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Putting American Democracy on a Pedestal: The Story of the 1975-1976 Old Supreme Court and Old Senate Chamber Restorations

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Abstract
Examining how the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers progressed reveals a connection to differing attitudes towards historic spaces that can occur following dips in a nation's morale. At times of uncertainty and doubt, mementoes of a grander past can be used for reassurance in the midst of change. Attitudes towards the physical fabric of the U.S Capitol changed dramatically throughout the 20th century, as is reflected in the prolonged story of the old Senate and old Supreme Court restorations. The two historic chambers, used by the Senate until 1859 and the Court until 1935, watched the nation's baby steps evolve into the confident strides of a growing democracy. Despite serving as a stage for presidential inaugurations and national debates, the chambers fell into neglect in the 20th century after the Supreme Court vacated the premises. A 1934 directive to preserve of the chambers was not adhered to until the spaces were restored and opened to the public during the Bicentennial years of the mid-1970s. The restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers to their respective 1859 and 1860 appearances was a remarkably thorough and academic undertaking. The cooperation and leadership of the Architect of the Capitol's Office, the Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities, the Office of the Senate Curator, contracted architects, and skilled artisans resulted in a striking and symbolic recreation of what these historic chambers looked like during the last years they were both occupied by the Senate and Court.

Keywords
Historic Preservation; Supreme Court; Senate

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PUTTING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY ON A PEDESTAL:
THE STORY OF THE 1975-1976
OLD SUPREME COURT AND OLD SENATE CHAMBER RESTORATIONS

Christine Stewart Wells

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INTRODUCTION

A child’s first steps are wobbly, as is often the case with learning anything new. Similarly, America’s new democratic government took a while to settle into its current location. Congress moved frequently until the City of Washington was founded as the nation’s capitol in 1790. Even after moving into the partially completed north wing of the new Capitol in 1800, the game of musical chairs continued for the U.S. Senate and the U.S. Court Chambers. The two historic chambers, used by the Senate until 1859 and the Court until 1935, watched the nation’s baby steps evolve into the confident strides of a growing democracy. Despite serving as a stage for presidential inaugurations and national debates, the chambers fell into neglect in the 20th century after the Supreme Court vacated the premises.

In an attempt to protect the imminently empty rooms, a resolution was passed by the Senate in 1934 which called for the preservation of the chambers for the educational benefit of the public. However, no money was allocated for the preparation of working drawings for their restoration until thirty years later in 1964. Subsequently, the final lump appropriation for the actual restoration work was continuously deleted from the appropriations bill until Fiscal Year 1973. As a result, the 1934 directive to preserve of the chambers was not adhered to until, after many years of neglect, the two rooms were restored and opened to the public during the Bicentennial years of the mid-1970s.
Since the completion of the restorations coincided with the Bicentennial celebrations, it is easy to view the restoration as a Bicentennial project. According to the Architect of the Capitol’s website, “The Old Senate Chamber, National Statuary Hall, and the Old Supreme Court Chamber ... were restored to their mid-19th-century appearance for the nation's 1976 Bicentennial celebration.”¹ However, as evidenced by the 1930s efforts to restore the two chambers, this project was set in motion many years prior.

Examining how the project actually progressed reveals a connection to differing attitudes towards historic spaces that can occur following dips in a nation’s morale. At times of uncertainty and doubt, mementoes of a grander past can be used for reassurance in the midst of change. One such tangible reminder is in the form of federal government architecture, both functional and symbolic these spaces speak of America’s history and progress. Attitudes towards the physical fabric of the U.S Capitol changed dramatically throughout the 20th century, as is reflected in the prolonged story of the old Senate and old Supreme Court restorations.

Periods of low morale for the United States are ideal times to inspire patriotism. While these historic chambers are functional spaces they also can be used to symbolize America’s great past and as an opportunity for rebranding and image refurbishment. The first appropriation for the project’s initial planning stage was a month after President Kennedy was assassinated and the actual work was finally funded a week after six men had been arrested for trying to bug the offices of the Democratic National Party at the Watergate hotel and office complex, a rather unpatriotic undertaking.

While the restoration project relied on the efforts of many dedicated individuals for its success, the larger historical context tells the story of why this project of preservation for the benefit and education of the public moved forward and was then overlooked for many years before its completion. Why did the restoration of these historic chambers require decades to come to fruition? Funding was requested year after year for the project, but outside factors affected how and when the project was allowed to proceed. The actual proposal for the project changed little between the 1930s and 1970s, but what did change was how these patriotic spaces were viewed by those inside and outside the Capitol Complex. Broader shifts in America’s preservation movement also influenced perceptions of these two rooms by those responsible for their care.

Lastly, the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers to their respective 1859 and 1860 appearances was a remarkably thorough and academic undertaking. The Architect of the Capitol’s internal files and the Treasury Department’s records at the National Archives reveal detailed expense records for purchases, repairs, and alterations to the chamber throughout the 19th century. Researchers also assembled old guidebook descriptions, plans, paintings, and drawings to try to ascertain the appearance of the chambers throughout their lifetime. While the furniture, draperies, and carpet required recreations, many of the fine architectural details in both chambers still existed and merely needed uncovering and/or refurbishment. The cooperation and leadership of the Architect of the Capitol’s Office, the Senate

2 The project initially started without an existing set of working drawings which created some surprises.
Commission on Art and Antiquities, the Office of the Senate Curator, contracted architects, and skilled artisans resulted in a striking and symbolic recreation of what these historic chambers looked like during the last years they were both occupied by the Senate and Court.
TIMELINE

1793
Original north (Senate) wing, 1793-1800
Original south (House) wing, 1793-1807

1818
Center section and Rotunda, 1818-1824

1851
Senate and Supreme Court Chambers rebuilt, 1819; House Chamber rebuilt, 1826

1856
Present House and Senate wings and connecting corridors, 1851-1867

1884
Cast-iron dome, 1855-1866

1908
Terraces, 1884-1892

Russell Senate Office Building, 1908
Cannon House Office Building, 1908

Longworth House Office Building, 1933

Senate Resolution 193 to protect the chambers, 1934

1958
East front extension, 1958-1962
Dirksen Office Building, 1958

Rayburn House Office Building, 1965

Restoration funding denied

Restoration funded with $37,500, FY 1964

Commission on Art and Antiquities
of the U.S. Senate established, 1968

1968

1972
Restoration funded with $1,521,000, FY 1972

1973
House Commission on Restoration appointed, 1973

1975
Old Supreme Court Chamber reopened, 1975
Old Senate Chamber reopened, 1976
CHAPTER 1: Changing Attitudes towards the Two Historic Chambers

I. Rediscovering an Old Senate Resolution, 1960

An innocuous letter revealed a long overdue project to the right people, thereby restarting a chain of events which would lead to the restoration of the old Senate and Supreme Court chambers in the U.S. Capitol. This letter was written by Joseph C. Duke, who was elected by the U.S. Senate to serve as their Sergeant at Arms in 1949.³ Duke had come to the Capitol to work for two Arizona Senators; the second was Senator Carl Hayden (D-AZ) who was the Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, whose control of the federal purse makes it all-powerful. Since Hayden was held in high regard by his colleagues for his support of their own state projects, when he needed something they rarely stood in the way.⁴ Duke’s connection with Senator Hayden helped get him elected the Sergeant at Arms, who serves as the chief protocol and law enforcement officer for the Senate while managing many of the Senate’s support services.

In the spring of 1960, Duke wrote a letter to his former boss, Senator Hayden, stating that both the Senator and other Senators have asked him from time to time why was the old Supreme Court Chamber (now referred to at the old Senate Chamber) not preserved as a shrine and kept open to the public.⁵ The old Senate Chamber is located on the first floor of the original North Wing of the Capitol, adjacent to the rotunda. And directly beneath the chamber is the old Supreme Court Chamber on the ground floor.

The U.S. Senate met in the upper chamber until 1859 and the U.S. Supreme Court met in

³ Duke served as the Sergeant at Arms from 1949-1953 and 1955-1965; his brief intermission was while the Republicans took the control of the Senate.
⁵ April 22, 1960 letter from Duke to Hayden, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 4.
the lower chamber before moving into the upper chamber in 1860, where they stayed until 1936. Duke’s letter revealed an overlooked 1934 resolution to preserve the chamber and the space below it. He recommended initiating a restoration to ensure that the use of the chamber complied with the resolution and he suggested first restoring the upper chamber and then the lower chamber. By contacting his former boss who was the influential Appropriations Chair, Duke put an old project back in motion.

II. The Genesis of Senate Resolution 193, 1934

The educational and inspirational value of the two chambers is what drove the Senate Majority Leader, Senator Joe Robinson (D-AR), to advance Senate Resolution 193 (S.Res.193) in 1934 to protect the rooms once the Supreme Court moved out:

“Resolved, That the court room now occupied by the United States Supreme Court in the Capitol, when vacated by the Court, and the space below it formerly part of the court room, shall be preserved and kept open to the public under such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the Architect of the Capitol with the approval of the Committee on Rules of the Senate.”\(^6\)

According to a preeminent historian of the historic preservation field, Charles B. Hosmer, the principal motivation of preservation in the 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries was the “desire to educate” the American people into a deeper regard for their history, only

\(^6\) The resolution initially excluded the lower chamber but was amended to include both chambers. A resolution is a proposal that addresses matters entirely within the prerogative of one chamber or the other and requires neither the approval of the other chamber nor the signature of the President, and it does not have the force of law: U.S. Congress. Senate. 1934. Senate Resolution 193. 73\(^{rd}\) Cong., 2\(^{nd}\) sess.
occasionally tempered by aesthetic considerations.”

The perceived historic value of the chambers lay in their role as a stage for historic events undergone by historic people.

Senate Resolution 193 aspired to give Americans a place to remember their illustrious past during the low times of the Great Depression, similar to the 1935 recreation of President Lincoln’s cabin by the Civilian Conservation Corp to remember the great president. In times of difficulty, remembering the glorious colonial past of revolution and overcoming tyranny also served to elevate national morale. Virginia’s colonial capitol was restored and reconstructed in the 1930s as a shrine of American ideals. During difficult years for the nation, Colonial Williamsburg reinforced the notion that America’s past was magnificent and served as a source of inspiration. The restoration was celebratory, “to commemorate the history and success of the American Revolution” and to diffuse “healthful information in regard to American history.”

Fittingly, the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation’s mission statement is “To help the future learn from their past.”

The federal government also helped shape patriotic and historic sentiment with a celebration of the bicentennial of George Washington’s birth in 1932.

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8 It is of interest that the fact the site was entirely reconstructed was glossed over originally: The site was presented as the authentic place of his birth despite being an entirely reconstructed building: John E. Bodnar, Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 192.
9 Ibid., 172
Bicentennial Commission managed to overcome the nation’s financial struggles and initiated or inspired thousands of commemorative events for a “globe-girdling” celebration.\textsuperscript{12} Nine months of medals, stamps, marches and memorials commemorating the nation’s hero provided a source of pride and civic education for a nation in the midst of deep economic hardship. Another reason to value the past and places such as the chambers which represented the past, was because America was rapidly changing.

The 1920s had ushered in a period of modernity which altered the mindset of many Americans. Innovations in transportation and communication resulted in attitudes that preferred new over old. Entire downtown neighborhoods were razed for massive public works projects with little regard given to preserving a historic place unless a famous patriot had graced its doors. As buildings were torn down for new construction, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) was formed in 1933 to document the rapidly disappearing architectural heritage.\textsuperscript{13} The demolition was feasible because the federal government had no overall commitment to conserve the built environment.\textsuperscript{14}

This changed with the Historic Sites Act of 1935, which created a national policy to preserve historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for public use for


\textsuperscript{14} When the National Park Service (NPS) was organized in 1916, their initial priority was to establish national parks to preserve America’s natural resources.
the “inspiration and benefit” of the American people.\textsuperscript{15} However, preservation efforts were still primarily initiated and led by private citizens, like Mrs. John Lord O’Brien.

Mrs. O’Brien recognized the educational value of the two historic chambers in the Capitol and led the charge for their preservation which resulted in the passage of Senate Resolution 193.\textsuperscript{16} President Hoover had appointed her husband the Assistant Attorney General of the Anti-Trust Division at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).\textsuperscript{17} While with DOJ, he argued more than 15 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court, so both O’Brians were familiar with the gravitas and historic connotations of the chamber (the lower chamber was their law library). Mrs. O’Brien resembled other early American preservationists, in that she was a well established white female.

Early preservation efforts in America were generally grass-roots movements with women at the helm striving to save specific buildings associated with historic people and events, mostly related to the nation’s founding.\textsuperscript{18} For example, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association purchased Mount Vernon in the 1850s not for its architectural significance but for patriotic love of past glories associated with the life of George Washington.\textsuperscript{19} Successful preservation endeavors, like Mount Vernon and Colonial Williamsburg, received no public funds and relied on the support of the private sector,

\textsuperscript{17} President Roosevelt appointed him to serve as General Counsel of the War Production Board in 1941.
\textsuperscript{19} Norman Tyler, \textit{Historic Preservation : An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice} (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000), 34.
particularly philanthropists. In the Thirties, women, such as Mrs. O’Brien, were still the primary advocates for historic preservation initiatives in the United States.

As a result of Mrs. O’Brien’s influential advocacy, a committee was formed to preserve the court’s chamber. They met in the Office of Assistant Attorney General Seth Richardson to discuss the matter. Attending were: Mrs. O’Brien; Charles Warren, former Assistant Attorney General; David Lynn, the Architect of the Capitol; and Frederic Delano, the Chair of the National Capitol Park and Planning Commission. Delano had already taken up the cause of the upper chamber in 1932 and wrote to David Lynn, the Architect of the Capitol, asking “is not the country justified in insisting that the ancient traditions of the past be preserved?” Also anxious for the “proper preservation of this historic room” were two notable figures, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, and Charles C. Burlingham, an advocate for judicial reform.

The meeting’s powerful attendees drafted a resolution calling for the preservation of the upper chamber and keeping it open for the public once the Supreme Court moved into their new building across the street. Mrs. O’Brien lobbied Members of the Senate and Supreme Court Justices to obtain their approval for the proposal. She

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20 The federal government’s first preservation initiatives were focused on conserving lands, not buildings.
21 Women also worked to pass ordinances to preserve their cities historic district. Charleston, South Carolina was the first to do so in 1931 and the Vieux Carré in New Orleans, Louisiana followed in 1936: Ibid., 39.
23 December 19, 1932 letter from Delano to Lynn, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 14
also visited with Mrs. Roosevelt, who offered her support.\textsuperscript{25} The First Lady wrote to her, “My husband tells me that the Supreme Court Room will remain intact and will be used for special hearings.”\textsuperscript{26} Mrs. O’Brien’s lobbying efforts led to Senator Robinson lending his support as the powerful Senate Majority Leader and their combined influence resulted in most Senators approving of the plan to preserve the chambers.

As the Senate Majority Leader during the 1920s through the 1930s, several Presidents relied on Senator Joe Robinson’s clout to pass their proposals, including President Roosevelt.\textsuperscript{27} The Senate powerbroker fought successfully for FDR’s New Deal reforms through persuasion, oration, and floor maneuvers, and he used his position to appoint loyal Senators to powerful committees to aid passage of the reform bills.\textsuperscript{28} Incidentally, FDR promised his loyal supporter an appointment to the first available opening on the Supreme Court, since the former criminal lawyer’s personal dream was a seat on the Supreme Court.\textsuperscript{29}

To strengthen the request to preserve the rooms, Senator Robinson submitted research to the \textit{Congressional Record} on the historic association of the spaces by Charles Warren, a prominent lawyer and legal historian, along with a letter from Dr. Butler, President of Columbia University, which advocated their value as a “center of pilgrimage

\textsuperscript{25} May 27, 1960 memorandum to file regarding conversation with Mr. O’Brien, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 14.
\textsuperscript{26} January 5, 1934 letter from Eleanor Roosevelt to Mrs. O’Brien, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 14.
\textsuperscript{29} However, this was not to be despite Robinson’s best efforts to support Roosevelt’s court packing efforts; Ibid., 163.
for young Americans.” The support of these two prominent academics lent credence to the worthiness of preserving the two rooms by detailing the history of the two spaces where the Senate and Court had met for many years. The value of the rooms lay not in the aesthetics but in their service as a stage for historic events. After an effective lobbying campaign, Robinson met with success after introducing Senate Resolution 193 on the Senate floor on May 28, 1934, when his colleagues voted in favor of setting aside the two chambers for the public and S.Res.193 passed the Senate.

Mrs. O’Brian and Senator Robinson wisely anticipated that the purpose of the soon-to-be vacated chambers would come into question once the Supreme Court moved out the following year; the resolution was intended to preempt Senators who envisioned dividing up the Chambers into committee rooms. While Capitol space was at a premium, they encouraged Senators to view the two chambers not as simply functional office space but as historic rooms worth preserving since they provided a patriotic reminder of the nation’s success as the great social experiment in democracy.

The Senate agreed, if even only temporarily, as evidenced by the passage of S.Res.193.

The chambers remained empty after the Court’s departure in 1935, but the proposed preservation of the rooms was derailed by Senator Robinson’s death in 1937.

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30 Senate Congressional Record of March 22, 1934 includes letters and articles by Warren along with excerpts from his book, The Supreme Court in the United States History. Dr. Butler’s letter stated that “The room now occupied by the United States Supreme Court should not be permitted to be used for any other administrative or governmental purposes when the Court goes to its new building but kept as it now is – to be a center of pilgrimage for young Americans for generations to come.”

And despite serving as show spaces for monumental debates over slavery and succession, landmark rulings over state’s rights, and Presidential inaugurations, the rooms fell into neglect without their powerful protector. In spite of Mrs. O’Brian’s preservation efforts, no other Senator took up their cause, additionally imminent war created different priorities for Congress, such as adequate support and funding for the troops. So the preservation of the two chambers fell into a prolonged period of inactivity until 1960.

The two rooms were treated instead as a functional space within the crowded Capitol Complex and minimal regard was given to their value as a historically significant site worthy of preservation for the benefit of the public. The lower chamber remained a reference library until the 1940s and then served as storage or meeting space until 1957 when it was subdivided with “unsightly” plasterboard partitions and the walls were covered to create office space for the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy (see fig. 1). The Cold War had given the nation another enemy to fight from home. Atomic bombs and national defense were more pressing concerns for the Senate than preserving historic rooms in the Capitol. Use trumped preservation and the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy stayed in the lower chamber until additional space became available in the Capitol in 1962 in the Capitol’s new Eastern Extension.

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32 June 29, 1961 letter from Philip L. Roof to Gordon Harrison, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 4.
The upper chamber remained unused until serving as the Senate’s temporary quarters when their current chamber underwent repairs in 1940, 1949 and 1950 (see fig. 1). After working in the upper chamber, Senators were apt to view the space as a functional workplace within the Capitol and overlooked or forgot the Resolution 193. The history of the room was disregarded as it quickly became a place for meetings, conferences between the Houses, and numerous luncheons and cocktail parties (see fig. 2).

Fig. 2. “The Senate Meets Again in the Old Senate Chamber that it Outgrew 90 Years Ago,” image courtesy of Life, July 25, 1934, 20.

By the 1960s, the frequent use of old Senate Chamber room left it dirty and uncared for, the “odor of tobacco and alcohol overwhelmed the smell of history.” The original furnishings and amenities for the two chambers were lost, destroyed, or misplaced. Not until the 1960s was the preservation request of 1934 finally revisited.

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III. Crowding on Capitol Hill

The delay in restoring the old Senate and old Supreme Court chambers was in part due to over-crowded conditions in the Capitol. Office space was already limited at the turn of the century, requiring the construction of a House annex and a Senate office annex in 1908, now the Cannon House Office Building and Russell Senate Office Building (see fig. 3). Until this point, Members rented office space or borrowed committee rooms and offices in the Capitol. While the two new office buildings helped reduce crowding, the lure remained strong for the prestige and convenience of rooms near the Senate and House floor.

And as the role of the federal government expanded in the 1930s with the New Deal, Congress required more staff which in turn created crammed conditions again on the Capitol Hill. The Longworth House Office Building was built in 1933 and in 1941 the Senate authorized the Architect of the Capitol to prepare plans for their second office building, however, the war postponed construction of the Dirksen Senate Office Building until 1958 (see fig. 3). Due to the symbolic nature of the Capitol complex, the buildings were designed using classical building forms that complemented the Capitol.

35 The New York architectural firm of Carrere and Hastings was hired to design the Beaux Arts exteriors of the buildings to complement the Capitol. When the building opened, the Senate had 75 committees, in part so that office space could be claimed in the Capitol but with the additional space around 40 committees were eliminated in 1940.
Figure 3. Construction Sequence of Congressional Office Buildings on Capitol Hill
1) Jefferson Library of Congress Building, 1897
2) Senate Office Building, 1908
3) Cannon House Office Building, 1908
4) Longworth House Office Building, 1934
5) Supreme Court Building, 1935
6) Dirksen Senate Office Building, 1958
7) Rayburn House Office Building, 1965
9) Hart Senate Office Building, 1982
Image courtesy of http://lugar.senate.gov/services/tour_map.cfm.
The architectural world in America was changing during the 1950s, however, Modernism was considered controversial and not embraced on Capitol Hill.\textsuperscript{37} Architects such as Philip Johnson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Walter Gropius, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, Eero Saarinen, and Edward Durrell Stone, were all at work in America creating modern designs. But most of the work commissioned on Capitol Hill was in the classical Beaux Arts style, instead of creating a new model of architecture for the emulation of others. President Kennedy recognized the symbolism of federal architecture and created an “Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space” which established design guidelines for federal architecture that were promptly ignored after the President’s death.\textsuperscript{38} He also formed the President’s Council on Pennsylvania Avenue, which formed a master plan for Pennsylvania Avenue in 1964 intended to “arouse public and governmental enthusiasm.”\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{37} In 1952, Michigan Representative George Dondero, Chair of the House Committee on Public Buildings, delivered a speech which called modernism a depraved “Communist conspiracy.” The context was in discussion of museums such as the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.  
\textsuperscript{38} The committee produced a brief report, titled “Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture” or known as the “Goldberg Report” which recommended a three-point architectural policy for the government. The first point called for the avoidance of an “official style,” instead design should flow from the architectural profession to the government and not vice versa. The second point stated that “the choice and development of the building site should be considered the first step of the design process” and more telling was the third point: “The policy shall be to provide requisite and adequate facilities in an architectural style and form which is distinguished and which will reflect the dignity, enterprise, and stability of the American National Government. Major emphasis should be placed on the choice of designs that embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought:” Ruth Helen Cheney and Peter G. Green, “The Federal Client,” \textit{Progressive Architecture}. 50, no. January (1969), 164.  
The Capitol Hill building boom after the war resulted in a monopoly by the architectural firm DeWitt, Poor & Shelton.⁴⁰ Individual members of the firm worked on numerous projects during the 1950s and 1960s, including the East Front Extension of the Capitol.⁴¹ While working on the East Extension of the Capitol, they issued a report which recommended including the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers with the extension project (the extension is adjacent to their eastern wall). Their need for a makeover could have come to their attention through historic research for other projects within the Capitol complex. Although a restoration was suggested, it needed an influential supporter to take up the cause and champion it as a priority.

DeWitt, Poor & Shelton also completed the Rayburn House Office Building in 1965, along with the Folger Theater, the Madison Library of Congress Building, and the remodeling of the current House and Senate Chambers and the Longworth and Cannon House Office Buildings (see fig. 3).⁴² The additional office space available to Congress, weakened claims that space restrictions necessitated the use of the chambers. However, the location of the rooms in the middle of the Capitol complex still made them exceedingly convenient to access for Members of both Houses.

⁴⁰ The partners included Roscoe DeWitt and Fred Hardison of Dallas, Alfred Easton Poor and Albert Swanke of New York City, Jesse M. Shelton and Alan G. Stanford of Atlanta (after Stanford’s death A.P. Almond took his place). They formed a partnership in 1955 after being awarded the contract for the extension of the Capitol.

⁴¹ Preservationists and the American Institute of Architects where dismayed that the extension would alter the outward appearance of the Capitol but Congress’s need for space prevailed. Using Alfred Easton’s Poor’s design, the east front of the Capitol was extended approximately thirty-two feet and reproduced in marble: C. Ford Peatross and others, Capital Drawings : Architectural Designs for Washington, D.C., from the Library of Congress (Baltimore ; Washington, DC: The Johns Hopkins University Press in association with the Library of Congress, 2005), 84.

⁴² The Sam Rayburn House Office Building, an imposing blocks of concrete, was dubbed the “Texas Penitentiary.”
CHAPTER 2: First Stage of the Restoration, 1960 - 1962

I. Laying the Groundwork

In response to the Joseph Duke’s 1960 letter inquiring about the preservation of the chambers, Senator Hayden quickly wrote to George Stewart, the Architect of the Capitol, to request estimates for costs of restoring only the upper chamber including refurbishment of furniture and furnishings as well as the chamber itself. 43 Stewart’s Assistant Architect of the Capitol, Mario Campioli, searched for drawings, photographs, and furniture and furnishings which occupied the upper chamber while it was the Supreme Court. 44

Management of the Capitol complex, in particular repairs and alterations, is the responsibility of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC). Stewart was not a professionally trained architect, but he had worked at a construction firm and was elected to Congress for one term. 45 Stewart’s political background served him well as AOC since the position requires finesse to move projects forward as a “grand building superintendent trying to keep one of the world’s touchiest groups of tenants happy”. 46 Requesting funding for repairs and improvements could be an onerous annual ritual for the architect since Members of Congress could use the process to cite their grievances. 47

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43 April 23, 1960 letter from Hayden to Stewart, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 4.
44 April 29, 1960 memorandum from Campioli to Stewart, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6.
45 George Stewart was appointed the AOC in 1954 by President Eisenhower.
47 One of the architect’s most contentious issues in the 19th century was the heating and cooling of the complex and proper ventilation.
Mario Campioli was a natural fit for taking the lead the restoration project; as a professional architect he had worked on the restorations of the Williams Gibbs House in Charleston, South Carolina and the VanCortlandt Manor House, Croton New York, and was the Director of Architecture at Colonial Williamsburg. Additionally, before becoming the Assistant Architect of the Capitol in 1959, Campioli worked in New York City as an associate in the office of Alfred Easton Poor.

Senator Hayden needed details regarding the restoration of the chambers as soon as possible since he intended to request funds in the Legislative Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 1961. The most effective way to get the project funded was with the support of the Chair of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations, Senator John Stennis, a Mississippi Democrat widely respected by his colleagues for his integrity, diligence, and judgment. Therefore, Hayden turned the project over to his friend Stennis, who in turn actively championed the restoration. Whether at first it was in deference to Senator Hayden is unclear, but soon Senator Stennis became the Senate’s outspoken advocate for their preservation.

At the time, the 58 year-old Senator from Mississippi supported racial segregation; he signed a Southern Manifesto in 1956 to oppose racial integration in

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48 Since Williamsburg was considered a ground-breaking preservation project, the staff was considered frontrunners and experts in the field of historic preservation. Incidentally, a personal report of Campioli while he was at Williamsburg called him a “thin faced and unsmiling man.” Ivor Noël Hume and Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, *Something from the Cellar* : More of this & that : *Selected Essays from the Colonial Williamsburg Journal* (Williamsburg, VA: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 2005), 65.

49 Campioli served as the Assistant Architect until 1980.

public places and pledged to “preserve the Southern way of life.” As a southern Senator fighting changes to a rapidly progressing society, preserving a symbol of older and simpler times would hold appeal. Stennis associated himself with a symbol of national unity at a time when he and other Southern Democrats were pursuing nationally divisive racial policies.

While on the Senate floor in May of 1960, Senator Stennis inquired why the chambers were not preserved and opened to the public instead of the upper chambers either being locked or used for parties or meetings. He rebuked his colleagues for their misuse of the historic chambers, “the present use, purpose and practice going on in that room are a degradation of our American culture.” The commanding Senator would snap his fingers to get his colleagues attention before speaking and his speeches were often lectures with finger-pointing and “shush” sounds when interrupted. He asked that the historic space be treated as a national shrine instead of a party room.

In 1961, the Assistant Architect finished a report on the “Proposed Restoration of Old Senate Chamber, Principal Floor, and Old Supreme Court Chamber, Ground Floor in the United States Capitol” which included historical research, drawings, and plans. An interesting response to the proposal was from John Harbeson of Harbeson, Hough,

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52 Historic preservation at this juncture was largely a patriotically inspired Anglo-Saxon movement; Hosmer, Presence of the Past; a History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg, 300.

53 Rosenbaum, Senator John Stennis, 93; Democrat from Mississippi Led Powerful Committees, B11.
Livingston, and Larson Architects, who suggested that the upper chamber be restored to its Supreme Court appearance instead of Senate appearance:

“Therefore the question: is it wise to destroy the later Supreme Court manifestation of that room, of which a great deal remains, in order to attempt a pseudo historical recreation of an earlier room for which there is not adequate documentation. It would be a simple matter to restore it to its Supreme Court days, leaving the rather fine busts of Chief Justices in place.” 54

However, as a note details in the margin, “the Senate would not go for this” and the idea gets little traction despite being a less invasive suggestion for the restoration.

Senator Stennis and Hayden were motivated to restore the chambers as a tribute to their predecessors, capitalizing on the image of America’s grand democracy at work. The Golden Era of the Senate (1801-1850) was rife with eloquent debates and compromises as the nation grew despite growing North South tensions. The Senate moved out of their chamber a year prior to the country reaching the boiling point of Civil War. So the Senate’s last date of occupancy of the old Senate Chamber, 1860, provided a meaningful restoration date, representing a nation striving for unity in the midst of disagreement.

This restoration choice required a more drastic intervention, first removal of all of the court’s alterations and then a recreation of the chamber as it appeared during the Senate’s occupancy in 1860. This decision also necessitated recreating the lower empty chamber to its 1859 appearance, the last year that the Court met in that chamber before moving up into the vacated Senate Chamber.

54 May 16, 1961, letter from John Harbeson to Campioli, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
II. Bad Press for the Senate

When Stennis brought the 1934 preservation resolution to the attention of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Committee at the Fiscal Year 1961 budget hearing, George Stewart testified and asked for $40,000 to repair and renovate the upper chamber. Stennis called it “most important single proposal in the entire bill,” since the money could return the mistreated room to its appearance when last occupied by the Senate. Included were costs for procurement, restoration, and repair of furniture and furnishings. The Senate allocated the funds for the patriotic project but the proposal caught the House appropriators off guard; who insisted on deleting the money until the matter was further discussed. Their lack of enthusiasm for the restoration project on the Senate side of the Capitol was in part due to the cramped quarters of the Capitol. Meeting space was at a premium and the old Senate Chamber was a popular meeting place for joint conferences for bills. Stennis was not deterred and asked Stewart to compile more details regarding project to support a subsequent request for funds.

Stennis wisely enlisted the support of Senator Mike Mansfield (D-MT), who held the powerful position of Senate Majority Leader from 1961 – 1977. The former history professor took the proposed restoration up as his pet project and his leadership and vision helped propel the restoration project into the limelight. However, the old Senate Chamber was already receiving negative attention from the press who referred to the

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55 Campioli had estimated it would cost $40,000 for each chamber.
56 Senate Congressional Record of June 29, 1960.
57 September 20, 1960, letter from Stennis to White, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
chamber as the “Senate’s Rumpus Room,” so restoring the appropriate grandeur to the chamber was also an opportunity to present the Senate in a more favorable light.58

Throughout September of 1961 the Washington Daily News published articles sympathetic to the plight of the “Cocktail Party Site,” telling of a scene where a “young lady jiggled her martini—and it dribbled on the floor where Daniel Webster stood in his great debates” and “The bartender, hurriedly handing out bourbon, gin and Scotch highballs, appeared oblivious to the fact he was plying his trade were reverent funerals were held for John C. Calhoun and Henry Clay.59 A subsequent story called the parties in this “stately night club” so secretive that Sergeant at Arms Joseph Duke who handles the “booking” of the Chamber cannot share the details. Historical researchers and the voters of 1962 were to take note.60

In response, the Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield and Carl Hayden, Chair of the Committee on Appropriations, held a news conference to announce the Senate’s intention to “kick out the cocktail parties.”61 Mansfield had previously informed his colleagues that the upper chamber was no longer available for receptions and luncheons.62 The new East Front of the Capitol was recently completed and provided additional office space, so the Senate Leadership asked that the routine usage of the

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59 Mention is also made of parties sponsored by friends or associates, including a Senate spouse’s sorority reception; Vance Trimble, "High Court Once, Now a Cocktail Party Site," Washington Daily News, September 19, 1961.
62 March 7, 1962 memorandum from Roof to Stewart, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 4.
chamber cease by April of 1961.\textsuperscript{63} Mansfield instructed Duke that the upper chamber could no longer be used for hearings, receptions or other routine functions since the Senate leadership hoped to remove all the meetings and social activity from the chamber in preparation for its restoration.\textsuperscript{64} Thereby he hoped to limit the socializing which the media had termed a “slippage of reverence for things past.”

**III. “Selling America”**

The Senate Appropriators decided to wait another year to strengthen the restoration funding request while also adding the lower chamber to the project. Campioli enlisted the aid of Alfred Easton Poor, his former boss, to collaborate with on the restoration. Their close working relationship lasted throughout the lifetime of the project as well as additional projects on Capitol Hill. Poor’s preference for a “variety of conservative styles” was well suited for producing drawings that complemented the design aesthetic of Capitol Hill.\textsuperscript{65} Together they compiled a base estimate of $416,000 for restoring the upper room as the old Senate Chamber and $202,000 for restoring the lower room as the old Supreme Court Chamber, amounting to a grand total of $618,000.\textsuperscript{66}

The funding for the project was requested again at the Legislative Branch Appropriations hearing for Fiscal Year 1963. Stewart submitted to the committee a full

\textsuperscript{63} Activities associated with the Cherry Blossom Festival were to be the last scheduled events in the chamber; March 9, 1962 letter from Senators Mansfield and Dirksen to Duke, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 4.

\textsuperscript{64} *Misuse of a National Shrine*


\textsuperscript{66} Poor initially obtained a base estimate from Nash Babcock Engineering Company of $585,000.
overview of the project with the history, drawings, and a cost estimate.\textsuperscript{67} Suggested language for the pending Legislative Appropriations bill was submitted to Senator John Pastore (D-RI), the new Chair of the Subcommittee on Legislative Branch Appropriations. The language would enable the AOC to prepare working drawings, specifications, and estimates of cost for returning the chambers to their condition, with furnishing, when last occupied, 1859-1860.

At the Appropriations hearing, Senator Stennis reiterated the value of restoring these Chambers and said “we must make every effort to preserve those places which have met the struggles of the past” so that visitors “can find new courage, new resolve, new inspiration as they visit these historical chambers.”\textsuperscript{68} In part, the desire to preserve places in the 1960s was a response to the frenzy of modernization of the 1950s. The growing population and economy were leading to the wholesale destruction of historic places and an increased national awareness of the value of historic places as the nation lost more and more of its irreplaceable historic fabric for the sake of progress.\textsuperscript{69}

Since its inception, the Capitol stood as a symbol of democracy and self-government. Continuing the theme, Stennis said the chambers emphasized a positive aspect of our system of government. During periods of rapid change, the past provides those unready for change comforting reminders of how things used to be. New government programs in transportation and housing had brought “great upheaval in the

\textsuperscript{67} March 13, 1962 letter from Stewart to Hayden, AOC’s Archives, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 1.
\textsuperscript{68} Senate Congressional Record of August 2, 1962.
\textsuperscript{69} A national environmental movement also started in response to wholesale destruction of the natural environment: Murtagh, Keeping Time : The History and Theory of Preservation in America, 156.
social fabric of society,” and Pastore described the proposed restoration as a way of “selling America” to those who visit.\textsuperscript{70} In light of the recently opened Eastern Extension to the Capitol, Stennis believed it was “an ideal time to preserve the space if it is ever going to be done since the addition to the Capitol took care of space needs.”\textsuperscript{71} The Appropriations Committee agreed and included an initial appropriation of $37,500 for the preparation of working drawings, specifications, and estimates of cost for restoring the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers.

The archival research by the Architect of the Capitol’s office revealed sufficient details to reproduce the furniture for the old Senate Chamber but there was a dearth of information regarding the old Supreme Court furniture. However, a furniture layout on a print of a plan, a portrait of Chief Justice Marshall, and descriptions by visitors, lawyers, architects, and guidebooks provided some indication of the 1859 layout and appearance of the old Supreme Court Chamber. A report with photographs and detailed historic drawings was compiled. After reading the report, Stennis and some of his Senate colleagues were eager to proceed, however politics fittingly entered the fray.

In 1962 a controversy developed between the Senate and House Committees on Appropriations regarding their meeting location for joint conferences between them. The House Members traditionally travelled to the Senate side of the Capitol but now preferred to meet more centrally. The issue was temporarily resolved by deciding to

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid., 156
\textsuperscript{71} Hearings before Subcommittee on Appropriations United States Congress, 87\textsuperscript{th} Congress, second session on H.R. 11151, making appropriations for the Legislative Branch for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1963.
meet in the upper chamber, despite it being slated for restoration. To gain House support for the restoration, the Senate needed to convince them to view it as a historic shrine worth preserving instead of only office space. While Stennis was an advocate for the restoration, he also understood the political necessity of a compromise and suggested that the old Senate Chamber still provide conference space after the restorations but also serve as a public space at all other times. The idea of restoring the chambers for the public’s benefit was a novel endeavor since no rooms in Capitol were yet set aside as museum space.

Despite the best efforts by Mansfield and Stennis, the restoration appropriation was again deleted in conference with the House and no project money was allocated for Fiscal Year 1963. The request for $37,500 was struck out with comments that some House Members believed the request should be processed through regular legislative channels since under the law, changes in architectural features of the building require prior legislative approval. Then the heart of the matter was revealed, the House would like to revisit the restoration in discussions regarding an addition to the west front of the Capitol. The reason given was that engineering and structural effects of the East Front Extension may create a need to discuss rebuilding the west central side also; to

73 February 27, 1962 letter from Campioli to John Harbeson, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 16.
74 Stennis asked Stewart whether a door could be made out of one of the windows along the east loggia, since the eastern extension created a hall behind the windows of the chambers and a door could provide a more discrete access for Members. He also asks if lighting and acoustics could be improved and restroom facilities added. Stewart responded that it could all be done; August 20, 1962 letter from Stennis to Stewart and August 31, 1962 letter from Stewart to Stennis, both in AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 5.
75 House Congressional Record of August 31, 1962.
compensate and replace deteriorating structural features. Members of the House Appropriations Committee wanted a West Front Extension to the Capitol and did not want to give up their favorite place to hold conferences with the Senate.

Figure 4. Cots filled the Old Senate Chamber during the 1960s civil rights debates, image courtesy of AP.
CHAPTER 3: Funding Battles, 1963-1972

I. The Jackie Kennedy Effect

While Senator Stennis attempted to fund the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers, another more successful restoration was underway nearby. Over 80 million viewers watched Jacqueline Kennedy’s tour of the White House on February 14, 1962. Her stunning restoration of the White House’s historic rooms into a showcase for American art and history created a national sensation. The restoration imparted a heightened sense of the White House’s ceremony and grandeur to the public and Mrs. Kennedy’s intense interest in historic spaces and the past was contagious.76

As a result of Jacqueline Kennedy’s efforts, the White House was inundated with requests for information on conducting restoration projects and obtaining landmark status.77 The extensive White House restoration project commenced in February of 1961 and was nearing completion when President Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1962. Americans visited the Capitol in droves after his death, because the building represented an unwavering sign of a strong country despite a time of national crisis.78 Similarly, in the midst of a national shock, legislators now valued their own historic rooms as worth preserving.

76 Through the First Lady’s involvement, the White House Historical Commission was established, the position of White House Curator was created and Congress officially declared the White House a museum. Her efforts also helped preserve the Old Executive Building and Lafayette Square, a square of historic residential buildings adjacent to the White House.
The First Lady’s widely admired transformation of the White House inspired changing attitudes regarding the value of new over old and helped validate preservation as a worthwhile and meaningful cause, her iconic status as an arbitrator of good taste brought historic restorations to the forefront. The issue of restoring the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers had languished since the 1934 resolution and by the 1960s, Senators used the rooms for myriad official and unofficial purposes. After the President’s death, Mrs. Kennedy left the White House as a widow on December 6, 1963 and just three weeks later funds were finally appropriated for the first stage of restoring the old chambers of the Senate and Supreme Court.

The First Lady’s stunning White House restoration and the devastating death of her husband, created an environment conducive to embracing the past. A historic preservation project, such as the restoration of the chambers to their glory days, was a tangible way to present a reminder of brighter days during a bleak time. Congress finally viewed their own historic rooms as worth restoring and $37,500 was appropriated for Fiscal Year 1964 for the planning phase of the project.79

II. $37,500 Appropriation

Once the money was finally appropriated, the Architect of the Capitol went to work quickly and retained the firm of Dewitt, Poor & Shelton on March 6, 1964.80 Stewart and Campioli were already collaborating with Alfred Easton Poor on the drawings and now George Via, of their Washington, DC office, was also assisting with

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80 They had produced the contract documents for the execution of the proposed restoration work the previous year.
the drawings. At the request of Stewart, Via updated the old Supreme Court floor plan to agree with the 1854 plan from Bohn’s Hand-Book of Washington (see figs. 5 and 6). In February of 1965, Dewitt, Poor & Shelton completed the drawings for the proposed restoration of the old Supreme Court Chamber and three months later the drawings for the old Senate Chamber were also completed (see fig. 7).

Fig. 5. *Floor Plan of the U.S. Supreme Court Chamber*, published in Bohn’s Hand-Book of Washington, 1854.

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81 March 16, 1944 letter from Stewart to Via, Office of the Senator Curator’s working files.
82 December 7, 1964 memorandum to file by Via, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
Fig. 6. *Supreme Court First Floor Plan*, DeWitt, Poor & Shelton, February 12, 1965, image courtesy of LOC, Prints & Photographs Reading Room, (Madison, LM337).

Fig. 7. *Old Senate and Old Supreme Court Chambers West Elevation*, DeWitt, Poor & Shelton, February 12, 1965, image courtesy of LOC, Prints & Photographs Reading Room, (Madison, LM337).
Robert J. Colburn was hired by the Architect of the Capitol to conduct primary source research at the National Archive, particularly for documents about the chambers from the period 1807-1860. Colburn was an experienced historian from the National Park Service who had recently conducted extensive research to prepare a furnishing plan for the second floor of Congress Hall in Philadelphia. Stewart wanted Colburn to compile a similar report for the two chambers. George Hartzog, the Director of the National Park Service, agreed to Stewart’s request to borrow Coburn’s expertise.

Colburn combed through the Department of the Treasury’s records, particularly Record Group 217, seeking receipts which detailed purchases and repairs to the two chambers. The records contain the contingent expense accounts of both the Secretary of the Senate and the Marshal of the Supreme Court. And records of the accounts of the Commissioner of Public Buildings provided detail of physical changes to the building. Based on his research, Colburn issued four reports in September of 1964: one on the “Architectural Features and Alterations” of each chamber, and one on the “Furniture and Furnishings” of each room. Once his reports were submitted, the research on the rooms was considered “exhausted” and the next step was finalizing the drawings.

Stennis and Campioli continued to work together to keep the first stage of the restoration on track. They decided to break the restoration work into two phases to

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84 February 18, 1964 letter from Stewart to Hartzog, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 2, Folder 13.
85 The Colburn reports were recently compiled and bound into a book, available in the Senate Library.
86 According to Stewart’s testimony at the hearings for the Legislative Appropriations Act of 1966.
87 June 29, 1964 memorandum to file by Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 5.
make it more palatable financially and to close one room at a time. And it was determined that the old Senate Chamber could be restored and also be available for meetings without altering its appearance. Some initial decisions made regarding the restorations were that the porthole portrait of George Washington by Rembrandt Peale, 1823 would be returned to the old Senate Chamber from the Vice President’s office and several Supreme Court Justice busts would be removed from the old Senate Chamber.

III. A Dry Spell for the Restorations

The restoration funding dance began again at the 1964 Legislative Branch Appropriations hearing for FY 1965, when Campioli testified that the research sources were nearly exhausted so the cost estimates and drawings would be finalized shortly. The request made for a complete restoration of the chambers was for $700,000, which included $408,000 for construction costs, $223,500 for furniture and furnishings, and $68,000 for administration, fees, and contingencies. However, the money was again funded by the Senate and then deleted in conference with the House. Stennis was still undeterred and planned to request the money again the next year, so that the rooms where “many great decisions were made which have shaped the destiny of our Nation” could be preserved to provide the public with patriotic reminders of their history.

The primary opponent of the restoration was Representative George Mahon, a Democrat from Texas, who became the chair of the House Appropriations Committee in 1964. He diametrically opposed the funding unless the Senate agreed to a House-

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88 A table was recommended that could be assembled and then broken-down and removed as needed.
89 Representative Mahon was the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee from 1964-1979.
endorsed plan for an extension to the west front of the Capitol.\textsuperscript{90} Mahon said space limitations prohibited the restoration and no funding would be provided unless space could be added via an extension. Since the Senate did not support the West Front Extension plan, which would alter the Capitol’s most visible facade, the restoration project was locked into a stalemate for several years.

At the hearings for the Legislative Appropriations Act of 1966, Stennis gave an update on the restoration project and urged that the chambers not serve merely as mementoes of the past but as shrines to commemorate the achievements of the past.\textsuperscript{91} He also described the proposed changes, which primarily included furniture and furnishing changes.\textsuperscript{92} Regardless, the House appropriators again deleted the $700,000 appropriation when the bill went to conference. The House Members suggested that the restoration of the chamber not start until the proposed West Front Extension project was completed.\textsuperscript{93} Despite the lack of additional funding, Campioli and Via were still updating the completed drawings and specifications as further research called for changes, i.e. the discovery of Jefferson Davis’s Senate chair.\textsuperscript{94}

Since the project was at a standstill, the Senate Rules Committee assigned the lower chamber to the Joint Committee on the Organization of Congress in 1965, and the

\textsuperscript{90} www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/A_Shrine_Restored.htm, accessed March 6, 2010.
\textsuperscript{91} Legislative Branch Appropriations hearing for FY 1966 on June 14, 1965 (H.R. 8775).
\textsuperscript{92} Stennis requested that the work be done on a cost-plus-fixed-fee basis or a negotiated bid basis, and he emphasized funding the restoration before costs increased; Legislative Branch Appropriations hearing for FY 1966 on April 28, 1965 (H.R. 8775).
\textsuperscript{93} Legislative Branch Appropriations Conference Report for H.R. 8775 of July 20, 1965.
\textsuperscript{94} July 1, 1965 letter from Campioli to Via, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 5.
space was partitioned off to create four office rooms for the committee.\textsuperscript{95} Ironically, the co-chair of the committee, Senator Mike Monroney (D-OK), was aware of the ongoing restoration project and hoped it would go ahead someday. Despite a larger awakening of a “preservation consciousness on all levels” through the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act which established the National Register and Section 106 process for federal properties, the protections did not extend to the Capitol’s own historic rooms.\textsuperscript{96} However, a change was in store for how Capitol architectural contracts were awarded.

In response to mounting public concerns regarding DeWitt, Poor & Shelton’s monopoly on architectural contracts, a Senate Joint Resolution was passed in 1965 requiring that all architects chosen for Capitol work be selected by a committee. A New York Times article had pointed out that eight of the nine design contracts awarded during the Capitol Hill building boom, were given to seven DeWitt architects for a sum of over $5 million.\textsuperscript{97} In response, Campioli testified at special House subcommittee hearing that the same architects were used because few others were trained in the architecture traditional to the Capitol; the AIA called this claim “hogwash.”\textsuperscript{98} The fact that Campioli had previously worked for two of the seven partners at Dewitt, Poor & Shelton left room for skepticism but the awarding of contracts to one firm was legal at the time.

\textsuperscript{95} The committee’s work resulted in the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1970; March 26, 1965 memorandum of meeting, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 5.
\textsuperscript{96} Tyler, \textit{Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice}, 45.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid.
III. The Senate Commission on Arts and Antiquities

A monumental step forward for the restoration of the chambers came from the 1968 Senate Resolution which created the Senate Commission on Arts and Antiquities and decreed the two chambers historic sites.\(^{99}\) The Senate committee was established in part to oversee the restorations while also creating another avenue to pursue funding for the restoration project. The powerful leadership of the commission provided the strong allies required for the project’s success. Senator Mansfield, the Majority Leader, was the chair of the committee and other members included the president pro tem, Chair of the Rules and Administration Committee and the Appropriations Committee Chair. In one fell swoop, Senator Mansfield had empowered the Senate leaders as caretakers of its historic elements.

Despite the creation of the commission, no records were located of work or study towards the restoration of the old Senate Chamber and old Supreme Court Chambers in 1969. These turbulent years in America were dominated by social and political upheaval. Protests against the Vietnam War dominated college campuses. The escalation of the Cold War left many American fearing nuclear war. And the civil rights movement was drastically changing the country’s social fabric for the better. Many young and old Americans were dissatisfied with the status quo and the traditional thinking of America’s leaders from the 1950s and early to mid 1960s were challenged from many corners. Elected officials found themselves in unchartered waters which required careful navigation and made the past seem halcyon.

\(^{99}\) Senate Resolution 382, 90\(^{th}\) Congress, agreed to October 1, 1968.
In his capacity as the Chair of the Committee on Arts and Antiquities, Senator Mansfield worked closely with the Architect of the Capitol to progress the chamber restoration.\(^{100}\) By 1970, costs estimates had increased to $1,209,000, due primarily to the raising expense of mechanical and electrical work.\(^{101}\) However, when Campioli testified before the Legislative Branch Appropriations hearing in 1970, he now had three powerful allies who served on the Committee on Arts and Antiquities and submitted letters of support for the restoration: Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-MT), Minority Leader Hugh Scott (R-PA) and Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV), Chair of the Subcommittee on Deficiencies and Supplementals of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Regardless, after the money was appropriated by the Senate it was of course deleted in conference with the House.

At this juncture though, Senators Mansfield and Scott had another avenue to pursue funding. A request was submitted on behalf of the Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities that the restoration be funded in the Supplemental Appropriations bill, since it would “stimulate public interest in the formative phases of the nation’s political history” and it “would enhance the Capitol as a major repository of the national heritage of the people,” all resounding endorsements for restoring the chambers to improve the public’s perceptions of their government and the Capitol.\(^{102}\) By 1970, public support for government and the Vietnam War had decreased as the war dragged on. A national

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\(^{100}\) Senator Mansfield was the Senate Majority Leader from 1961 to 1977, making him quite influential.

\(^{101}\) The old Senate Chamber cost $802,000 and the old Supreme Court Chamber cost $407,000; July 7, 1970 letter from Campioli to Mansfield, Office of the Senate Curator working files.

\(^{102}\) July 22, 1970 letter from Mansfield and Scott to Byrd, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 7.
identity crisis made patriotic projects such as the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers an enticing project for the country’s leaders.103 The age divide between young and old increased as students stirred with civic unrest and leaders such as President Nixon failed to unite Americans in supporting their agendas. By reminding Americans of their shared history, the chambers provided a tangible way to connect the youth with the distant past.

In a similar vein, a bicentennial fervor spread throughout the country in anticipation of the 200th anniversary of adopting the Declaration of Independence. Multiple celebrations and commemorative events were planned, in part because America’s leaders were glad for an opportunity to polish off the somewhat tarnished national identity after the turbulent Vietnam War and Watergate years. During the late 1960s and early 1970s political discourse was full of conflict and divisiveness but the Bicentennial presented a call for national unity to celebrate America.104 However, the restoration project was not part of a Bicentennial initiative and still needed funding.

At the request of the Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities, the Supplemental Appropriations bill on December 11, 1970 recommended appropriating $1,209,000 for the restoration of the two chambers; the Commission was unanimously agreed to proceed with the project.105 The final bill authorized the AOC to make

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103 A country in crisis emerged as demonstrations culminated in the shooting of ten students at Kent State in Ohio, resulting in an ant-war protest in DC attended by over 100,000 people and the subsequent National Student Strikes at over 450 schools throughout the country.

104 Bodnar, Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century, 206.

expenditures as were necessary for restoring the old Senate Chamber to its 1860 appearance and the old Supreme Court to its 1859 appearance, including expenditures for procurement, restoration, and repair of furniture and furnishings, all under the direction of the Commission. Yet again, the appropriation was deleted by the House Appropriators who awaited approval for their proposed Western Front Extension.

After 16 years of service, George Stewart passed away on May 24, 1970. President Nixon appointed George White, vice president of the American Institute of Architects, as the new Architect of the Capitol. The appointment put the restoration in his hands since the Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities had named the AOC as lead on the project. The commission met in the spring of 1971 and agreed that work should proceed on the chambers since the restoration will be “a lasting contribution towards preserving the rich heritage of the Capitol” White then requested funds for the restoration from the Senate Appropriations Committee for FY 1972. Writing on behalf of the Commission, Mansfield and Scott asked Senator Hollings (D-SC), Chair of the Subcommittee on Legislative Appropriations, to support the request of $1.2 million for the Office of the AOC. By this juncture, both the upper and lower chamber had fallen into disrepair, including a deteriorating ceiling in the old Senate Chamber.

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107 White had two engineering degrees, a law degree, and a business degree. He was the last Architect appointed without the advice and consent of Senate; he was the Architect of the Capitol until 1995.
108 May 7, 1971 letter from Valeo to White, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 7.
109 June 3, 1971 letter from Mansfield to White, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
110 June 8, 1971 letter from Mansfield and Scott to Hollings, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
The Senate again appropriated the funds since the restoration would “enhance the Capitol as a major repository of the national heritage of the people of the United States; and would add to the edification and pleasure of thousands of visitors who visit the Capitol each year.” However, the money was naturally deleted by the House since the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee, Congressman George Mahon (D-TX) would not fund the restoration unless the Senate supported a West Front Extension. Hollings, a Southern Democrat like Stennis, took the matter personally and threatened from the Senate floor that since they “refused the opportunity of putting it in decent shape for the many Americans who would like to look at it,” the old Senate Chamber would be closed to any future conferences.

Senator Cotton (R-NH) also spoke on the floor in support of the restoration, making the first connection to the upcoming Bicentennial. He hoped his “friends in the other body will view it in more lenience...we can have these rooms restored, hopefully in time for the Bicentennial.” Regardless, while $1,521,000 was included in the Fiscal Year 1972 Supplemental Appropriations Report, the House deleted the money yet again. The proposal included a two phase construction plan to alleviate available space concerns, but the House Appropriators were still not appeased.

112 Mahon was the Chair of the House Appropriations Committee from 1964-1979.
114 Senate Congressional Record, June 30, 1971.
115 Since the restoration request included a two-phase construction plan, the cost was increased from $1,209,000 to $1,521,000; Supplemental Appropriations for FY 1972, Report on H.R. 11955, pg. 49 (December 2, 1971).
The Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities resolutely continued efforts to preserve the two chambers. They wrote the Rules Committee that the “assignment of these two rooms which are in an advanced stage of disrepair should be avoided.” The upper chamber was under the control of the Commission but the Rules committee oversaw the lower chamber. They specifically requested that Senator Jordan (D-NC), Chair of the Committee on Rules and Administration, not assign the lower chamber for other purposes to avoid it becoming a “nondescript office space.” Jordan supported their request since he also wanted to see the rooms “preserved for posterity.”

In 1972, the Senate Commission on Arts and Antiquities asked Hollings and White to renew the request for funding “to undertake this historic restoration” despite the economic controls in effect. White reviewed the chronology of the past decade’s legislative efforts for funding but history repeated itself when the money was again deleted in conference. However, White’s presentation on the restoration to the Appropriations Committee on the project’s stalemate piqued the interest of the media. The press reported the story of a “classic impasse” between the House and

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117 July 27, 1971 letter from the Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities to Jordan, Office the Senate Curator’s working files.
118 July 31, 1971 letter from Jordan to Mansfield, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
119 To further dismantle the House’s opposition, Mansfield also asked White to investigate the options for restoring the rooms to allow their continued use for joint conferences. White suggested placing a table in the old Supreme Court Chamber to accommodate 22 persons that could be built in sections to store and the same type of table could be used in old Senate Chamber; February 17, 1972 letter from Mansfield and Scott to Hollings, and March 17, 1972 letter from White to Mansfield, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
120 The Senate Curator’s private March 3, 1972 memorandum noted that a discrete publicity campaign for the project which used the “utmost propriety” could be difficult due to the rather obvious House role in the impasse, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
the Senate over the extension and restoration projects; articles were published in the Chicago Tribune, Washington Evening Star, Roll Call and Los Angeles Times.\(^{121}\)

The stories decried the waste of only using the upper chamber for conference meetings and the lower chamber for storage. The historic old Senate Chamber was pitifully described as, "a very dull room today, with green walls and paint peeling" and a very dirty carpet.\(^{122}\) The Los Angeles Times article was titled "UNSEEN BY PUBLIC: Capitol History Hidden in Storerooms," Cotton was quoted, "Thousands upon thousands of schoolchildren and visitors pass by and never have a chance to see where much of the nation's history was enacted," and Stennis added, "In my opinion these chambers will be among the most outstanding and important historical shrines in our nation."\(^{123}\) Once national attention was directed to the plight of the rooms, the restoration finally moved forward again.

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Carl Albert (D-OK) now wanted the restoration completed and he called Mahon, the House Appropriations Chair, to see if the provision could be assured passage in the 1973 Fiscal Year Legislative Appropriations bill.\(^{124}\) Mahon’s previous protestations regarding conference space were somewhat muted by the two-phase plan, although his spokesperson said "there would still be a heck lot of noise going on there while the work was being done."\(^{125}\) Mahon agreed to


\(^{122}\) Bill Anderson, "Old Senate Chamber Worth Saving," Chicago Tribune, March 8, 1972.


\(^{124}\) April 5, 1972 memorandum titled “Chamber Restoration,” Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.

\(^{125}\) Cimons, "UNSEEN BY PUBLIC : Capitol History Hidden Away in Storerooms."
support the project with the stipulation that Mansfield would work to defeat the
proposed Proxmire Amendment which would block the West Front Extension project. ¹²⁶

The West Front Extension project had been a priority consideration of House
leaders for more than ten years. The project would extend the principal side of the
Capitol, in view of much of the city, to include new restaurants, offices, and meeting
rooms. However, Congressman Bob Casey (D-TX), the new Chair of the House
Appropriations Subcommittee for the Legislative Branch, went on record that while
some members of the full appropriations committee were holding out for this project, “I
don’t think the west front should be a consideration but some members have just been
stubborn about it.”¹²⁷ Casey promised to push for the project in his new position.

The first version of the Legislative Branch Appropriations bill for 1973 did not
include money for the restoration of the chambers, but a few days later $1,502,000 for
the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers was added to the
bill, signifying Speaker Albert’s support and a momentous change of heart by Mahon.¹²⁸

The Texas Congressman had received a persuasive call from Lady Bird Johnson, another

¹²⁶ The Senate Appropriations Committee had attached a rider to the Legislative Appropriations bill to
stop the previously appropriated funds from going towards the West Front Extension unless both the
House and the Senate voted to endorse construction. In the interest of obtaining funds for the restoration
and in the spirit of compromise, Mansfield and Scott introduced an amendment to the Legislative
Appropriations bill which would apply funds to the preparation of plans for the extension, although no
money could be used for the actual construction work unless specifically approved and appropriated by
Congress. However, the amendment was defeated and the Senate Legislative Appropriations bill was
approved with the rider attached which would block any further spending for the West Front Extension
until specifically approved by a vote of the House and the Senate.
¹²⁷ Cimons, “UNSEEN BY PUBLIC : Capitol History Hidden Away in Storerooms.”
Texan, and the former First Lady.\textsuperscript{129} Her “gentle nudge” combined with a promise from Mansfield ease opposition to the West Front Extension, finally toppled Mahon’s staunch opposition.\textsuperscript{130} Lady Bird Johnson’s involvement helped spur the restoration project forward, as did Mrs. Lord O’Brian’s efforts almost 40 years prior.

The two women bookended a prolonged period of inactivity for the restoration of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers. The restoration plans were drawn in 1965, but a lack of support from the House appropriators blocked the project from proceeding. However, after the Joint Legislative Appropriation Conference met, both the Senate and House motioned on June 28, 1972, to include the money for the restoration in the upcoming year’s budget.\textsuperscript{131} The project was finally in the homestretch.

\textsuperscript{129} Johnson, a conservation advocate, was the First Lady from 1963-1969.
\textsuperscript{131} House \textit{Congressional Record} of June 28, 1972 and Senate \textit{Congressional Record} of June 28, 1972.
CHAPTER 4. Full Speed Ahead for the Restorations, 1972-1976

I. Preliminary Organization

For the first time since 1963, the restoration funding was unscathed by the House appropriators and was subsequently made into law. The two primary requirements for the $1,521,000 appropriation were: the Speaker of the House would create a commission similar to the Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities so both groups could work in tandem on the restoration, and that after the restoration the rooms could still be used for joint conference meetings. Once the House and Senate Commissions overseeing the restoration authorized the contracts, the work would proceed in two phases with the first stage, the old Supreme Court Chamber, completed by June 30, 1974.

The establishment of the Senate Commission on Arts and Antiquities created the position of Senate Curator which was filled by James Ketchum, who previously was the White House Curator. Similar to Campioli, Ketchum reflected the growing professionalism in the management of historic spaces, with a focus on restoration, renovation, research, and interpretation. By 1972, historic preservation was considered an entire field of study and had expanded from solely the “glorification of

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133 House Congressional Record of August 14, 1972 reports that the Speaker appointed Boggs of Louisiana, Ford of Michigan, Mahon of Texas, and Bow of Ohio to the commission.
134 There was generally a three month period from the awarding of the contract to when the construction work starts.
135 He began his career as a curatorial assistant with the National Park Service before going to the White House where he assisted with Mrs. Kennedy’s ambitious restoration project.
136 Bodnar, Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century, 201.
the sacred and special” to a more discrete civics lesson with undercurrents of nation building themes, which the chambers clearly represented.137

The Senate Curator was responsible for aesthetics and “historical matters” of the restoration. White entrusted the on-site direction of the project to his experienced Assistant Architect, Campioli, who in turn recommended hiring DeWitt, Poor & Shelton since they had already completed around 75% of the work since contracted in 1964.138 Their contributions included surveys, inspection of the existing construction, study of the available drawings and records of the chambers, and the preparation of working drawings, specifications, and estimates of cost.139 The remaining architectural work was estimated at $30,000 and entailed changes to the drawings and specifications as necessitated by the two-phase construction.

The Senate Commission on Arts and Antiquities wanted to procure architectural services by publicizing the need for services and a commission reviewing the proposals. However, while White wanted to offer architectural commissions to a variety of firms, the restoration project was a unique situation since an extensive design effort had already been conducted.140 Majority Leader Mansfield and Speaker Albert, both chairs of their respective committees overseeing the restoration, approved of White’s suggestion that DeWitt, Poor & Shelton be retained to complete the restoration work

137 Ibid., 200.
138 July 19, 1972, “Meeting on restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and the Old Supreme Court Chamber,” Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
139 July 31, 1972 letter from White to Mansfield, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
140 July 27, 1972 note from Ketchum to Francis Valeo, Secretary of the Senate, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
(including the checking of shop-drawings, changing the existing drawings and specifications, and visits to factories and shops).\textsuperscript{141}

Since both Commissions approved, Campioni called a meeting for a preliminary discussion of the scope of the work.\textsuperscript{142} Alfred Easton Poor and A.J. Tatum of DeWitt, were the consulting architects and the working drawings for the rooms were discussed and tweaked accordingly, however, additional research and on-site investigation was required to resolve outstanding issues.\textsuperscript{143}

**II. The Work Begins**

In August of 1972, Campioni and his engineer, G.W. Shaw, investigated the west entrance and marble mantels on the north and south walls of the old Senate Chamber. They decided to replace the existing doors and wooden trim as well as the jamb paneling since they were of a later date than the 1859 restoration period.\textsuperscript{144} Since Colburn had written in his report that every entrance to the Senate Chamber had two doors, an inner baize covered door and an outer mahogany door, new doors were placed on the corridor side of the jamb to swing in. Campioni decided to move the existing marble mantels on the north and south walls to the old Supreme Court and to make two new mantels which each matched one of two mantels on the east wall.

\textsuperscript{141} While the Senate Commission on Arts and Antiquites agreed with hiring a firm to complete the work that had already done most of it, they were hesitant to go on record in favor of the initial AOC selection process since it was a closed, uncompetitive process; August 1, 1972 memorandum to the chamber restoration file, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files; August 17, 1972 letter from White to Albert, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2; and August 16, 1972 letter from Mansfield to White, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 1.

\textsuperscript{142} August 16, 1972 memorandum of meeting, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 1.

\textsuperscript{143} Fred Hardison of DeWitt had died since the 1964 contract so A. J. Tatum took his place, Tatum worked for Roscoe DeWitt in Dallas, TX and had designed and built numerous hospitals throughout America.

\textsuperscript{144} AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 4.
To complete the working drawings and specifications, Tatum provided a detailed list of items to investigate during the exploratory work in the old Supreme Court Chamber, including removing sections of the floor, door frame, plaster, and paint. For the old Senate Chamber he needed paint removed from one of the mantels on the east wall so that the two new ones could be made to match and he asked to remove an existing marble dutchman from a column pilaster on the semi-circular wall to determine if an original gas line existed behind it. The investigations were duly undertaken so Poor and Tatum could complete the working drawings and specifications and the bidding process could begin. The plans were updated by the end of 1972 and the contracts for the general construction were let soon after.

The lower chamber required: concrete plank flooring installed on the brick sub wall and topped by cement, and the floors of the loggia, north, south, and east arcade repaired with cement topping and wood flooring. The millwork and cabinet work would be done by contract, including wood doors and trim, window repairs, wood base, wood panels on south arcade wall, and the paneled mahogany railing; the cast iron and mahogany rail were also contract. A new marble mantel and hearth would be needed as well as the removal and relocation of two existing mantels and hearths from the upper chamber to the east arcade of the lower chamber.

145 The exploratory work in the old Supreme Court Chamber which was done in-house by the AOC; October 10, 1972 letter from Tatum to White, and November 14, 1972 memorandum to file by Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 1.

146 If there was a gas line it could serve as an electrical conduit for wiring of the proposed scones on the pilasters.
White decided to proceed on the work insofar as possible with his own forces rather than with selected outside bidders to exercise more control over the workmanship.\textsuperscript{147} Senator Mansfield and Speaker Albert approved of the decision since it ensured that the restoration would benefit from the work of specialized construction staff. Outside specialists completed the metalwork, cabinetwork, lighting fixtures, carpets, drapery and furniture. This allowed tweaking and correction to the drawings as elements of the chambers were exposed during exploratory demolition.

At the end of 1972, White wrote to Mansfield with his recommendations for the next steps of the restoration.\textsuperscript{148} White asked first that the Commission on Arts and Antiquities approve the return to the old Senate Chamber of the George Washington painting by Rembrandt Peale. Secondly, he asked for permission to remove the Chief Justice busts in the old Senate Chamber to the old Supreme Court. The first five busts (Justices Jay, Rutledge, Ellsworth, Marshall and Taney) were reinstalled in the lower chamber and those of later Justices would be returned to the Court. Thirdly, White wanted to locate furniture and furnishings in the possession of the Senate and the Court that were previously located in the two chambers during the period 1800-1860.\textsuperscript{149} All of White’s requests were approved by the Commission.

III. Restoration of the Old Supreme Court Chamber, 1973
The biggest issue of contention for the restoration was the question of lighting in the old Supreme Court Chamber. Mansfield and Scott, the respective Chair and Vice-
Chair of the Commission on Art and Antiquities, were anxious that in regard to lighting as well as all other aspects of the work under way, “everything possible should be done to return this historic chamber to its appearance when last used by the Court.” Since 19th century accounts described natural light filtering through the three windows, the Commission believed that daylight was the primary source of illumination and did not want a chandelier installed since there was no evidence of one. They asked that the latest expertise in the field of interior lighting be taken into consideration.

At this juncture, the architectural drawings, colored cross-section renderings, and color layouts were completed. Furnishings for the restoration furnishings were to be as accurate as possible with known facts and in the absence of specific information, furnishings and materials typical of 1850-1860 would be used. Guidance was also derived from the chairs, cabinets, and sofas returned to the Capitol from the Supreme Court. A. J. Tatum and interior designer Nellie Rengifo of DeWitt, Poor & Shelton were provided with photographs of the furniture and furnishings, particularly to help with the design of the interior of the old Supreme Court Chamber.

A portrait of Chief Justice John Marshall by Richard Brooke, painted in 1880, hanging in the House Wing of the Capitol, also helped guide the restoration (see fig.

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150 January 19, 1973 letter from Mansfield and Scott to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 4, Folder 11
151 February 8, 1973 memorandum to file by Thayn, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 4, Folder 13
152 June 1, 1973 memorandum to file by Thayne, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6 and June 19, 1973 memorandum from Thayne to Frank Hepler, Marshal, U.S. Supreme Court, AOC’s. Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6.
Marshall’s chair influenced the furniture design, but the balustrade proved more challenging so Campioli recommended adhering to the original 1965 design drawings. However, Ketchum believed the balustrade design was flawed, since the sources from which the working drawings were prepared were missing; he also questioned the selective use of the Brooke painting for reproducing elements for the restoration.  

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153 Two AOC employees photographed the original painting by W.D. Washington, painted in 1858. Discrepancies between the paintings were identified, casting doubts on its accuracy. Since Campioli found several other “liberties with authenticity” in the painting in relation to the Chamber’s architecture he recommended adhering to the original design shown in the drawings; April 25, 1973 memorandum to file on “Old Supreme Court Chamber,” Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.

154 May 7, 1973 letter from Ketchum to the Secretary, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
Poor wrote to White regarding the old Supreme Court restoration, “There is an interesting conundrum in the restoration raised, particularly concerning regard to authenticity in the restoration.” Poor blamed the delay in decisions on “Mr. Ketchum’s insistence on authentication of every portion of the room, relying either on paintings and photographs of the period when the Chamber was last used for the Supreme Court, or on invoices as to items ordered.” His fee was negotiated on the basis of checking on shop drawings and casual supervision, based on the approved drawings, he had not realized that the chambers would be restudied, new research instituted, and the plans and details resulting from the new studies and research would again require approval. Also, the issue of lighting was proving too difficult to settle. Poor thought the lower chamber had a chandelier since the upper chamber had one, but the Commission on Arts and Antiquities wanted evidence before making a lighting decision. To move the matter forward, Poor asked that the Commission meet to resolve the matter.

In response, the Commission decided to hire a “historian consultant” to provide illumination recommendations. They needed an historical architect but the term as such was not yet widely known. Campioli searched extensively for a lighting expert, eventually contacting Alan Gowans, the President of the Society of Architectural Historians, to widen his search. At a meeting to discuss a list of potential qualified architectural historians, Ketchum posed the question, “What is an Architectural

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155 May 31, 1973 letter from Poor to White, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
156 July 19, 1973 memorandum to file by Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
157 Mrs. Antoinette F. Downing of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation recommended several people but Campioli had no luck initially; July 20, 1973 letter from Campioli to Gowans, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
Historian?”158 It was agreed that in addition to being knowledgeable in the field of architectural history, the specialist should have a good knowledge of architectural detail and the ability to draw or develop architectural detail information in illustrative form. Senators Mansfield and Scott later wrote that they expected the architectural historian to be “pre-eminent in his field and well-recognized by his colleagues.”159

After finding little success in hiring an architectural historian, Campioli received a letter from Dr. Paul Norton which indicated a change of heart from his previous decision to pass on this opportunity. Norton believed the task required a “kind of arbitration and tact which comes under some other heading than architectural history.”160 His offer to come to Washington to discuss contractual arrangements was accepted and following his meetings a contract was agreed to.161 Norton, formerly the Chair of the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Massachusetts, was “considered the country’s most eminent authority on Benjamin Henry Latrobe.”162 The Commission expected him to bring a high degree of historical and architectural integrity to the restoration.

The partitions and the dropped ceiling of the old Supreme Court Chamber were removed, opening the space up to its original configuration.163 The room’s layout was guided by the 1854 plan from Bohn’s Hand-Book of Washington, with the justices sitting

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158 September 5, 1973 memorandum to file by Thayne, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
159 September 27, 1973 letter from Mansfield and Scott to White, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
160 October 2, 1973 letter from Norton to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
161 October 9, 1973 memorandum to file by Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
162 November 26, 1973 letter from Mansfield and Scott, U.S. Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities, to Senator Eastland, Office of the Senate Curator’s working files.
with their backs towards the east windows. Much of the original furniture was returned to the Chamber from private collections and the Supreme Court itself, including desks, chairs, benches, and tables. A Simon Willard wall clock, made in 1837, was returned to its place over the entrance door (below the plaster relief of Justice by Franzoni which was also restored). The busts of the first four justices were placed on brackets on columns of the arcade. The paint was removed from the stone columns. The three original fireplaces were reconstructed; two were closed in 1936 to use as air-conditioning ducts. The new mantels were designed to complement the room’s Doric order. And the portrait of Marshall guided the color and design of the carpet in the chamber.

A triumphant Mansfield addressed the Senate Democratic Conference on January 30, 1974, in the newly restored old Supreme Court Chamber. Once completed, the rooms will “share their heritage” while also being “occasionally used on occasions” for regular business and ceremonial occasions “befitting the historic site.” He said that in a few months’ time the appropriate furniture, curtains, carpeting and lighting fixtures would be completed and installed.¹⁶⁴ Now the rush was on to finish the project.

Stennis wrote to White for a restoration status update since it was supposed to be finished in 1975 and the Bicentennial was approaching.¹⁶⁵ The Architect quickly responded that the project was completed on schedule with the exception of lighting

¹⁶⁴ A Decorative Scheme Presentation Board with the color scheme and materials chosen for the carpet, furniture, and draperies had already been submitted to Campioli by Tatum. The materials shown and their respective colors were also included in the specifications for the Carpet and Furniture contracts; November 12, 1973 letter from Tatum to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 8.
¹⁶⁵ March 12, 1975 letter from Stennis to White, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 1.
since disagreement on the most authentic lighting delayed the selection of lighting fixtures by a few months.

Norton completed his report on the lighting in both chambers, but he had hoped to find more visual representations of fixtures (this issue was part of the original problem in determining the appropriate lighting for the old Senate Chamber). Norton submitted his “Report on Lighting and Fixtures for Renovation of the Old Senate and Supreme Court Chambers” and the last phase of the restoration of the old Supreme Court Chamber commenced.

The lighting decisions were guided by Norton’s report and required Ketchum’s approval. Instead of a chandelier, desk fixtures were chosen to illuminate the chamber. A student lamp style was chosen for the Justice’s desks, with two desks sharing one double light with the exception of a single light for the desk of the Chief Justice. A student lamp was also placed on the lawyers’ desks. The three windows were lit with a soffit fixture inside the drapery valance of the center window. Ketchum requested that the new floor and ceiling lighting options be not mistaken for authentic, and that the authentic lighting conform to the architecture of the room. His attention to historical accuracy and avoiding a misleading installation reflected an increasingly academic approach to historic preservation in the 1970s.

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166 February 26, 1974 memorandum from Thayne to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
167 March 20, 1974 letter from Campioli to Ketchum, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 1, Folder 2.
168 June 18, 1974 minutes of meeting by Thayn, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12.
169 July 2, 1974 memorandum to file by Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12.
On May, 22 1975 the newly restored Old Supreme Court Chamber was dedicated to great fanfare. The *Congressional Record* included the history of the room and details of the restoration as well as Senate Resolution detailing the roles for the use of the room: the chamber remains open to the public from 9 am to 4:30 pm each day the Capitol is open, except when being used for “ceremonial occasions associated with the heritage of the judicial and legislative branches;” the Sergeant at Arms has responsibility for the security and maintenance; food, drink, and smoking are prohibited; requests to use the space are directed to the Senate Commission on Arts and Antiquities; and the Senate Curator handles requests to see the Chamber outside scheduled public hours.

Fig. 9. Old Supreme Court Chamber, 2008, image courtesy of HABS No. DC-38-B.

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170 Senate *Congressional Record* of May 21, 1975.
V. Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber, 1976

The old Senate Chamber restoration work was also progressing well; Poor, the project coordinator, and his firm’s interior designer, Nelly Rengifo, were sending Campioli updated drawings and samples for him to approve.171 The roof, ceiling, and structural work were completed, as was a new terraced floor with ascending tiers for the rows of Senate desks. The restoration of the Senate Chamber to its 1859 appearance required the removal of what little remained in the chamber from the Supreme Court’s use, to then recreate its appearance when last occupied by the Senate.

The ladies gallery on the west wall was carefully reconstructed. The semi-circular iron rail was recreated based on G.P.A. Healy’s painting of the Webster-Hayne debate of 1830 (although it was painted some 20 years later). An 1847 guidebook described the gallery as supported by “reeded bronzed iron columns, surmounted by a rich gilt iron balustrade.”172

The furniture bid was awarded to P. Nathan, Inc., who also was the contractor for the furniture in the old Supreme Court Chamber.173 The Senate chairs were made from mahogany and the seats were cane with a loose leather cushion stuffed with hair, upholstered in “Senate Red.”174 The reproduced desks were based on Senator Daniel

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171 They also provided lists of suggested bidders; February 27, 1975 letter from Poor to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6; and April 3, 1974 memorandum from Rengifo to Florian Thayne, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6.
172 Thayn, Report of the Research for the Proposed Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and the Old Supreme Court Room.
173 Their bid beat one from Smith & Watson, June 24, 1975 letter from Poor to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6
174 Thomas Constantine, the New York cabinetmaker, had made the Senate desks after the fire of 1814. Although the pattern was similar, the desks varied in size and height and those on the outside edges of the chamber had one side graduated to conform to the curve of the room. Writing desks with a hinged lid
Webster’s desk with dark red mahogany.\footnote{175} Jefferson Davis’s chair guided the chair design; although it has a cane seat it is otherwise nearly identical to chairs in the current Senate Chamber, most of which moved with the Senate in 1850.\footnote{176} 64 desks and chairs were installed in the old Senate Chamber to reflect the 1859 layout.\footnote{177}

The AOC’s carpenter shop was slated to make the benches for the ladies gallery, but Poor expressed concern that the proposed benches were simpler than design records indicated so he recommended using a more elaborate design that the contractor could make.\footnote{178} The benches were made from pine using Poor’s design which was based on a sketch from “Furniture of the Pilgrim Century” by Wallace Nutting, which covers furniture from 1620 to 1720.\footnote{179}

A long, slightly curved, upholstered bench was located in the Supreme Court Building, which fit the wall of the old Senate Chamber and was likely to have been used by spectators. The bench’s design was similar to the Jefferson Davis chair which therefore was used as a pattern for reproduction. Eight benches were placed under the balcony, three shorter benches placed in the three windows, and 20 stained pine were made as Senators requested them; the “writing box” on the desk provided room for supplies. The original desks were moved to the new Senate Chamber in 1859; Florian H. Thayn, Report of the Research for the Proposed Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and the Old Supreme Court Room (Art and Reference Library of the Architect of the Capitol: 1965).

\footnote{175} Although records indicate a variety of chair styles were often seen on the Senate floor, September 6, 1974 meeting notes, Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12.

\footnote{176} The chair bears the name “T. Constantine – New York” and was used by Jefferson Davis while he was in the Senate, 1847-1851 and 1857-1861.

\footnote{177} An 1850 floor plan was located that helped guide the placement of the furniture in the Chamber.

\footnote{178} March 6, 1975 letter from Poor to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6.

\footnote{179} April 16, 1975 letter from Poor to Campioli, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6.
benches were made for the gallery.\(^{180}\) Two flat-top desks, two armless chairs, and a
bookcase were placed in the loggia along with six chairs on the east wall.\(^{181}\) One existing
armchair, with tuft seat and leather panel back, was used as the pattern for three others
and all three were placed in the loggia behind the Vice President’s chair.\(^{182}\) The settees
were made from mahogany with leather upholstery in “Senate Red.”\(^{183}\) There were four
existing settees located, so four new ones were made to match the existing ones.\(^{184}\)

For the restoration, the Supreme Court returned what was thought to be an
original Vice President’s desk which was placed on the reconstructed raised dais. The
desk was also used as a model for recreating the four clerk desks.\(^{185}\) Period drawings of
the chamber depict the desks of both the Vice President and adorned with green
brocade draperies, so Rengifo selected a green felt color for the desk tops.\(^{186}\) Red
modesty drapes were placed in front of the Vice President and clerk desks (two
reporters, secretary, and clerk) and the chairs for the clerks’ desks are armless.\(^{187}\) A
replication bill hopper was placed on the dais to the right of the Vice President’s desk.\(^{188}\)

\(^{180}\) March 12, 1975 meeting notes by Thayne, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6
\(^{181}\) Florian H. Thayn, \textit{Report of the Research for the Proposed Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and
the Old Supreme Court Room} (Art and Reference Library of the Architect of the Capitol: 1965).
\(^{182}\) September 6, 1974 meeting notes, Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12.
\(^{183}\) February 28, 1975 memorandum by Poor and Swanke \& Partners, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford
Building, Box 3, Folder 6.
\(^{184}\) September 6, 1974 meeting notes, Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12.
\(^{185}\) September 6, 1974 meeting notes, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12
\(^{186}\) Thayn, \textit{Report of the Research for the Proposed Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and the Old
Supreme Court Room}.
\(^{187}\) September 6, 1974 meeting notes, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12
\(^{188}\) A bill hopper at the Smithsonian was measured and replicated.
The Vice President’s chair was recreated with a caned seat and a loose tufted seat cushion covered with red morocco and brass shoes on the legs.\textsuperscript{189} An 1829 guidebook described the Vice President’s chair as canopied by crimson drapery and purchase records detail the large amount of fabric required for the draperies.\textsuperscript{190} For the restoration, the baldachino and the swags for the balcony were recreated with red damask with gold tassels.\textsuperscript{191} The wooden eagle and shield which adorned the baldachino were brought out of storage.

Most draperies were recreated in “Senate Red” with tassels and fringe while the curtains were white linen. The “Stars” design carpet was $3/4$ cut pile Wilton Weave with a red that matched the old Supreme Court Carpet and a dark and light gold for the stars. The star motif was seen in several drawings of the chamber and referred to in vouchers as “star carpet” and was later described as “body-brussels carpeting and border.”\textsuperscript{192} The carpet in the gallery was made in the same color as the floor but without the stars.\textsuperscript{193}

Drapery details were also provided by four panels and tie backs donated by Elizabeth R. Crosby, for the restoration. She was the great granddaughter of Doorkeeper Isaac Bassett.\textsuperscript{194} The restoration recreated the gilded stars that drawings indicated holding up the swags in the ladies gallery at intervals, complementing the star carpet. Venetian blinds with a natural wood stain were placed in the balcony windows.

\textsuperscript{189} September 6, 1974 meeting notes, Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12.  
\textsuperscript{190} The chair itself changed according to the preference of each Vice President; Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{191} March 12, 1975 meeting notes by Thayne, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 6.  
\textsuperscript{192} Thayn, Report of the Research for the Proposed Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and the Old Supreme Court Room.  
\textsuperscript{193} September 6, 1974 meeting notes, Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12.  
\textsuperscript{194} Architect of the Capitol’s internal files, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 9.
Rembrandt Peale’s portrait of Washington was hung in its previous place of honor, above the east gallery. The plaster ceiling coffers were reguilded, however, the original colors were unknown since the original hair-plaster ceiling was replaced in 1919 to improve the acoustics of the room.195

A grand reproduction of the Cornelius & Baker gilt chandelier with 24 oil-burning lamps was designed by Rambusch. The design was based on an 1847 engraving by Thomas Doney, but without the globes (see fig. 10).196 The original chandelier was installed in the Senate Chamber in 1837 and is described as having “facility of movement,” indicating it could be raised and lowered to be lit.197 There is though, no indication what fuel was used since its installation predated the use of gas in the Capitol by 10 years.198 Recessed florescent lighting was placed in the chamber’s three windows, with the exception of the central window which used lighting from the soffit.199 Diffused lighting was also placed behind the railing on the east balcony. The skylights were lit with florescent lights with plastic shields over the lighting to resemble daylight.

Thomas Voigt of Philadelphia made a floor-standing clock for the Senate which traveled with Congress to Washington and stands outside the current Senate Chamber. The clock may have been placed in the old Senate Chamber, but in 1837 a smaller clock was installed over the main entrance; for a restoration a modern clocked was used.

195 Ironically, the coffered ceiling may have originally been intended to improve acoustics by minimizing echoing.
196 June 18, 1974 minutes of meeting by Thayn, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12
197 Thayn, Report of the Research for the Proposed Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and the Old Supreme Court Room.
198 It is worth noting though that the House Chamber had an Argand chandelier.
199 June 18, 1974 minutes of meeting by Thayn, AOC’s Archival Records, Ford Building, Box 3, Folder 12
Two reproduction iron stoves were placed in the niches flanking the entrance door. Treasury vouchers indicated various transactions for heating stoves but no descriptions of their design so the recreated stoves were based on drawings of stoves designed by Charles Bulfinch for the Library of Congress.\textsuperscript{200} Snuff boxes, spittoons, and quills were placed in the chamber. Vouchers reflected the purchase of individual ink wells, sand shakers, and glass desk weights for the Senate.\textsuperscript{201}

The completed chamber was dedicated by Vice President Rockefeller on June 16, 1976. He called the room a “new shrine of American liberty.” Mansfield was pleased

\textsuperscript{200} Thayn, Report of the Research for the Proposed Restoration of the Old Senate Chamber and the Old Supreme Court Room.

\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
with the splendor of the chamber and its furnishings and noted that the “Senate has lost some of its elegance over the past century and a quarter.” In February, the Senate passed a resolution to make $5,000 available for ceremonial and reception purposes in connection with the dedication of the old Senate Chamber.\(^{202}\) Senator Mansfield said on the floor that “With the return of these rooms to their mid-19\(^{th}\) century appearances, a new perspective has been provided for the many thousand Americans who will visit the Capitol Building during the Bicentennial and the years that follow.” The Bicentennial celebrations had begun in earnest and these patriotic reminders of the glorious days of the early Senate and Court were a fitting tribute to add to the celebration.

\(^{202}\) Senate Congressional Record of February 17, 1976
CONCLUSION

While these old Senate and old Supreme Court chamber restorations were not undertaken until 1973 and completed in 1975-1976, the impetus for their initial protection in 1934 was in part due to the efforts of an influential widow. The 1930s were also a time of severe economic depression in the United States, a time when Americans clung to patriotic reminders of their glorious past to help boost low morale. The restoration of the chambers took the back seat when the nation lent its efforts to fighting World War II. Not until the building boom of the 1950s, was there time and money to consider the actual physical fabric of the Capitol Complex.

A building boom ensued after the war to create more working space for Congress and to build strong symbols of a great nation throughout Washington DC. The House and Senate office buildings were designed and built in a classical style to complement and not detract from the Capitol. Many of the design contracts went to one firm, DeWitt, Poor, and Shelton, whose monopoly on Capitol projects was largely in part due to their former employee, Campioli, who was the Assistant Architect of the Capitol. A lack of enthusiasm for the restoration project by House Members effectively derailed funding for the project year after year. The House appropriators were fond of the ease of using the old Senate Chamber for joint conferences and were hoping to get a West Front Extension approved. Mrs. Kennedy’s restoration project at the other end of Pennsylvania Avenue combined with her husband’s death, helped Congress finally allocate money for the initial plans and research.
Political infighting further delayed funding for the project until Lady Bird Johnson entered the fray and helped remove opposition to the restoration in 1972. Additionally, the influential Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities was created by the Senate leadership to advance the cause of these two historic yet neglected chambers. Under the Commission’s direction and that of the Senate Curator, the Architect of the Capitol quickly restored first the old Supreme Court Chamber and then the old Senate Chamber to their respective 1859 and 1860 appearances. The restoration plans were drawn up by 1965 and by the time the work began in 1973, new approaches to accuracy in restorations led to changes in the approach. Since the two-phase restoration was completed in time for the Bicentennial, the projects are now incorrectly referred as the Bicentennial restorations.

Historic preservation in the United States had started a localized grass roots movement to save historic sites associated with colonial leaders; however, its breadth grew quickly throughout the 1960s in response to America’s massive leap forward into the modern age and the ensuing mass demolition in the name of progress. The Historic Preservation Act of 1966 created standards for the preservation of historic sites that had far reaching effects as the federal government added itself to the list of protectors of physical remnants of history, however the law did not apply to the Capitol’s own space.

Understanding how these meticulous restorations were finally funded and the thought process behind the ensuing design decisions provides a wealth of knowledge to incorporate into future discussions regarding their management and care by the Office
of the Senate Curator. The battle to preserve these historic rooms in the active Capitol complex indicates extensive power struggles and changes in attitudes towards historic spaces throughout the 20th century. Researching the monumental undertaking of restoring of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers reveals the unique challenges in preserving an active functional space. The story of the restoration of these magnificent chambers largely parallels the development and increased importance of historic preservation as a field of study in the United States.

The restorations project’s in-depth research and resultant attention to historic accuracy was a joint effort between Senators, academics, architects, and Capitol Hill staff. The eventual completion of the project is indebted to the leadership and perseverance of several Senators, a widow, and the influence of two former First Ladies. The restoration’s success also relied on cooperation between the Architect of the Capitol’s Office, the Senate Commission on Art and Antiquities, the Senate Curator’s Office, and the architectural firm of Dewitt, Poor & Shelton, who all in turn relied on the advice of contracted academics and the skills of talented craftsmen to recreate the mid-19th century appearances of the old Senate and old Supreme Court Chambers.
APPENDIX: History of the Old Senate and Old Supreme Court Chambers

Washington commissioned the French-American engineer Pierre Charles L’Enfant to carve a capitol city out of a wilderness. L’Enfant gleaned inspiration from the grand avenues of Paris and Versailles gardens and designed a plan with a grid street pattern intersected by grand avenues emanating from the Capitol and President’s House. The plan placed the Capitol on Jenkins Hill, looming over long garden or Mall to provide awe-inspiring views of the building. Naturally, Washington was pleased with the plan which “aimed at being a truly national metropolis, a great federal capitol that would help bind far-flung states into a united country.”

The capitol city and its buildings would stand as a beacon for unity and strength, firmly establishing the ambitious young democracy.

Since L’Enfant failed to provide drawings for the Capitol and President’s House, Washington held a design competition which resulted in a plan for the President’s House by James Hoban, while a late design entry submitted by Dr. William Thornton was the winning plan for the new Capitol (see fig. 12). Thornton envisioned a domed rotunda fronted by a Corinthian portico on an arcade, and two wings with a rusticated ground story supporting Corinthian pilasters and full entablature flanked the dome.

By using a dome and portico design similar to the Roman temple Pantheon, the Capitol

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203 L’Enfant was let go in 1792 due to his failure to follow the requests of the commissioners and his hot temper.
204 “Instead of a mere house for Congress, the nation would have a capitol, a place with symbolic roots in the Roman Republic and steeped in its virtues of citizenship and ancient examples of self-government”: Allen, 10.
205 Hoban proposed a refined Georgian mansion in the Palladian style.
206 The dark horse was a doctor in Bermuda and like most architects of his time was not professionally trained and instead was a “gentleman architect” guided by European architectural publications. As the winner of the competition, Thornton’s prize was $500 and a lot in the City of Washington: Ibid., 21.
building’s architecture linked the new republic to the democratic ideals of antiquity, lending more credence to the embryonic government. The design was widely admired for its scale and elaborateness, which was deemed fitting for the new Capitol. Thomas Jefferson, as Secretary of State, hoped to utilize federal buildings modeled on antiquities as a way of combating the Continental view of America as a tasteless and inferior backwater.

Fig. 12. William Thornton’s East Elevation of the Capitol, c. 1796, drawing, image courtesy of www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/wt_dwg.cfm.

The laying of the Capitol’s first cornerstone in 1793 was an opportunity to use a “grand display of pomp” to help restore confidence in project that was already a year behind schedule. The endeavor experienced numerous difficulties obtaining raw materials and hiring and retaining skilled laborers at the rural construction site.

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207 As the runner-up in the design competition, Stephen Hallet did not admire the plan and found much fault in its ambitiousness and unfeasible interiors, which he detailed in a report issued in 1793. His recommended floor plan was incorporated in the final “conference plan.” This resulted in placing the House and Senate Chambers on the ground floor instead of the second level, the piano noble, which should have been the building’s primary floor: Allen, 21-22.

208 Jefferson hoped to use the arts to increase the America’s reputation throughout the world: Ibid., 14.

209 Ibid., 24.
Congress and Jefferson, now president, moved to the City of Washington in 1800, as scheduled, but while the President’s House was completed, the Capitol’s construction delays resulted in only its North Wing being nearly complete.²¹⁰ But the shoddy workmanship resulted in a leaking roof, rotting wood, and loss of plaster in the new North Wing.²¹¹ The simple interiors were mostly finished; the Senate Chamber was a two story room on the ground floor and the House of Representatives was temporarily housed in the library on the second floor.²¹² To relieve the cramped conditions, a temporary House Chamber was built in the South Wing, and the rapid deterioration of the North Wing required rebuilding (see fig. 13).

Fig. 13. 1) Original north (Senate) wing, 1793-1800 and 2) Original south (House) wing, 1793-1807, Image courtesy of www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/c_const_seq.cfm.

²¹⁰ Hallet was hired to oversee the Capitol’s construction and as the city’s “surveyor of public buildings,” Hoban was his boss. Similar to Lafayette, Hallet was later dismissed for insubordination when he refused to show the three-man commission overseeing the work his altered plans for the Capitol: Allen, 23-26.
²¹¹ The moisture issue in the North Wing was also due to lack of air holes for ventilation: Ibid., 27.
²¹² The Senate Chamber had 16 Ionic columns, standing on a brick arcade covered with wood paneling, trimmed windows, and sandstone hearths. The shafts were wood skinned with plaster and the capitals were plaster as well. Two portraits of the King and Queen of France, Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, moved with Congress from Philadelphia to Washington and hung in the gallery as a patriotic reminder of the fight for independence from the British: Ibid., 40-44.
President Jefferson was integrally involved in the challenging project of completing the Capitol building. Raising funds for the construction proved difficult until Congress appropriated $50,000 for the repairs and alterations to the Capitol and President’s House in 1803 – particularly for constructing the South Wing. Jefferson hired Benjamin Henry Latrobe as the Surveyor of Public Buildings. He was an English-born professionally trained architect who specialized in neoclassical architecture. As “America’s foremost architect/engineer” his previous projects included the Bank of Pennsylvania and the Philadelphia Waterworks. Latrobe redesigned the Capitol’s interiors in a Neoclassical style which “...brought the antiquities of Athens to the Capitol and helped associate the young republic with the ancient cradles of democracy.” Using grand architecture to link the old and the new lent gravitas to the young government.


213 Allen, 50.
214 Latrobe moved to America in 1795, after the death of his first wife: Ibid., 51
215 Allen., 50-51.
Latrobe redesigned the interior of the North Wing using brick and sandstone walls to create two levels from the one story Senate Chamber. He used vaulted construction to create two stacked rooms so the Senate could meet in the upper chamber and the Supreme Court in the lower chamber. Latrobe created the semicircular shape and elegant columns of the old Senate and Supreme Court Chambers to reflect the amphitheaters of ancient Greece and Rome, the birthplaces of democracy and republicanism (see fig. 15). The rooms were designed to welcome the public to watch their new government at work while also striving to impress upon the visitor a sense of awe.


The Senate Chamber’s east gallery was supported by a colonnade of eight columns of variegated marble from a Potomac quarry. The columns divided the
chamber proper from a loggia, where Senators met privately and clerks worked. Two fireplaces along the ends of the loggia provided warmth and the loggia’s three windows provided light as did the skylights in the coffered half-dome ceiling. The vice president’s desk was on a raised dais directly in front of the loggia and was adorned with a carved baldachino topped with a gilt eagle. The Secretary of the Senate and the Chief Clerk’s desks were in front of the vice president’s desk, and all three desks faced the Senate body. The desks for the Senators radiated outwards from the vice president’s desk and behind them were settees for special guests along the chamber’s curved western wall.

Fig. 16. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, [United States Capitol, Washington, D.C. Supreme Court chamber, section & plan of bench], 1808, drawing, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, image courtesy of http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b51707.

The Supreme Court Chamber displayed Latrobe’s architectural and engineering skill with an ornamental barrel vaulted ceiling which was divided into lobes by ten ribs.

\[216\] Goodwin, Safeguarding the Senate’s Golden Age, 21.
The structural load of the semi-spherical ceiling was supported by three Greek Doric columns on the eastern wall and an arcade along the western wall. The eastern wall was lined with three windows which provided the chamber with natural light. The desks for the justices were on a raised dais in front of the eastern arcade and were flanked by the desks of the court officials. The desks for the lawyers faced the court and adjacent to these desks and along the western wall were settees for visitors to the chamber.

Hiccups in the project included the death of Latrobe’s assistant, John Lenthall, when he prematurely removed the support and the ceiling of the upper chamber collapsed. Although Latrobe had not authorized him to do so, this incident tainted his reputation as a skilled engineer. Funding issues also plagued the project since Latrobe required quality materials and workmanship, and therefore exceeded his budget to the displeasure of Congress and Jefferson.

When the new Senate Chamber was completed in 1810, there were 34 Senators. Senators were appointed by the state legislature and were considered rather “elite” and generally looked like gentlemen. But they chewed tobacco and spit (a cuspidor was placed by every desk in the room). Snuff was available on the vice president’s desk, alcoholic Senate “tea” was consumed in the chamber, and one Senator would even bring in his foxhounds and tie them to his desk. Senators had no private offices and constituents came to their Senate desks for meetings.

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217 Ibid., 21
Upon moving to Washington, the Supreme Court met in six different spaces in the Capitol until their new chamber was also completed in 1810. Lacking specific direction from the Constitution, the Supreme Court was the weakest of the three branches of the government. Early courts were unlikely to take on controversial cases because they were unsure of their powers; however the court was forever changed when President Adams appointed John Marshall of Virginia to the Supreme Court in 1801. Marshall boldly defined the role and powers of the court and successfully molded the federal judicial system into the powerhouse it is today. The landmark 1803 case of Marbury v. Madison established the court’s power to interpret the constitutionality of laws passed by Congress or state legislatures, thereby strengthening the judiciary.

During the War of 1812 the British burned the new Capitol building so in 1815 Latrobe was tasked with the design and reconstruction of the chambers. He hoped to restore the Capitol to its former beauty in every detail possible, upping the awe factor. The fire had ruined the upper chamber but the lower chamber ceiling remained intact, however, Latrobe rebuilt both spaces since at the Senate’s request he enlarged the Senate chamber by removing a small staircase and water closets behind the curved wall, and this required rebuilding the undamaged dome of the lower chamber. Latrobe was let go, the reason being that he was not fully adhering to

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218 Latrobe was also tasked with rebuilding the South Wing for the House of Representatives.
219 Budget constraints forced Latrobe to make cost-cutting measures when completing the new chambers, for example he covered the chambers with wooden domes instead of his choice of brick and was forced to abandon his plan for columns holding marble caryatids in the Senate Chamber: Allen, 116.
220 The original Latrobe working drawings of the old Senate Chamber, thought to have been used during the 1817-1819 construction, are preserved in the files of the Architect of the Capitol: Ibid., 108.
Thornton’s original Capitol plan and his beautiful plans often required more money than Congress had.

After Latrobe’s departure, Charles Bulfinch was appointed in his place and he completed the work on the chambers in 1819.\textsuperscript{221} Bulfinch was a respected Boston architect whose designs employed classical elements such as columns and domes in both the public and private buildings he was commissioned to build, such as the domed Massachusetts State House and Connecticut’s Old State House.\textsuperscript{222} He also completed the center rotunda section of the Capitol and designed its first wooden dome along with the Capitol’s western approach and portico.

\begin{figure}[h]
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\caption{Center section and Rotunda, 1818-1824, image courtesy of www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/c_const_seq.cfm.}
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\textsuperscript{221} It is unknown what became of Bulfinch’s plans of the Senate Chamber.

\textsuperscript{222} Bullfinch’s Federal style of classical domes, columns, and ornament dominated early 19th century American architecture.
In 1819 the Senate and Supreme Court returned to their rebuilt chambers (the South Wing of the Capitol for the House of Representatives was completed in 1826). Bullfinch built a Ladies Gallery in the Senate Chamber to accommodate the numerous lady visitors to the Chamber who wished to listen to the exciting Senate proceedings. The semicircular balcony in the rear of the room was supported by delicate cast-iron columns and was completed in 1828, a time when women had begun to leave their homes and go out more in public. During the early 19th century, “shifting attitudes toward the presence of women in public space and evolving dilemmas about the dangers and pleasure of city life” were slowly incorporated into the design of public spaces. The ladies gallery was a novel undertaking for a federal government space and soon the Senate Chamber was a fashionable meeting place to hear the great orations of Senators Webster, Clay, and Calhoun over state’s rights and secession.

The Senate Chamber and Supreme Court Chamber were a stage for the new country’s great social experiment in democracy where all men are created equal. The balance of power created by the three branches of government strived to firmly establish the new federal government and the national debates in the years leading up to the Civil War led to the Golden Age of the Senate. Senators Webster, Clay and Calhoun, were the "the ornaments of American statesmanship in the era between the

224 David M. Henkin, The Postal Age : The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2006), 75.
225 During the early 19th century only the private sector had begun to incorporate private areas for ladies on steamboats, trains, and hotels, however, this changed with the mid-century design of women’s areas in the new federal post offices: Ibid., 74
226 Becker, The United States; an Experiment in Democracy, 2.
founding and the Civil War. Together against their political foe, President Jackson, they were famous throughout the country for their great oratory skills. Americans flocked to the Chamber to listen to speeches and heated deliberations, the ladies balcony often overflowed. 

“Washington and Jefferson’s Capitol was designed for a nation straddling the Atlantic seaboard,” not one that expanded across North America. The country’s rapid growth necessitated a building campaign that tripled the Capitol’s sizes so two new spacious legislative chambers were planned as well as new committee rooms and offices and a brand new magnificent towering cast-iron dome for the Capitol.

Fig. 18. 4) Present House and Senate wings and connecting corridors, 1851-1867, image courtesy of www.aoc.gov/cc/capitol/c_const_seq.cfm

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228 Drama was in no short supply in the chamber as evidenced by Representative Brooks administering Senator Sumner a severe cane beating in 1856 over the issue of slavery: Goodwin, Safeguarding the Senate’s Golden Age, 23.
230 The fireproof dome eliminated the embarrassing possibility of the wooden dome catching fire.
A young Philadelphian’s designs for extensions to the Capitol incorporated the needs of Congress and won the approval of President Fillmore and his cabinet.\textsuperscript{231} Thomas Ustick Walter, whose prior claim to fame was Girard College, was selected as the architect of the Capitol extension. In 1857 the new House Chamber in the Western extension was completed as was the new Senate Chamber in the Eastern extension two years later. The House and Senate moved into their new more spacious chambers, where they still remain today – completing their game of musical chairs. However, the Court was still one move away from its final resting place.

When the Senate left their old chamber in 1859, the vacated space was modified to suit the needs of the Supreme Court; the Ladies Gallery and the western colonnade were removed. And in 1860 the Court moved from their ground chamber into the vacated chamber on the main floor and their old chamber became their library. The court stayed in these rooms until moving into their new Supreme Court building east of the Capitol in 1935. These two historic chambers witnessed the birthing of a new country and its development into a nation. The two deliberative bodies which assembled in these rooms hashed out America’s first laws and their constitutionality, setting the course for a new democratic government. The initially successful experiment in democracy was shattered with the advent of the Civil War. With a nation on the brink of civil war, gone were the days of legislative solutions to the issues dividing the north and south, ending the Senate’s Golden Age.

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 190-195.
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