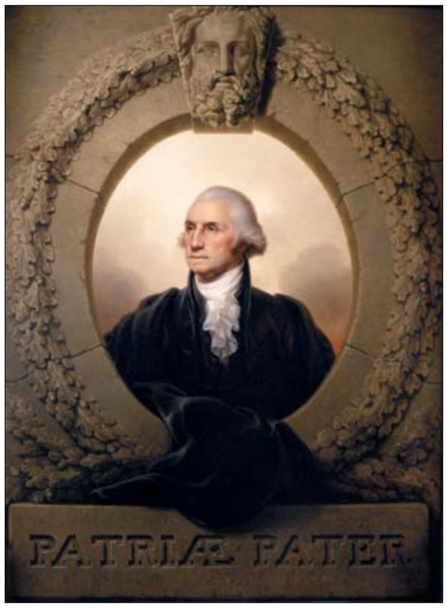
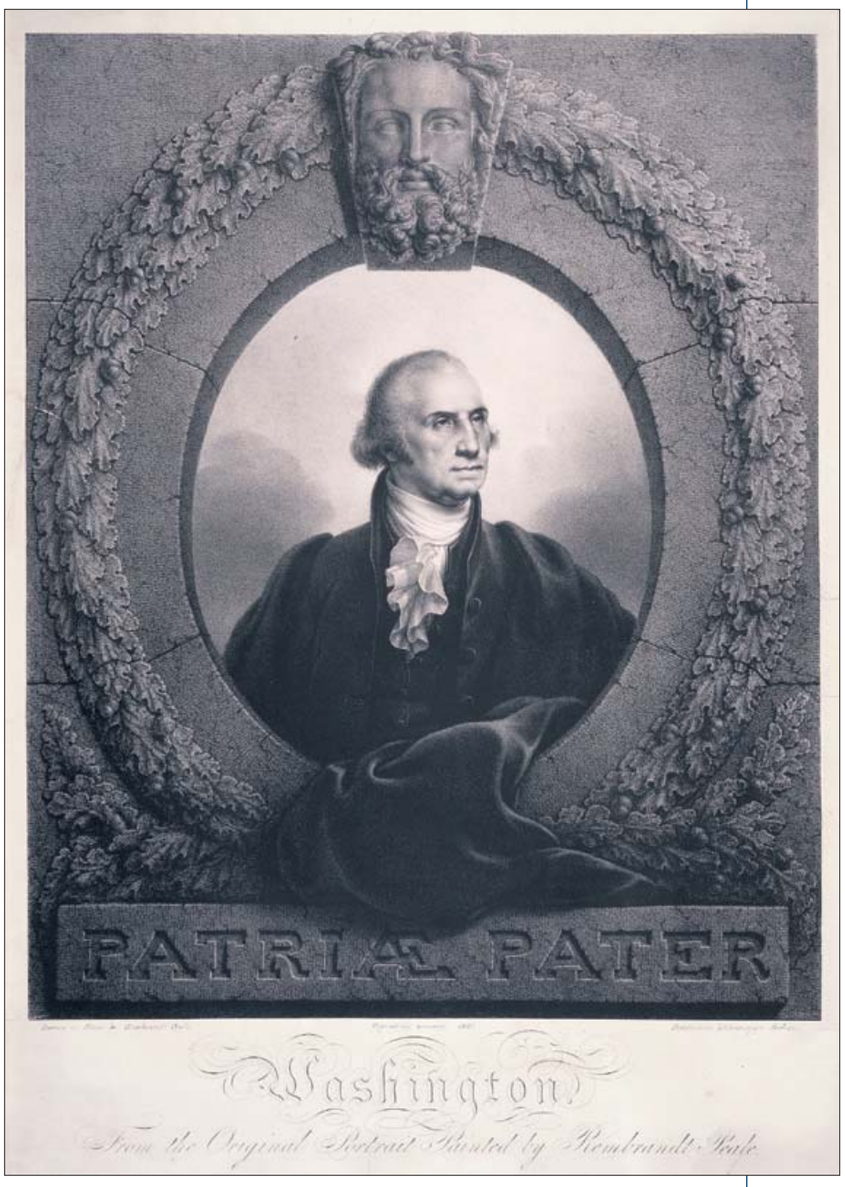
# SENATE ART

On display in the Old Senate Chamber in the U.S. Capitol is Rembrandt Peale's striking painting of George Washington, subtitled *Patriæ Pater* (Father of His Country). Also known as the "porthole portrait," the painting incorporates classical elements to create a heroic image of Washington, which Peale hoped would become the "Standard likeness" of the first president.[1] To promote the portrait and provide additional income, Peale exhibited the painting in Europe, made numerous oil replicas (more than 75), and created a print for sale to the public (38.00982.001). He drew the lithograph in the spring of 1827 in the Boston studio of William and John Pendleton, whose state-of-the-art printing press was highly regarded. Peale was one of the first American artists to become skilled in the lithographic process, and he personally redrew his composition on stone to create this popular image. Contemporary critics considered it the finest print produced in America, and it won a silver medal, the highest award, at the 1827 exhibition at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. The popularity of the print helped Peale publicize his work and increase his reputation.



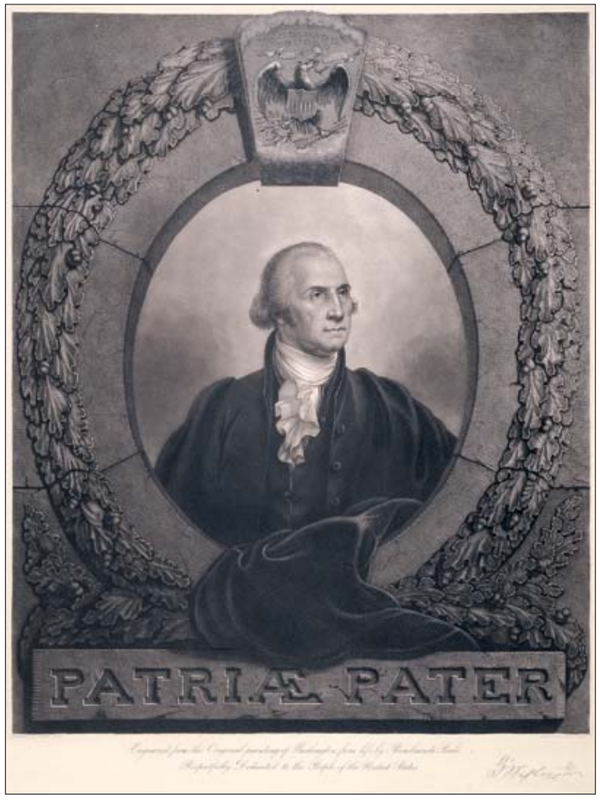

***George Washington (Patriæ Pater)***
by Rembrandt Peale, 1823, oil on canvas.
(U. S. Senate Collection)

[1] Lillian B. Miller and Carol Eaton Hevner, *In Pursuit of Fame: Rembrandt Peale, 1778–1860*, (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery; Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 144.




**[George] Washington.**

Rembrandt Peale
Pendleton's Lithography, 1827
Lithograph, black and white
18 ¾ x 15 ⅛ inches (47.6 x 38.4 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00982.001




**[George Washington]**

Adam B. Walter after painting by Rembrandt Peale
Unidentified, ca. 1865
Engraving, black and white
20 ¼ x 15 ⅛ inches (51.4 x 38.4 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00473.001

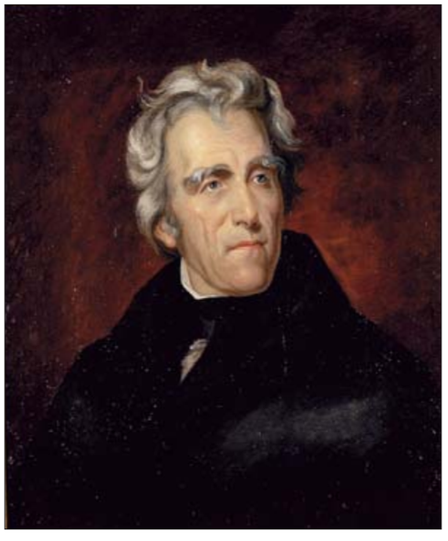
In 1840 noted Philadelphia engraver John Sartain copied John Blake White's painting of *General Marion Inviting a British Officer to Share His Meal*, now owned by the U.S. Senate. The mezzotint was made for the Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States, a group that showcased American painters by making their work available to a wider audience. Sartain's print was the first in a series of engravings made from American paintings and distributed to the association's members. He received numerous commissions throughout his career to create prints based on paintings by such noted artists as Thomas Sully and Benjamin West. Sartain is credited with introducing illustrations into American periodicals and pioneering mezzotint engraving. This image depicts one of the many legendary exploits of Revolutionary War General Francis Marion. According to the tale, while camped on Snow's Island, South Carolina, around 1781, the general received a British officer who had been sent to arrange an exchange of prisoners. After completing their business, General Marion (right center with plumed shako) asked the visiting officer to stay for a meal. The officer was surprised by the modest fare and the dedication of the American soldiers.

***General Marion Inviting a British Officer to Share His Meal***
by John Blake White, date unknown, oil on canvas.
(U.S. Senate Collection)

**Gen. Marion in His Swamp Encampment Inviting a British Officer to Dinner.**

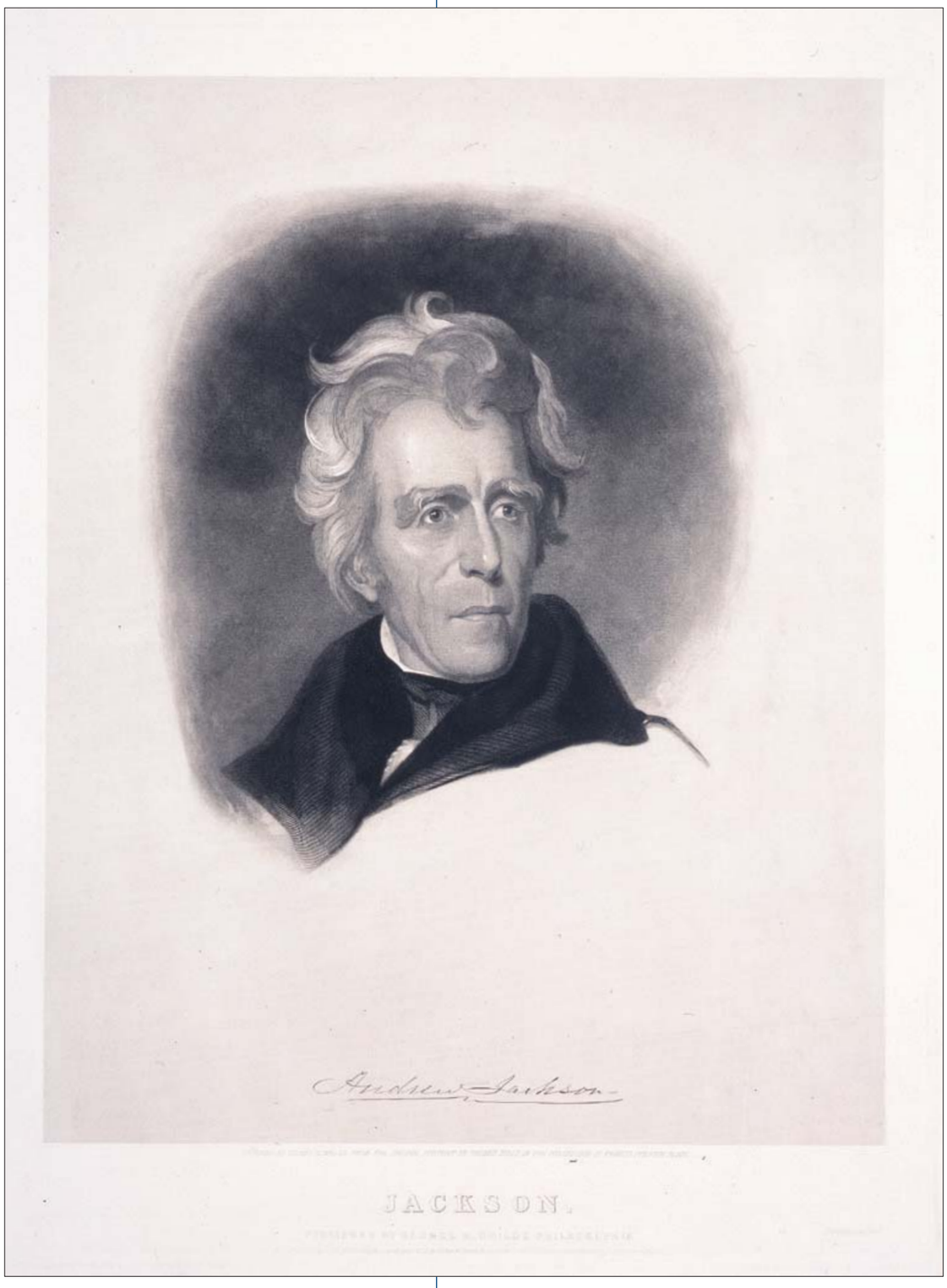
John Sartain after painting by John Blake White
The Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1840
Mezzotint, black and white
18 1/4 x 20 3/8 inches (46.4 x 51.8 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00961.001

Thomas Sully first painted Andrew Jackson in 1824. The hero of the Battle of New Orleans was by then a U.S. senator from Tennessee and a Democratic nominee for president. Sully painted a total of 11 portraits of Jackson, from a head-only likeness to a full-length, life-size image. One of the half-length portraits came into the possession of Francis Preston Blair, Jr., a lawyer, politician, and later U.S. representative and senator from Missouri. Blair was reported to have loaned his Sully painting to Philadelphia publisher George W. Childs, who had Thomas Welch engrave the Jackson portrait. Childs sent complimentary copies of the engraving to prominent individuals, hoping for testimonials that could be published in newspapers to increase sales of the print. Sully's half-length image of Jackson is the most widely recognized portrait of the president; it was the basis for the likeness that appears on the $20 bill.



***Andrew Jackson***
attributed to Thomas Sully, ca. 1857,
oil on canvas. (U.S. Senate Collection)

The Senate owns an oil on canvas painting attributed to Thomas Sully that shares many stylistic similarities to the 1852 Welch engraving, especially in the hair, eyebrows, chin, and facial lines, but differs from Sully's other Jackson portraits. Although Sully may have replicated it from an engraving of his own painting, it is also possible that the Senate's oil portrait was copied from Welch's engraving by another, unidentified artist.




**[Andrew] Jackson.**

Thomas B. Welch after painting by Thomas Sully
George W. Childs, 1852
Engraving, black and white
22 ½ x 17 ½ inches (57.2 x 44.5 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00963.001

"We have met the enemy and they are ours—two ships, two brigs, one schooner and a sloop." With this simple victory message to General William Henry Harrison, commander of the U.S. forces in the Northwest Territory, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry announced his victory over the British fleet at the Battle of Lake Erie. The battle ensured American control of the Great Lakes during the War of 1812, and secured the country's tenuous hold on the Northwest. Artist William Henry Powell captured this historic event in a monumental painting that dominates the east grand stairway in the Senate wing of the U.S. Capitol. A stereoview (38.00476.001), by Washington, D.C., publisher John F. Jarvis, shows a detail from Powell's painting—it depicts the moment when Perry made his way in a rowboat, through enemy fire, from his severely damaged flagship, the *Lawrence*, to another ship, the *Niagara*, where he took command and soundly defeated the British. Stereoviews were popular with the public by the 1860s, and viewing stereo cards became a common pastime for middle and upper class America. Jarvis's photograph may have been bought as a souvenir from a Capitol visit, or purchased by someone who would never have the opportunity to see the building, but wanted a collectible symbol representing the nation's Capitol.

***Battle of Lake Erie***
by William Henry Powell, 1873, oil on canvas.
(U.S. Senate Collection)

**Battle of Lake Erie.**

Unidentified after an 1865 painting by William Henry Powell
Johnson, Fry & Co., 1866
Metal engraving, black and white
7 5/16 x 10 3/4 inches (18.6 x 27.3 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00953.001

**Perries [sic] Victory on Lake Erie.**

Unidentified after painting by William Henry Powell
John F. Jarvis, date unknown
Photograph, black and white
3 1/4 x 6 1/16 inches (8.3 x 15.4 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00476.001

It took Francis Bicknell Carpenter only six months to paint his 15-foot-wide canvas of the *First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln*. As the title suggests, the scene shows members of Abraham Lincoln's cabinet gathered at the White House on July 22, 1862, to hear the president read his draft of the Emancipation Proclamation. Depicted in the painting are, from left to right: Edwin M. Stanton, secretary of war; Salmon P. Chase, secretary of the treasury; President Lincoln; Gideon Welles, secretary of the navy; Caleb B. Smith, secretary of the interior (standing); William H. Seward, secretary of state (seated); Montgomery Blair, postmaster general; and Edward Bates, attorney general. Soon after completing his masterpiece, Carpenter commissioned Alexander Hay Ritchie to create an engraving of the painting in hopes of advancing its popularity. Ritchie, who emigrated from Scotland in 1841, was a successful and accomplished painter and engraver of historical and allegorical subjects, and also created superb mezzotint portraits. The *New York Evening Post* predicted that the engraving would "take its place among the pictures which the people hang upon their walls to commemorate one of the great and most notable acts in the nation's history."[1] President Lincoln himself signed on as the first subscriber, requesting an artist's proof.

***First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln***
by Francis Bicknell Carpenter, 1864, oil on canvas.
(U.S. Senate Collection)

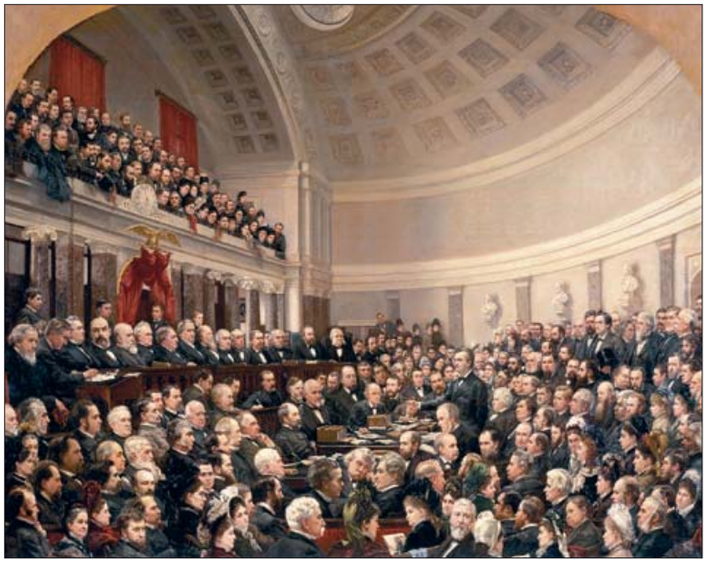
[1] Francis B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln. The Story of A Picture*. New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867, appendix.

**The First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation before the Cabinet.**

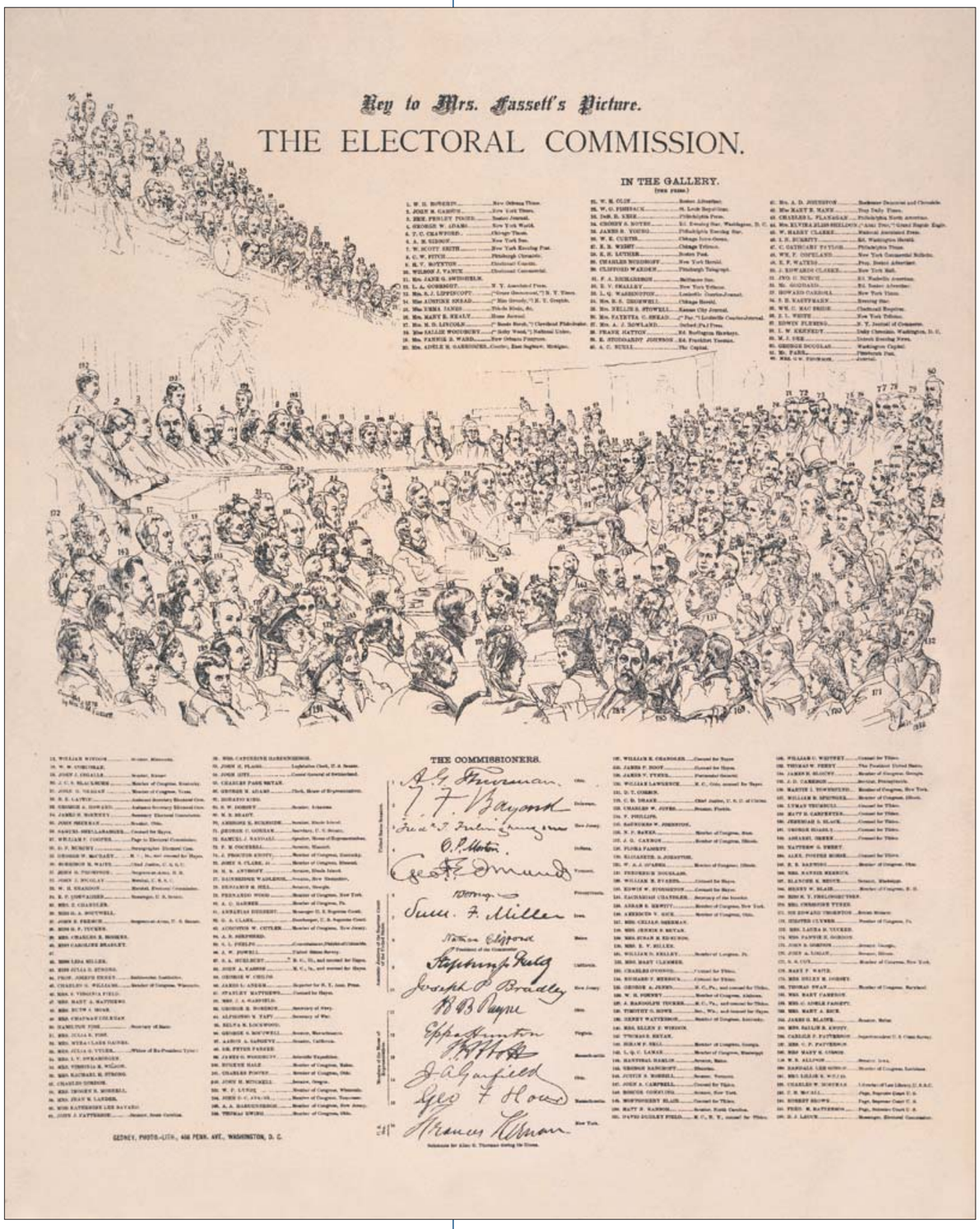
Alexander Hay Ritchie after painting by Francis Bicknell Carpenter
Derby and Miller, 1866
Metal engraving, black and white
23 ½ x 33 ½ inches (59.7 x 85.1 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00450.001

See appendix p. 482 for key

In the summers of 1877 and 1878, artist Cornelia Adèle Fassett set up a temporary studio in the U.S. Capitol's Supreme Court Chamber (now the Old Senate Chamber) to paint her monumental group portrait of the Electoral Commission meeting in the room over the disputed Hayes-Tilden election of 1876. The federal government did not commission the painting; Fassett created it independently, but was granted special access to record the historic event. While the architectural features are correct, Fassett took some artistic license—not all of the individuals depicted attended the hearings. She also interjected her own political concerns into the scene, such as including abolitionist Frederick Douglass (far right side, below center), champion of African American equality, and writer Mary Clemmer Ames (lower right corner), a vigorous advocate for women suffrage and equality. The artist depicted herself (bottom foreground, right of center) holding her sketchbook and drawing the head of William M. Evarts, counsel for Hayes. This detailed key was produced by the firm of J. F. Gedney the same year Fassett completed her group portrait. The painting was purchased by Congress in 1886.



***The Florida Case before the Electoral Commission***
by Cornelia Adèle Strong Fassett, 1879, oil on canvas.
(U.S. Senate Collection)




**Key to Mrs. Fassett's Picture. The Electoral Commission.**

Gedney, Photo.-Lith. after painting by Cornelia Adèle Strong Fassett
Unidentified, 1879
Wood engraving, black and white
14 ⅝ x 11 ¼ inches (37.1 x 28.6 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00373.001

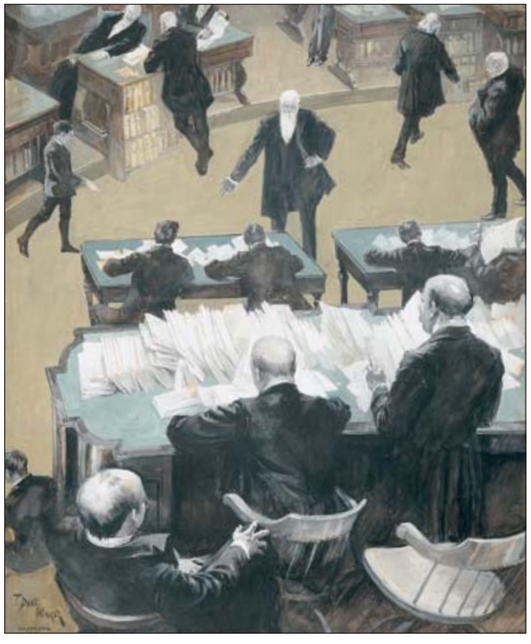
For many, the quintessential image of Revolutionary War hero Patrick Henry is Thomas Sully's half-length portrait, now owned by the Virginia Historical Society in Richmond. The Senate has an oil on canvas copy of Sully's portrait by George Matthews. In 1896 John C. Yorsten & Co. also copied Thomas Sully's painting as a metal engraving. Yorsten included below the portrait an image of the old Virginia Capitol in Williamsburg, site of many of Henry's famous speeches. Henry will forever be remembered by Americans for his courageous patriotism and for his stirring words, "Give me liberty or give me death!" His eloquent call to arms, reported to be from a speech he delivered in 1775 at the second Virginia Convention, galvanized his fellow colonists to action. As the movement for independence grew, Henry served as a delegate to both the first and second Continental Congresses, and was largely responsible for the establishment of a colonial militia. He helped draft a constitution for the new state of Virginia, served as its first governor, and was among those most responsible for adding a bill of rights to the Constitution.

***Patrick Henry***
by George Bagby Matthews after Thomas Sully, ca. 1891, oil on canvas. (U.S. Senate Collection)

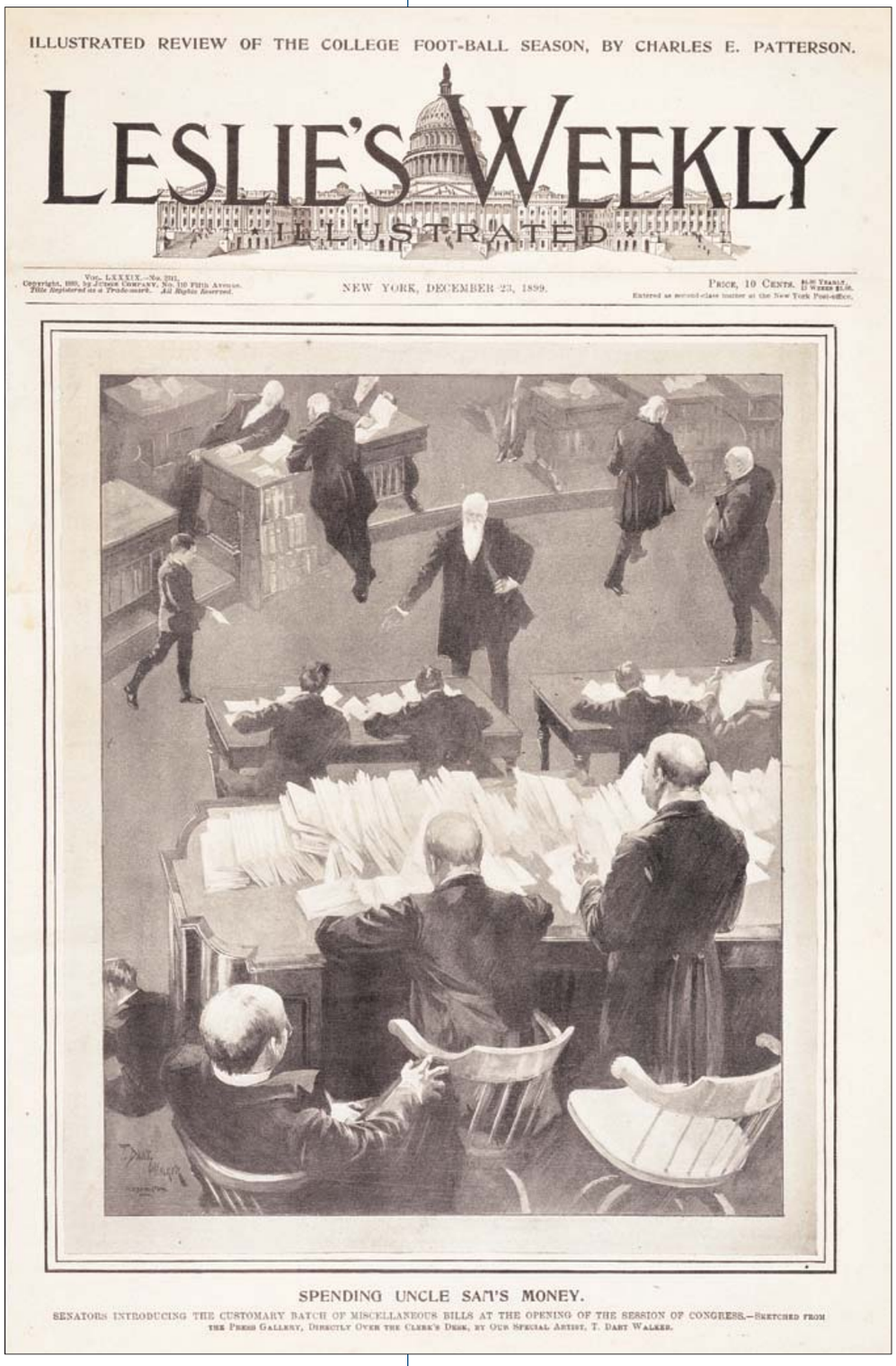
**P[atrick]. Henry**

Unidentified after Bather after painting by Thomas Sully
John C. Yorsten & Co., 1896
Metal engraving, black and white
9 11/16 x 6 inches (24.6 x 15.2 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00487.001

New York illustrator T. Dart Walker produced this image for the front cover of the December 23, 1899, issue of *Leslie's Weekly*. The Senate now owns the original painting. *Leslie's* technicians transferred the watercolor into a halftone image, a process that gained popularity among illustrated newspapers in the late 19th century. In the scene, Walker depicts the Senate Chamber as it appeared at the opening of a session of Congress. Senators have just introduced bills for consideration during the session, and the large number of papers suggests a heavy workload lies before them. The artist captured the view from the press gallery on the north side of the Chamber. In the lower half of the print, three Senate staff members sit in front of the presiding officer's desk (not shown). Most likely these men are, from left to right, the secretary of the Senate, the legislative clerk, and the reading clerk. Senators discuss the business at hand, and two Senate pages can be seen—these young boys ran errands for the members and handled other minor tasks as assigned.



***Spending Uncle Sam's Money***
by T. Dart Walker, ca. 1899, watercolor on board.
(U.S. Senate Collection)



ILLUSTRATED REVIEW OF THE COLLEGE FOOT-BALL SEASON, BY CHARLES E. PATTERSON.

LESLIE'S WEEKLY ILLUSTRATED

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SPENDING UNCLE SAM'S MONEY.

SENATORS INTRODUCING THE CUSTOMARY BATCH OF MISCELLANEOUS BILLS AT THE OPENING OF THE SESSION OF CONGRESS.—SKETCHED FROM THE PRESS GALLERY, DIRECTLY OVER THE CLERK'S DESK, BY OUR SPECIAL ARTIST, T. DART WALKER.

**Spending Uncle Sam's Money.**

Unidentified after painting by T. Dart Walker
*Leslie's Weekly*, 12/23/1899
Halftone, black and white
11 ½ x 9 inches (29.2 x 22.9 cm)
Cat. no. 38.00588.001