) Within the Capitol itself, another “Statue of Liberty,” called *The Genius of the Constitution* by its sculptor Enrico Causici (ca. 1790-1833), was installed in a niche high over the entablature of Statuary Hall in the late 1820s. As of 2016, it is still in its plaster state, in that same room, although it has come to be known as *Liberty and the Eagle*. This article discusses the development of the idea of a personification of a monumental Liberty sculpture leading up to 1807; Causici’s, Crawford’s, and Bartholdi’s statues embody the same ideals, but they are different examples of artistic expression from different periods. The term “Statue of Liberty” is used throughout this article on the premise that the statue itself is part of the “concept.” Latrobe himself often referred to it in his letters as the (lower case) “statue of Liberty,” making it a less formal concept.

2. This period corresponds to a period known as Latrobe’s “first construction campaign,” when he served as “Surveyor of the Public Buildings of the United States at Washington” from March 1803 until July 1811. He returned, this time as “Architect or Surveyor of the Capitol,” from April 1815 until his resignation in November 1817.

3. Latrobe to Philip Mazzei, 12 April 1806, in John C. Van Horne et al., eds., *The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (3 vols.; New Haven, Conn., 1984-88) 2:229n.

4. For the only two contemporary newspaper descriptions of both the interior and exterior of Federal Hall, which were reprinted dozens of times from New Hampshire to North Carolina, see Charlene Bangs Bickford, Kenneth R. Bowling, Helen E. Veit, and William Charles diGiacomantonio, eds., *The Documentary History of the First Federal Congress, 1789-1791* (19 vols. to date; Baltimore, 1972-) 15:32-35.

5. Peter L’Enfant to George Washington, 22 June 1791, in Dorothy Twohig et al., eds., *Papers of George Washington: Presidential Series* (17 vols. to date; Charlottesville, Va., 1987-) 8:290.

6. Albert Ten Eyck Gardner, “Fragment of a Lost Monument,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, v. 6, 7 (March 1948):189. Ceracchi (1751-1801) studied in Rome but spent his first formative years as a professional artist in England.

7. “A Description of a Monument...” [14 Feb. 1795], Printed Ephemera Collection, Portfolio 222, folder 3, Library of Congress;

Ceracchi to Alexander Hamilton, 16 July 1792, in Harold C. Syrett, ed., *The Papers of Alexander Hamilton* (26 vols., New York, 1961-79) 12:36-37. The “Description,” which circulated as a broadside, included “a plan by which the means for the undertaking are to be provided,” and in some cases, at least, was accompanied by a printed letter signed by sixty prominent men (presumably committed subscribers to the plan), who included President Washington, Secretary of State Edmund Randolph, Attorney General William Bradford, Secretary of the Treasury Oliver Wolcott, Jr., and Secretary of War Timothy Pickering (“An Appeal for Funds for a Monument... 14 February 1795,” in Syrett, *Papers of Alexander Hamilton* 18:271).

8. Ceracchi’s busts of notable Americans include Benjamin Franklin (now at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts), Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson (at “Monticello,” Virginia), President George Washington (at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), and Chief Justice John Jay (at the U.S. Supreme Court), illustrated here (fig. 7).

9. *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:21-24, 3:76. Mazzei (1730-1816) had first come to America in 1773, where his neighbor Thomas Jefferson encouraged his experimental horticulture. For much of the Revolutionary War he served as arms agent for Virginia, but in 1785 he settled permanently in Pisa, Italy.

10. *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:21-24, 141-45. Antonio Canova (1757-1822) was the most famous Italian neoclassicist sculptor of his day.

11. *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:225-31. Latrobe summarized their modified contract on 6 April 1806 (*Ibid.*, 2:219-22). Both Giovanni Andrei (1770-1824) and Giuseppe Franzoni (ca. 1777-1815) would also work under Latrobe in a private capacity, when work at the Capitol slowed; several works in Baltimore can be attributed to them. Franzoni is sometimes confused with his younger and reputedly more talented brother Carlo (1789-1819), who was recruited to work on Latrobe’s second building campaign in 1815 and completed Statuary Hall’s famous *Car of History* just before his death (*Ibid.*, 3:802). Unlike Giuseppe, Carlo is memorialized in a portrait, currently located in the Office of the Curator of the Architect of the Capitol.

12. *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:233-35. The formal definition of “colossal” as a term in sculpture is a figure at least twice the life-size.

13. *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:328-29.

14. *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:346-48.

15. *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:475-76.

16. To Samuel Harrison Smith, 22 Nov. 1807, *Latrobe Correspondence* 2:499-506.

17. *Ibid.*