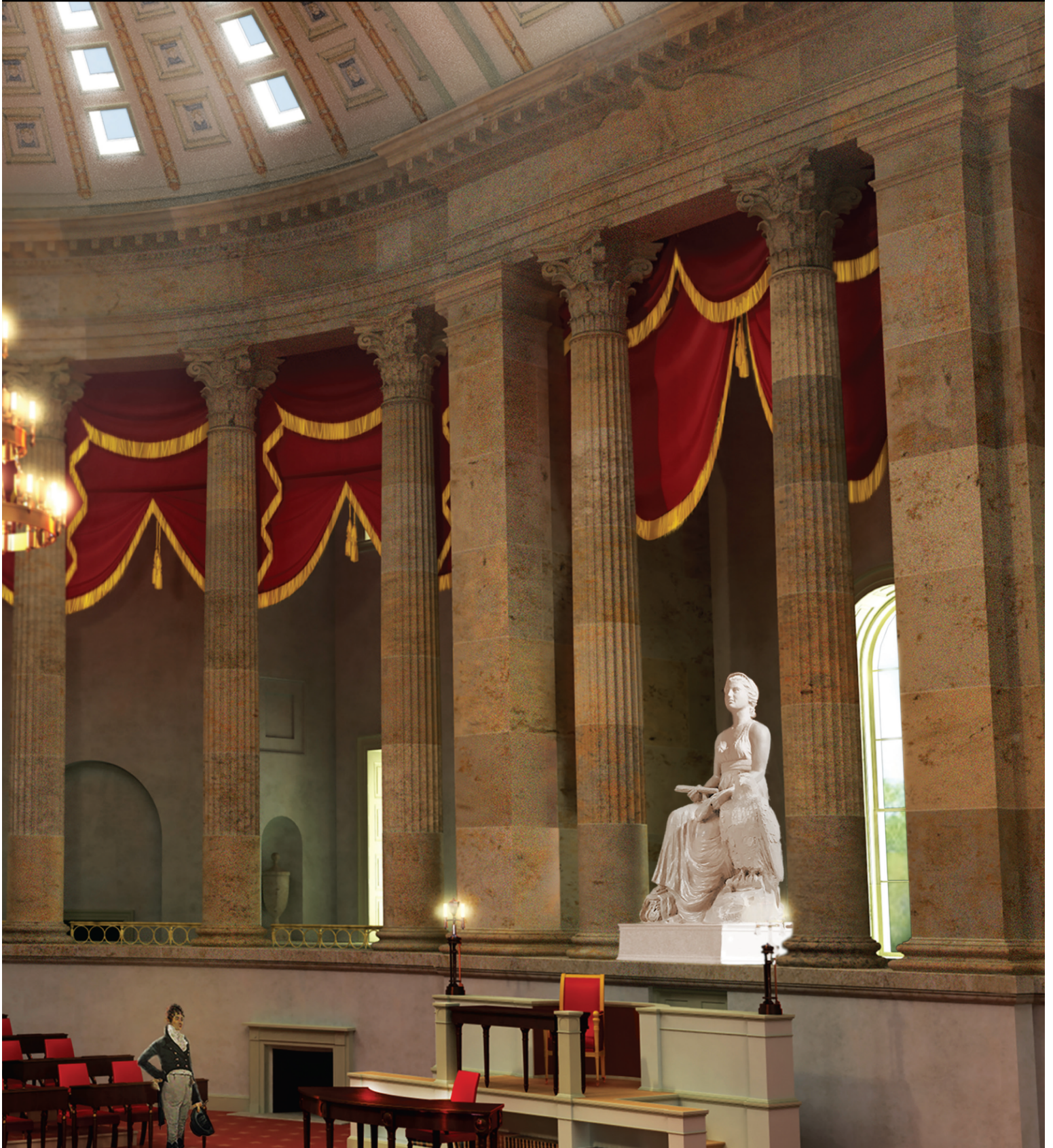


VOLUME 33 · 2022

# ARRIS

JOURNAL OF THE SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIANS





Arris: the edge formed where two planar or curved surfaces come together. In architecture, it is most commonly used to describe the sharp ridge between the flutes of a Doric column. The word is derived from the French *arête* and ultimately from the Latin *arista*, meaning both fish bone and the slender bristle at the end of a cereal grain.

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## About *ARRIS*

*Arris* is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes original scholarship on all aspects of the history of architecture and landscape, with particular interest in new perspectives on the American South. Founded in 1989, *Arris* is published annually by the Southeast Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (SESAH). SESAH promotes scholarship on architecture and related subjects and serves as a forum for ideas among architectural historians, architects, preservationists, and others involved in professions related to the built environment.

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*Arris* accepts submissions for articles and field notes on a rolling basis. Articles generally run from 5,000–7,000 words and are blind peer-reviewed. They should demonstrate a rigorous mastery over the scholarly literature, research methods, field work (if applicable), and available primary sources of the subject. Field notes are shorter contributions, approximately 2,500 words in length, and are blind peer-reviewed. These notes discuss significant ongoing field work or other research of interest to SESAH members. Submissions should follow *Arris* guidelines and should be sent to the editors. Complete information can be found at <http://www.sesah.org>.

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## Front Cover

Interior of the U.S. Capitol circa 1814 (Computer image by Richard Chenoweth).

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## Editors' Introduction

This issue of *Arris* continues the programmatic and intellectual themes that have shaped recent issues. First, it includes several articles that were presented as papers at SESAH annual meetings. Richard Chenoweth's article on Latrobe and Franzoni's statue of Liberty and Tara Dudley's research note on Freedmen Builders and Craftsmen in Austin are elaborations of their respective presentations that SESAH members might remember from the 2020 virtual meeting. This development trajectory of conference presentations into published papers is both appropriate and laudable. The current issue also contains three shorter pieces—two field notes and one research note, which is a valuable alternative format and one that the editors have consciously fostered of late. While full-scale articles remain the primary content vehicle of the journal, notes on more focused subjects—such as individual architects and buildings that may not warrant a full article—are valuable contributions to scholarship and allow appreciation of material not otherwise presented.

The subject matter in this issue expands and continues the scholarly inquiries seen in recent issues of the journal. Mid-century modern topics once again dominate the journal, which reflects a rich field still to be mined by historians and

a barometer of interest by young scholars and professional preservationists. Joss Kiely's article and the field notes by Casey Lee and Christine Neal all consider architects that worked in the mid-twentieth century. Dudley and Lee have painstakingly unearthed the contributions of African American architects and builders, another area that awaits the realization of its full scholarly potential. Kiely's article on Yamasaki's pavilion in New Delhi is the second article in recent issues dealing with Indian modernism, a vast field ripe for scholarship.

Finally, this is the last *Arris* edited by the team of Mark Reinberger and Vandana Baweja. After four issues, the former will retire, while the latter will continue as editor and be joined by Carrie Dilley as co-editor. Daniel Vivian will take over as book review editor from Bryan Norwood. It has been a sincere pleasure and privilege for the present editors to work together and serve the SESAH community.

With this issue, *Arris* will have reached 33 years of age, one-third of a century and definite adulthood. To celebrate, we are printing the cover in color, SESAH's own Richard Chenoweth's beautiful digital reconstruction of Benjamin Latrobe's first House of Representatives (1803–1814, burned by the British and replaced by the interior still there).



# The Collaboration of B. Henry Latrobe and Giuseppe Franzoni to Create the Nation's First Statue of Liberty (1807-1814)

## Abstract

*When the U.S. Capitol burned on 24 August 1814, its principal chambers were gutted and an early masterpiece of American Neoclassical sculpture, a colossal personification of Liberty in the style of the times, was completely destroyed. The Liberty is not well known because in her brief lifetime, no artist stopped to record her—not even B. Henry Latrobe himself, a prolific sketcher. Liberty presided over Latrobe's majestic Hall of Representatives, a chamber that was itself a difficult collaboration between President Thomas Jefferson and his architect Latrobe. Liberty was an integral part of the architecture and of the architectural sequence; upon entry into the chamber, the ten-foot-tall seated Liberty established the chamber's cross axis within the streaming diffusion of one hundred skylights.*

*Two sources of historical information lead to the Liberty's story: (1.) a direct trail consisting of one sketch and about a dozen letters by Latrobe in which he describes his aesthetic concerns and vision for the sculpture as well as details about its size, positioning, arm placement, and accoutrements and (2.) a history of early American sculpture and painting, including popular depictions of Liberty figures and her shifting aesthetic from political cartoons to coinage, and earlier examples of colossal allegorical figures of Liberty by other Italian sculptors working in America. The making of the Liberty represents twenty years of effort by various architects and artists to bring to fruition a major public work of American architecture and a monumental American sculpture.*

*The article shows for the first time a model of the colossal Liberty, carefully reconstructed based on known facts and the known proclivities of the principal designers. Digital reconstructions of the Hall of Representatives show the Liberty being a formidable aspect of the design of Latrobe's first building campaign at the Capitol.*

## INTRODUCTION

When the US 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,<sup>2</sup> 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, that is the House chamber in the South Wing of the Capitol, which today is the site of National Statuary Hall. Architect of the Capitol Benjamin Henry Latrobe designed the Liberty in large part by giving design ideas to the sculptor Giuseppe Franzoni, who carved her in plaster. After several critiques and redesigns, the final Sitting Liberty was unveiled in 1807. Liberty was raised upon the hippodrome-shaped south wall seven feet above the floor of the Hall on center, facing north to the entry door of the chamber. Latrobe intended to have the plaster model copied



Figure 1. Interior of the U.S. Capitol circa 1814, View from northeast (Computer image by the author).

into Vermont Marble, but the opportunity never came. The plaster Liberty presided over the Hall until that summer night in 1814 when the Capitol was burned by a fire so intense that even Vermont Marble would have been reduced to lime.

Latrobe's first tenure at the Capitol, 1803–1811, was a period charged with idealism and allegory, as well as scandal and misfortune,<sup>3</sup> but the ambitious architect remained indefatigable and undistracted (Figure 1). In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson assigned him to build the South Wing of the Capitol. This paper will describe evidence of Latrobe's efforts to include a Statue of Liberty within the chamber and to hire an appropriately talented sculptor to carve it. The Hall of Representatives, the giant figural room contained at the *piano nobile* of the South Wing, housed the Liberty, which was not an

afterthought nor mere sculptural decoration. In describing his approach, Latrobe wrote, "The Statue is indeed essential to the effect of my Architecture."<sup>4</sup> As such, 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.

## THE ENIGMA

In researching Latrobe's lost and unbuilt works at the US Capitol, the author was transfixed by the enigma that suggests a superlative body of Latrobe's work remains unknown in visual or pictorial evidence. William C. Allen's seminal book on the history of the design and construction of the Capitol mentions the existence of the Liberty sculpture but does not detail the story. Authors Brownell and Cohen refer briefly to the Liberty in *The Architectural Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, claiming that, "she descends from Flaxman's seated deities."<sup>5</sup>

How could Latrobe's American masterpieces be seen again? The author resolved to forensically piece together the Capitol as a comprehensive digital model based on original sources. Many disparate details emerged in the research process. Conflicts across letters, documents, drawings, change orders, and extant material required analysis, sequencing, rectification, and recreation into a composite and conclusive digital form. The author recreated the Liberty itself in clay based on information gleaned from a dozen letters and one drawing, and some of the images included in this paper digitally recreate the chamber interior in which the Liberty functions as a central element.

## EARLY PERSONIFICATIONS OF LIBERTY

The idea of an American symbol of freedom was not new in 1805, the year Latrobe first mentioned placing a Liberty sculpture in the Hall in his letters. Since colonial times, allegorical figures of American freedom had been increasingly common. Often personified as a female Native American in headdress, iterations of Liberty were known as *Liberty*, *Freedom*, or *Columbia* (Figure 2). After the revolution, Liberty evolved into a Greco-Roman personification. An early and well-documented example of popular iconographies related to *liberty* can be seen in the use of copperplate-printed "washing furnitures" or bed linens. These bed linens (quilt coverings and





Figure 2. Cartoon showing American liberty personified as an Indian maiden embracing Britannia, circa 1780–1783 (Boston Public Library, Prints Department).

tester drapery), printed in monochrome by English and French firms, were very popular exports to the American market after the war. Of particular interest is one example referred to as the “Apotheosis” (“The Apotheosis of Franklin and Washington”) pattern produced by an unknown English firm about 1785 (Figure 3). The apotheosis pattern depicts several allegorical figures and scenarios: the apotheosis of Franklin and Washington, a Greco-Roman Liberty figure carrying a liberty cap on a pole accompanying Franklin, who is guided to a small domed Temple of Fame by Minerva, the goddess of wisdom. In this image Washington steers a chariot driven by leopards (a symbol of England) accompanied by another Liberty figure in a plumed headdress and trumpeted by Indians carrying flags symbolizing the union. This fabric, held in at least eighteen museums, indicates the depth with which these icons and allegories resonated in American culture of the 1780s.<sup>6</sup>

Two engravings in the collection of the Society of the Cincinnati, one French (1786) and one English (1789), reinforce the prevailing contemporary depictions of Liberty. In the French version, Liberty is an Indian maiden in skirt, headdress, and pelt, presenting the familiar liberty pole and cap in one hand, and a caduceus in her other hand as she treads upon the regal leopard. Beside her, portraits of Washington and Franklin



Figure 3. English copperplate toile printed fragment, “The Apotheosis of Franklin and Washington” (circa 1785) (2022 Sotheby’s auction catalog).





Figure 4. A French print depicting Liberty as an American Indian Princess trampling upon the neck of the regal leopard; Roger L., engraver, "Indépendance des Etats Unis," Paris: Chez Blin, 1786 (The Society of the Cincinnati).

are surmounted by symbols of France—a portrait of Louis XVI and a sphere of *fleurs-de-lis* (Figure 4). A degree of propaganda is evident in this image. The English engraving contains all of these elements, except that Liberty is now Greco-Roman and wearing a Minerva-like helmet (Figure 5).

In another example Benjamin Franklin played a direct role in the symbolism of Liberty. He founded the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731 as a way of pooling intellectual capital during a time when books were scarce and expensive. Not long after Franklin's death, a statue of him was placed in the niche above the front door of the Library at Fifth and Chestnut Streets in Philadelphia. The slightly larger-than-life Carrara white marble statue was sculpted by Francois Lazzarini in 1791 and funded by a wealthy patron of the city (Figure 6). Lazzarini carved Franklin standing gracefully and dressed in a Roman toga. In his right hand he holds an overturned British scepter as his right elbow rests upon a stack of books symbolizing wisdom and history. Franklin's left hand displays an unfurled scroll, perhaps a copy of the Constitution. The original sculpture, terribly worn by the elements, is now displayed indoors at the Library Company while a copy of the sculpture is displayed in its niche on the original site (Figure 7). The allegorical arrangement of the Sitting Liberty by Latrobe and Franzoni sixteen years later bears a striking similarity to Lazzarini's Franklin.

Latrobe was a frequent borrower from the Library and presumably had seen Lazzarini's statue.

Late in 1788, French architect Pierre 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. L'Enfant's elegant additions and renovations of the interior were well received. While they were described in print, they were not recorded as pictures or engravings. L'Enfant established an early standard for the hierarchy and decoration of an important federal building, which included no small degree of symbolic representation. For Federal Hall, L'Enfant



Figure 5. America Trampling on Oppression (1789); Frontispiece from Cooper, Reverend, *The History of North America: Containing, a Review of the Customs and Manners of the Original Inhabitants*, London, 1789 (The Society of the Cincinnati).



Figure 6. Sculpture of Benjamin Franklin carved in 1791 by Francois Lazzarini for the niche over the entry to the Library Company of Philadelphia (LCP) Now displayed indoors at the LCP.

planned for a sunburst pediment on the facade (Figure 8) and a Statue of Liberty behind the Speaker's chair, but there is no record that these ever appeared.<sup>7</sup>

Only two sessions of Congress met in Federal Hall, but the important Residence Act of 1790 was passed here, creating the

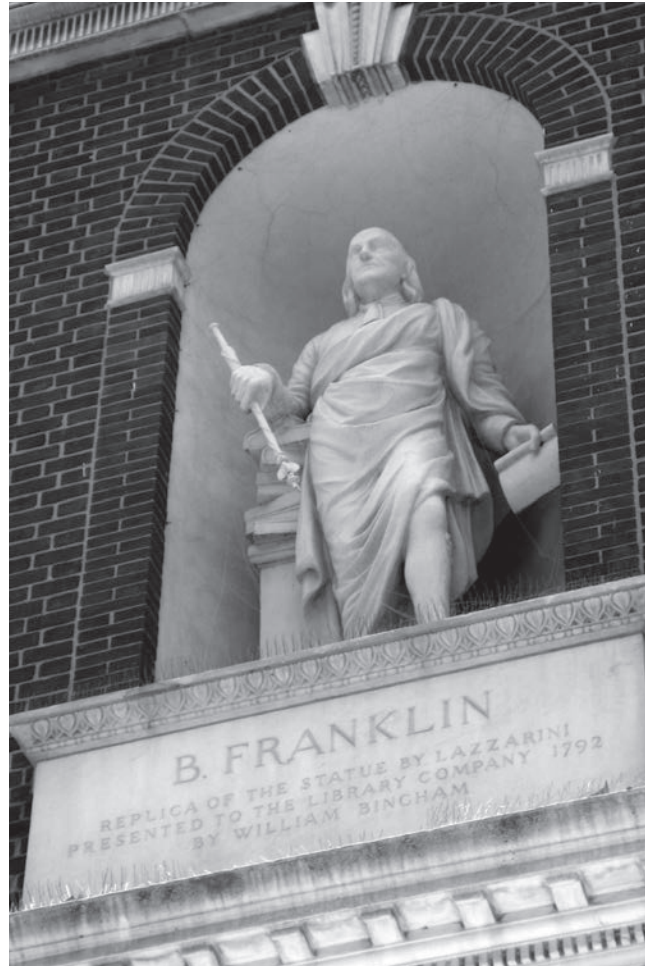


Figure 7. A recreation of the original Franklin sculpture displayed in a recreation of the original building on its original site in Philadelphia (Photo courtesy Wally Gobetz).

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. The design was a powerful symbolic expression of the new government as the grid, the open space, and the civic buildings formed a unified and symbolic pattern of authority and civic life as expressed by the classical city. L'Enfant described 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."<sup>8</sup> He suggested placing below the hill a "grand



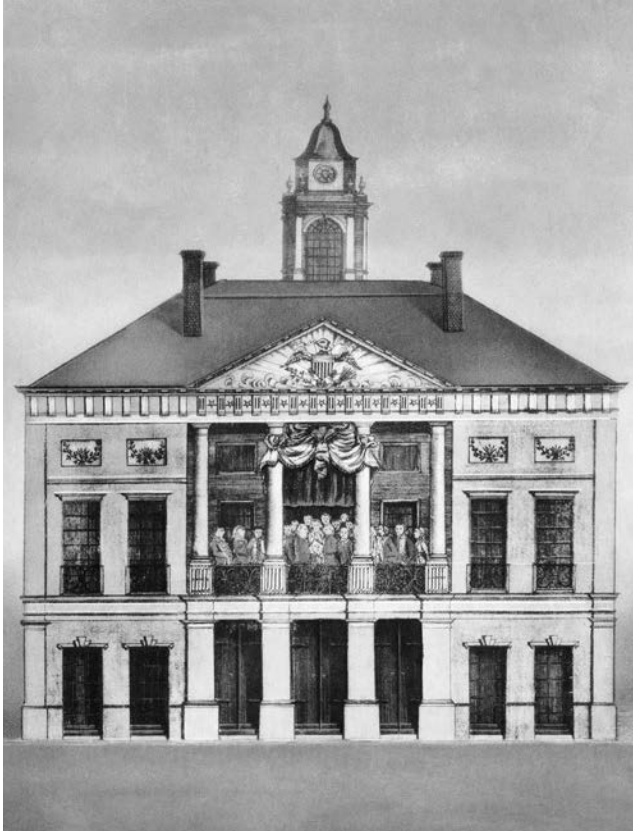


Figure 8. Amos Doolittle's 1789 drawing of the L'Enfant decorations for New York City's Federal Hall (Library of Congress).

Equestrian figure,” a reference to the bronze statue of George Washington that Congress had approved on 7 August 1783. The location of L'Enfant's large bronze equestrian was most likely near the crossing of the United States's prime meridian at what later would be known as the Jefferson Pier. 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 arrived in America, “filled with a volcanic enthusiasm for Liberty and the Rights of Man” (Figure 9).<sup>9</sup> Ceracchi was fresh from Europe, where he had struggled mightily to establish himself as a pre-eminent sculptor of political leaders and political monuments. He often made excellent likenesses in his busts and portraits (Figure 10). His larger compositions, however, often displayed complexity and melodrama that could be overwrought, though they were in the spirit of the age. In a fluid, synthetic attempt to 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 topped by a fantastic personification of Liberty (Figure 11).

Ceracchi proposed his concept to Congress twice, first in 1791 and then again in 1795. Most likely, he intended the statue to stand in the same area L'Enfant had identified. In his opening paragraph, Ceracchi wrote:

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

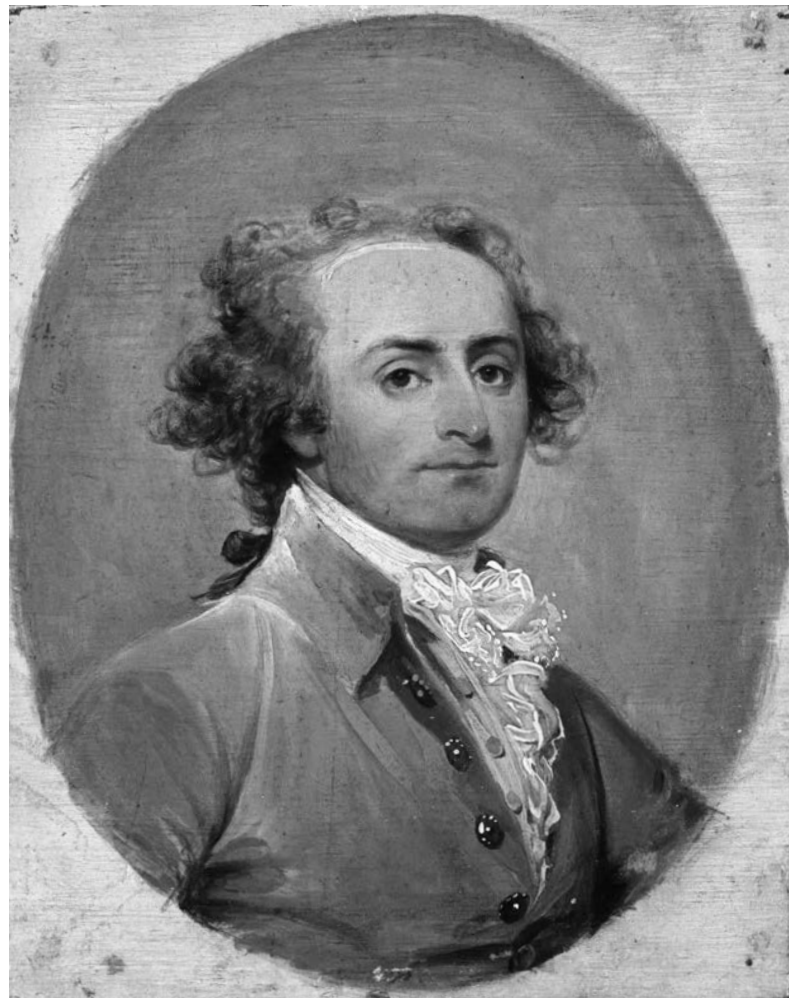


Figure 9. Italian sculptor Joseph Ceracchi in a 1792 painting by John Trumbull (Metropolitan Museum of Art).



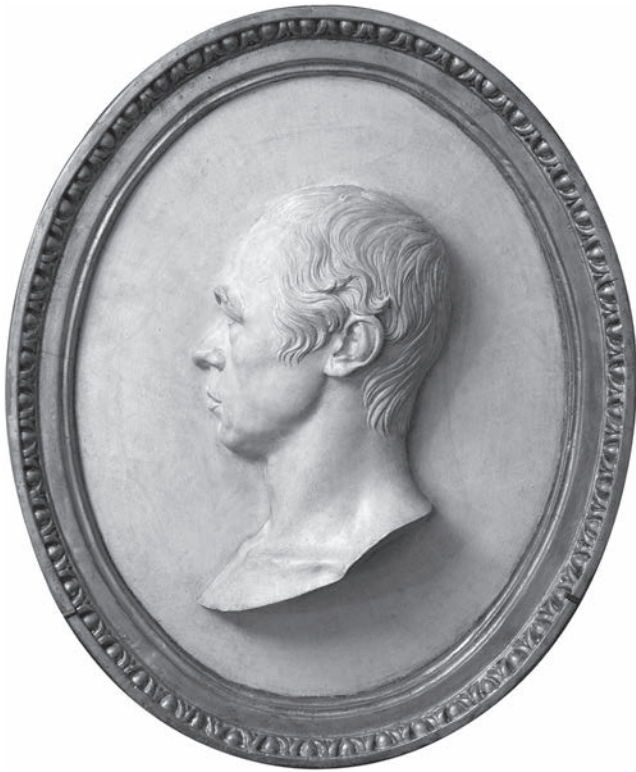


Figure 10. Ceracchi's portrait of James Madison, 1792. This sculpture now resides in a conference room at Princeton University (Photo by author).

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 awful voice echoes through the vault of heaven, in favor of the rights of man.

Ceracchi's animated Statue of Liberty crowned a monument that, overall, would have stood sixty feet high, nearly fifty feet in diameter, and included four additional allegorical groups surrounding the original bronze equestrian statue of Washington. He exhibited his six-foot drawing of the monument in a Philadelphia tavern in 1791, but that drawing is now lost.<sup>10</sup>

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,<sup>11</sup> followed by a return to Europe and a second trip to America, his subscription plan to finance the ambitious monument failed. 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—all at a time when the construction of the Capitol had not yet 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 by his time, he lived out 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

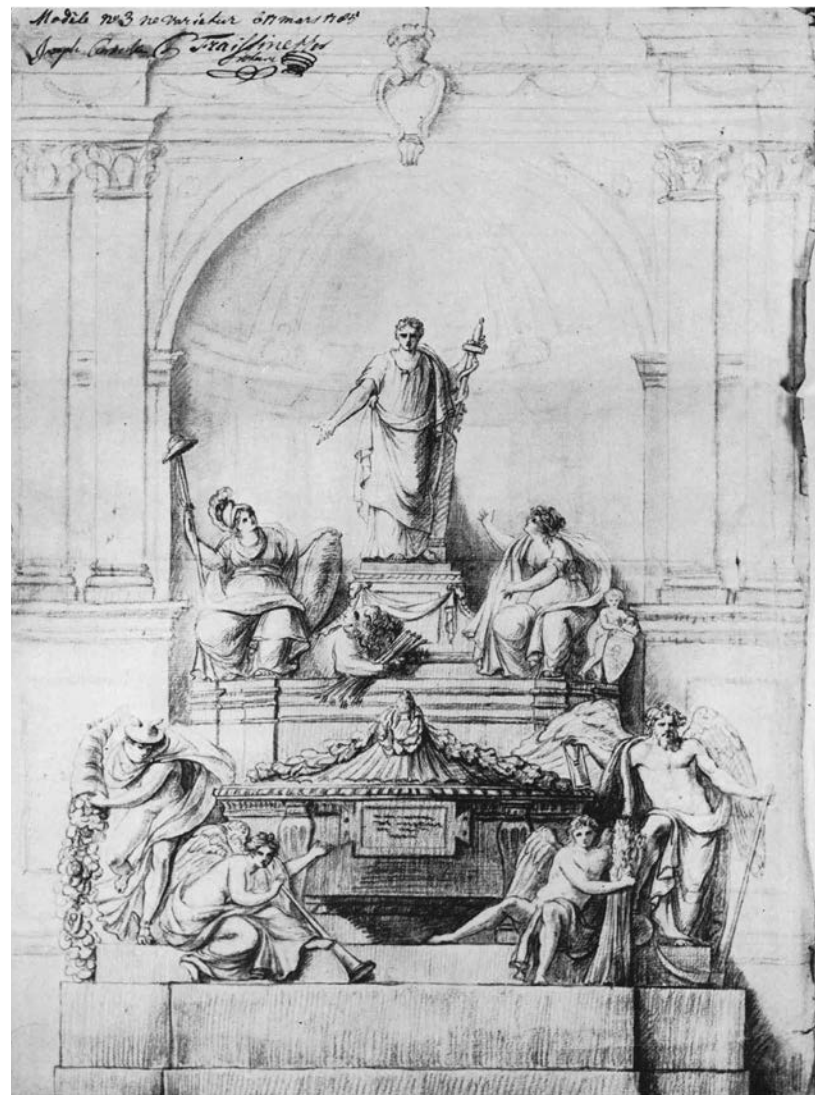


Figure 11. Ceracchi's drawing of the complete van der Capellan monument [Ulysse Desportes, "Ceracchi's Design for a Monument," *The Art Quarterly* 27, no. 4 (Winter 1964): 483].



Figure 12. The nearly six-foot tall head of Minerva by Joseph Ceracchi (1792). L'enfant proposed placing this Minerva behind the speaker's dais in Federal Hall. (Photo by author. This sculpture is in the collection of the Library Company of Philadelphia.)

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 sculpt in terracotta a colossal bust, *Minerva as the Patroness of American Liberty*, nearly six feet tall, which stood behind the Speaker's dais in Congress Hall in 1792 (Figures 12 and 13). Whether he meant *Minerva* to stand for Liberty is not clear, as in his own words, his *Minerva* figure occupied a lower place in his earlier gigantic monument. Nor is *Minerva* integral to the design of this chamber. Because of its colossal scale, the bust would have demonstrated the artist's ability to execute his giant monument. A composite photograph by the author shows the *Minerva*, in the correct scale, as it might have appeared in the Congress Hall chamber. *Minerva* was given to the Library Company of Philadelphia when Congress moved to Washington in 1800, and it remains there today.

## FINDING SCULPTORS TO EXECUTE THE WORKS

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 was inevitable that the arts would flourish. "The days of Greece may be revived in the woods of America," he predicted, "and Philadelphia become the Athens of the Western world."<sup>12</sup> Latrobe stated in this address that architecture was the most advanced of American arts in 1800. He lauded his client, Samuel Fox, for having the vision and courage to build the Bank of Pennsylvania, from Latrobe's own design. The Bank of Pennsylvania, the first Greek revival building in America and built of white marble, would have been innovative for any modern city in 1800. Masonry-vaulted, naturally lit, unencumbered of ornament, and exhibiting sleek proportions of monumental Greek architecture, the elegant white edifice nestled into Philadelphia's brick waterfront might have shocked the denizens of the city. In Latrobe's discourse, he also claimed that American painters were on the cusp of greatness (but Europe valued them more) and that America's sculpture languished.



Figure 13. Ceracchi's Minerva head behind the speaker's dais in Federal Hall (Composite image by the author).





Figure 14. William Rush's carved wood sculpture of George Washington displaying a raised foot and unfurled document (1814) (Independence National Historic Park).

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, crafted figureheads for ships, which Latrobe regarded very highly as an art form. Rush also carved the allegorical *Water Nymph and Bittern* that stood as the central 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. His carved wood figure of *George Washington* (1814), which today

resides at the Second Bank of the United States, demonstrates sophisticated contrapposto (Figure 14). However, Latrobe did not call Rush to duty when hiring sculptors for the Capitol, though Rush lived in nearby Philadelphia. Latrobe stated simply that Rush's medium was wood and though extremely talented, he was never considered for work on the Capitol.

## LATROBE'S AESTHETIC

Latrobe deeply admired the sculpture of Englishman John Flaxman from his London days. Charles Brownell has pointed out that Latrobe emulated Flaxman figures in his own sketches on at least two occasions.<sup>13</sup> Besides Latrobe's admiration of the artistry of Flaxman, Canova, and Thorvaldsen, 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. 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 circa 1810 (Figure 15). And he certainly knew Jean-Antoine Houdon's masterful busts of Jefferson and Franklin and the full standing figure of Washington, unveiled in the Virginia Capitol the year Latrobe arrived in America.

Besides the aforementioned Statue of Franklin by Lazzarini, 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. Jennings's painting "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 (Figure 16). 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 almost certain that he knew this painting.

## THE LATROBE-FRANZONI SITTING LIBERTY

Latrobe first mentioned the idea of a Statue of Liberty in a 6 March 1805 letter to Philip Mazzei and requested assistance in hiring sculptors from Italy to work on the Capitol. Latrobe wrote to Mazzei at Jefferson's behest. Mazzei and Jefferson had maintained a robust correspondence over the decades since



Figure 15. Left to right: Minerva models, Joseph Ceracchi for the van Der Capellen monument (1788); Johann Gottfried Schadow for the Brandenburg Gate (1792); Benjamin Henry Latrobe for the US Capitol (circa 1810) (Latrobe drawing reversed) (*Art Quarterly* 27 (1964): 483; Courtesy Demetrius Chryssikos; Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress).



Figure 16. Liberty Displaying the Arts and Sciences (1792) by Samuel Jennings (Library Company of Philadelphia).



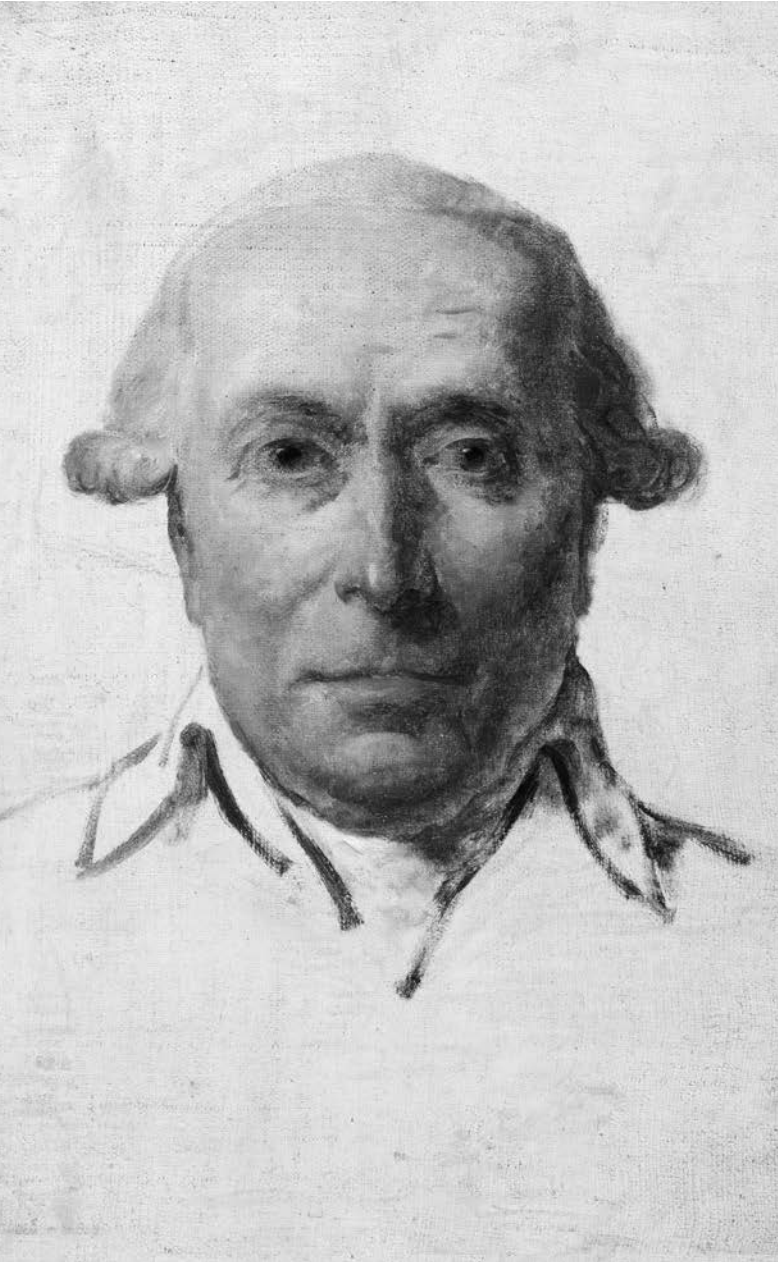


Figure 17. Filippo Mazzei by Jacques-Louis David (1790) (Louvre, Paris).

Mazzei left America. Mazzei 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 Wing.<sup>14</sup> He also asked Mazzei to obtain a bid price from Antonio Canova, one of the most celebrated sculptors in the world working in Rome, to carve the “sitting figure of Liberty” for the House chamber (Figure 17). 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.<sup>15</sup>

On 28 March 1806, Franzoni and Andrei arrived from Rome. In Mazzei’s estimation, Franzoni’s “masterful strokes [*sic*]” would make him a first-rate sculptor of the figures, and Andrei would be a first-rate sculptor of the flora and decorative pieces. In a 29 May 1806 letter to Mazzei, Latrobe lamented that Franzoni must carve the large eagle in the frieze before he could 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 that date.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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.”<sup>18</sup>

Latrobe’s letters provide key dimensions and parameters of the figure itself and its accoutrements. Subjectively speaking, Latrobe muses in his letters about his favorite sculptors, his proclivities in art, and his emotional response to stylistic ideas and elements. Both the literal parameters of the design and Latrobe’s aesthetic vision are important in recreating an image of the Liberty. When Latrobe puts pencil to paper, his ideas are clear and detailed. Therefore, the only design drawing of the Liberty that exists, although of small scale, is very informative. His drawing of Liberty occurs in the very center of his famous east–west section drawing of the Hall of Representatives in the South Wing from the spring of 1804,<sup>19</sup> which also includes the projected minimums and maximums of direct light entering the chamber (Figure 18). The Liberty is depicted at the exact center of this drawing, suggesting it is the symbolic and graphic centerpiece of the room and absolutely essential to the architecture. In his first March 1805 letter to Mazzei, Latrobe described the Liberty as 9’- 0” tall while seated. At the scale of  $1/8'' = 1' - 0''$ , the scale of the east–west section, the Sitting

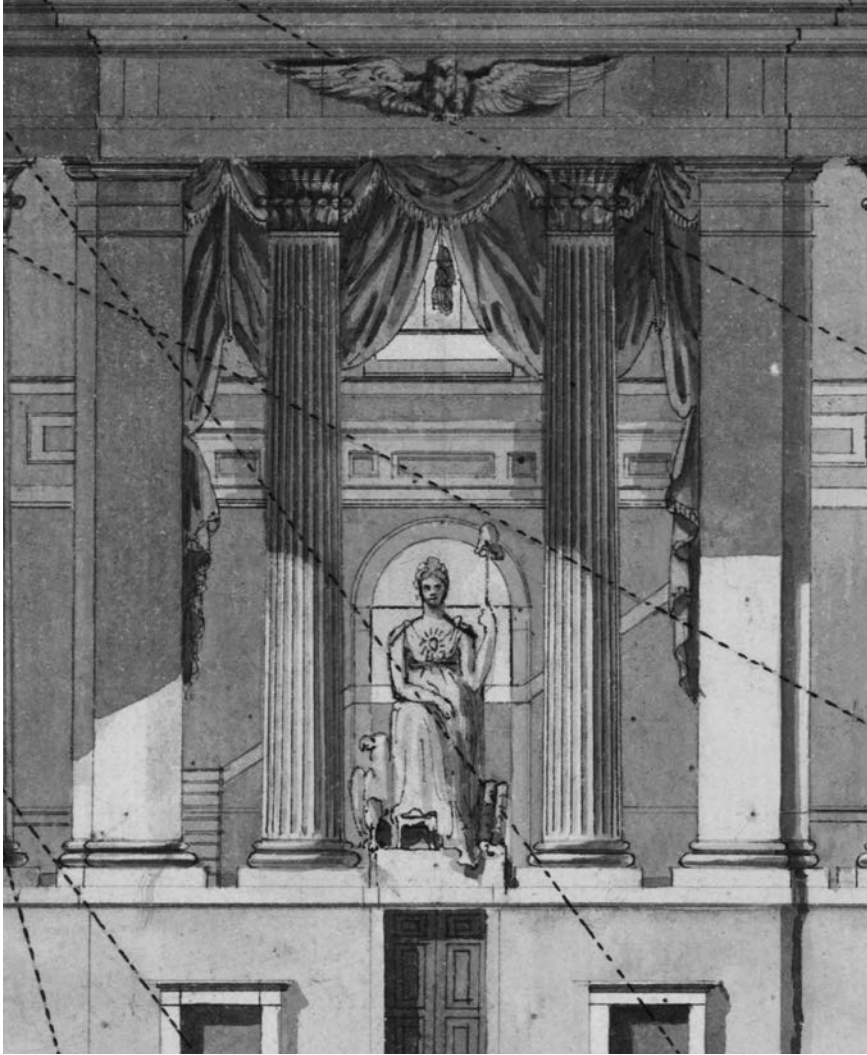


Figure 18. Detail of the center of Latrobe's east-west section drawing (1804). This is the only drawing showing the Liberty and her accoutrements. The dotted lines indicate the maximum and minimum angles of direct light that would enter the chamber (Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress).

Liberty is shown exactly one-and-a-half inches high (therefore 12'-0" tall) 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'-8" columns and billows of crimson drapery.

Even at small scale, stylistic details about Latrobe's intentions for the Sitting Liberty are obvious. She wears a Greek style gown with décolletage, a high waist, and a large ornament at her breast. Her hair is piled up with a tiara—a very fashionable look for 1805 (Figure 19). Her left arm holds a liberty pole with the Phrygian liberty cap, and her right foot is raised. An eagle in repose, with an outward look as though in a defensive stance, stands on her right. Two books are resting on her left, possibly a reference to the two books in Gilbert Stuart's famous Lansdowne portrait of Washington (thought to be the *Federalist Papers* and the *Congressional Record*), a

painting well known to Latrobe. The complex arrangements of the allegorical features in Latrobe's tiny sketch and in his subsequent writings are similar to those in the Franklin sculpture by Lazzarini. Writing to Mazzei on 19 December 1806, Latrobe expressed some confusion about 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, noting Franzoni "will not disgrace us by his Sculpture, but that Canova, probably Thorvaldsen, and Flaxman are his superiors to a great degree."<sup>20</sup>

Latrobe apparently did not approve at first 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





Figure 19. Madame de Verninac by Jacques-Louis David, 1799. Latrobe's costuming of the Liberty was based on such contemporary fashion. Note one arm raised and one lowered in this pose (Louvre, Paris).

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." Latrobe instead demanded that one arm be 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. Through such suggestions Latrobe continued to steer Franzoni in the design and carving of the Liberty<sup>21</sup> (Figure 20).

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. 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.<sup>22</sup> In the course of her design in the first nine months, 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 unfurled Constitution. Almost two months later, in a report on the south wing of the Capitol solicited by the editor of Washington's newspaper of record, the *National*

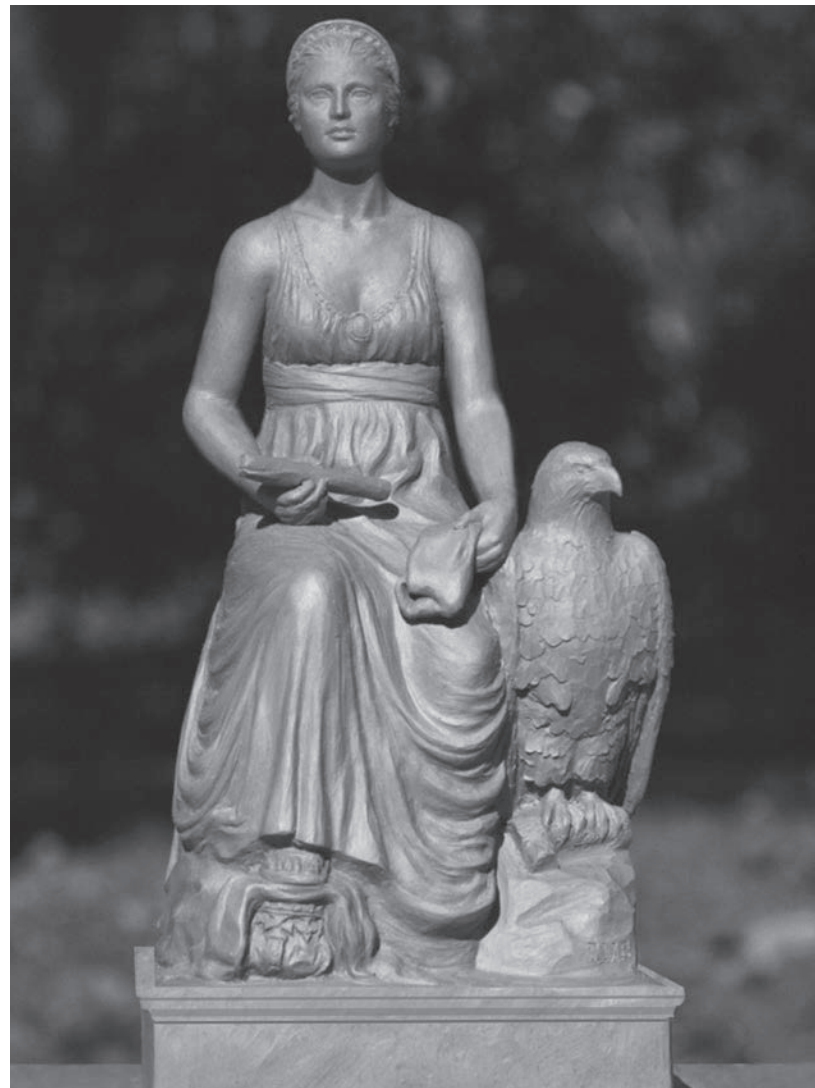


Figure 20. The author's reconstruction of the Latrobe–Franzoni Liberty based on the sketch and details from a dozen letters. This model is clay-for-plaster but was digitized for use in the computer model.

*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.<sup>23</sup> 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.<sup>24</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Latrobe had taken over the project for the South Wing in 1803, and his first task was to inspect the progress and quality of the works. By 1804, Latrobe had essentially redesigned the concept and sequence for the South Wing. He elevated Thornton's ground floor House chamber to a *piano nobile* and placed at the ground level a well-conceived program of offices, chambers, lobbies, privies, offices, a courtyard, and, importantly, an entry sequence of skylit vestibules. Latrobe wrote that the sequence was "the greatest variety of scenery in the building, every part of which, however, is indispensably necessary to the communication of the different apartments of each other."<sup>25</sup> Latrobe's intention was that visitors to the Hall chamber would enter into a finely detailed vestibule filled with soft indirect light and climb a stair that rose westward through a dark passage. At the top of the stair, visitors would turn south and enter the chamber that would be filled with light. His manipulation of the entry sequence heightened the effect of entering the vast chamber with its one hundred skylights and its framed Liberty.<sup>26</sup>

Latrobe described the scene at the entrance to the House chamber, and the viewer understands at once that the architecture and the sculpture are integral 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 (sic), 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" (Figure 21).<sup>27</sup>

Visualizing the Statue of Liberty as recreated by the author allows the reader to fully understand the meaning of the monument, within its comprehensive architectural setting, as intended by its original creators. The Liberty's symbolic and allegorical importance is echoed by later works at the Capitol. Enrico Causici's sculpture (1828) and Thomas Crawford's crowning piece (1863) personified similar concepts of Liberty within an architectural setting (see note 1). By contrast,



Figure 21. The author's reconstruction of the entry sequence of the Hall of Representatives as a computer model showing the Latrobe-Franzoni sitting Liberty on center of the north-south axis.



Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi's standing Liberty in New York Harbor (1886) differs in scale and meaning. Its title, *Liberty Enlightening the World*, signify its world scale; a city's harbor is its setting and a lamp held high its principal symbol. Bartholdi's Liberty suggests the evolved status of the United States as an emerging world leader in the pursuit of liberty and human rights. The Latrobe–Franzoni Liberty, the initial forging of the architectural expression of the *Rights of Man*, fundamentally represents the American experiment and that allegorical arrangement anchors a great chamber. In the spirit of the latter, Walt Whitman's distilled lines from 1855 accurately

describe the sought-after vision as “Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,/ A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,/Chair'd in the adamant of Time.”<sup>28</sup>

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## ENDNOTES

1. Research on the history of the US Capitol has been supported by three fellowships from the US Capitol Historical Society. It has been compiled and synthesized in the form of large and detailed three-dimensional computer models.

2. 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 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 2020, 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 “statue of Liberty,” making it a less formal concept.

3. This period is 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.

4. Latrobe to Philip Mazzei, 12 April 1806, in John C. Van Horne et al., eds., *The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, vol. 2, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984–1988), 229.

5. William C. Allen, *History of the U.S. Capitol; A Chronicle of Design, Construction, and Politics* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2001); Jeffrey Cohen and Charles Brownell, *The Architectural Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, Vol. II (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 344–424.

6. An excellent paper, “Sleeping Amongst the Heroes” (2012) by Whitney A. J. Robertson details the history and production of the bed hangings and the apotheosis pattern in particular. Whitney A. J. Robertson, “Sleeping Amongst Heroes: Copperplate-Printed Bed Furniture in the “Washington and American Independence [Sic] 1776; the Apotheosis of Franklin” Pattern,” in *Textiles and Politics: Textile Society of America 13th Biennial Symposium Proceedings, Washington, DC, September 18–September 22, 2012* (13th Biennial; Textiles and Politics: Textile Society of America, Washington D.C.: Textile Society of America, 2012).

7. 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*, vol. 15, 19 vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972–2017), 32–35.

8. Pierre L'Enfant to George Washington, 22 June 1791, in Dorothy Twohig et al., eds., *Papers of George Washington, 1744–1799*, vol. 8, 33 vols. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1983–1998), 290.

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

10. “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*, vol. 12, 26 vols., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961–1979), 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).

11. 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 US Supreme Court).

12. *Latrobe Correspondence*, vol. 2, 21–24; vol. 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.

**13.** *Latrobe Correspondence*, vol. 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: Yale University Press, 1985), 17-24, 29.

**14.** *Latrobe Correspondence*, vol. 2, 21-24 and 141-145. Antonio Canova (1757-1822) was the most famous Italian neoclassical sculptor of his day.

**15.** *Latrobe Correspondence*, vol. 2, 225-231. Latrobe summarized their modified contract on 6 April 1806 (*Ibid.*, vol. 2, 219-222). 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.*, vol. 3, 802). Unlike Giuseppe, Carlo is memorialized in a portrait, currently located in the Office of the Curator of the Architect of the Capitol.

**16.** *Latrobe Correspondence*, vol. 2, 225-231.

**17.** *Ibid.*, 233-235. The formal definition of "colossal" as a term in sculpture is defined as a figure twice life-size.

**18.** *Ibid.*.

**19.** ADE UNIT 2462, no. 18 (C Size), Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division.

**20.** *Latrobe Correspondence*, vol. 2, 328-329.

**21.** *Ibid.*, 346-348.

**22.** *Ibid.*, 475-376.

**23.** In Latrobe's own words he describes the sitting figure as being 8'-6" in height. The author has concluded that

with an 18" base block, the total height of the sculpture would have been 10'-0". Positioned seven feet from the floor of the Hall suggests the top of Liberty's head would have been 17'-0" from the floor. For comparison, Daniel Chester French's statue of a sitting Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial is 19'-0" tall, resting on an 11'-0" high pedestal.

**24.** To Samuel Harrison Smith, 22 November 1807, *Latrobe Correspondence*, vol. 2, 499-506.

**25.** *Ibid.*

**26.** For a discussion of the scenic effect of this sequence of spaces, see Brownell and Cohen, *Architectural Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, 344 and 353-357.

**27.** *Ibid.*

**28.** Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, (Dover Edition; Original 1855 Edition). The last three lines of Whitman's poem *America* express similarly the fundamental symbolism Latrobe sought.