PRESENT STATE OF THE CAPITOL AT WASHINGTON.—SEE PAGE 18.

Chapter 4

The Capitol Extensions and New Dome

William C. Allen

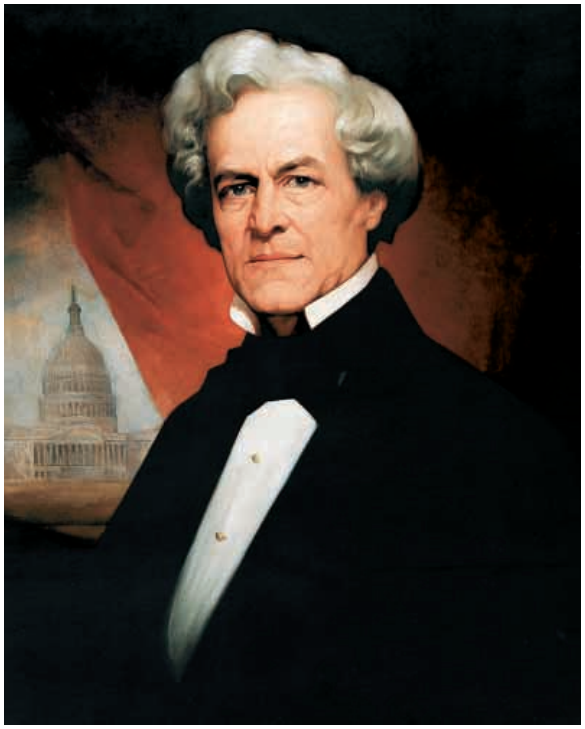

Fig. 4–2. Franciso Pausas, *Thomas Ustick Walter*, 1925. *Based on a period photograph, this portrait shows Walter at the beginning of his fourteen-year term as Architect of the Capitol Extension.* Architect of the Capitol.

In the 1850s, the enlargement of the United States Capitol employed scores of artists in addition to thousands of construction workers. Of all the artists to work on the Capitol extensions, Constantino Brumidi was the most famous and controversial. The new large, vaulted wings built at the ends of the old Capitol provided ample surfaces for fresco painting and other forms of elaborate decoration. The new cast-iron dome, authorized in 1855, provided Brumidi with additional opportunities to display his art. Indeed, his presence may have influenced a significant revision to its interior design.

When Brumidi arrived at the Capitol at the end of 1854, he found a building not yet thirty years old flanked by construction sites where hundreds of men worked on scaffolds that partially obscured the rising walls (fig. 4–1). The grounds were dotted with sheds where stone was cut and carved, fenced yards where mountains of marble and millions of bricks were stored, stables where the work horses were kept, and shops where belching steam engines helped turn blocks of stone into column shafts. Construction on the additions to the Capitol, already under way for three and a half years, had been administered by two different cabinet departments and had always been the center of controversy. From the beginning of the project in 1850, bickering among rival architects and engineers, libels traced to disappointed contractors, scrutiny by the partisan press, and political grandstanding shrouded the project in a pervasive cloud of acrimony. After he started work, it would not take Brumidi long to be caught up in the quarrelsome atmosphere that seemed to prevail on Capitol Hill.

Fig. 4–1. *Present State of the Capitol at Washington*, 1853 (detail). *The building completed by Charles Bulfinch was shown in the* Illustrated News *with the new extension under construction, shortly after Constantino Brumidi arrived in the United States.* U.S. House of Representatives, Conable Collection.

Expanding the Capitol was meant to solve two problems: space shortages and bad acoustics. The old Capitol, finished in 1826, was designed when there were only fifteen states in the Union. After the 1850 admission of California as the thirty-first state, the Capitol was very nearly out of space. The growth of the legislature, with its committees and its large library, strained the building's facilities and made an addition inevitable. Even more serious than cramped quarters was the dreadful acoustics in the Hall of the House of Representatives. In that otherwise impressive room, the voice of a member speaking from the floor reflected off the smooth, curving ceiling to become inaudible to some and a reverberating babble to others. One member remarked that it was impossible to be a gen-

Fig. 4–3. Charles Hart, *U.S. Capitol Washington. D.C.*, c. 1866. *Although differing in detail and materials, the two wings that were added to the Capitol were designed to harmonize with the existing structure. The great cast-iron dome, completed in 1866, unified the composition.* U.S. House of Representatives, Conable Collection.

tleman in that confusing, "unmannerly Hall."[1] Some thought that millions of dollars could be saved each year if only members could understand debates and know what they were voting for. A number of proposed solutions were tried, but nothing worked. The only remaining possibility was to build an entirely new hall, one designed with attention to the principles of acoustics.

The project to enlarge the Capitol was initiated on September 30, 1850, when Congress appropriated $100,000 to start construction and directed President Millard Fillmore to select the manner by which the building would be enlarged and to appoint an architect to design and build the addition. More than a dozen architects submitted designs; in June 1851 the president appointed the Philadelphia architect who had gained a national reputation for his Greek Revival-style Girard College for Orphans, Thomas U. Walter (fig. 4–2).

Walter's design featured wings attached to the old Capitol by narrow corridors. Each three-story wing was 142 feet wide and 240 feet long; the corridors were 45 feet in length (fig. 4–3). The wings were built of brick on gneiss and granite foundations and were faced with a beautiful white marble quarried in western Massachusetts. One hundred Corinthian columns, with fluted, monolithic shafts, were used for the ten exterior porticoes and colonnades. Windows were framed by elaborate frontispieces with carved consoles supporting pediments. A full entablature and balustrade partially masked the low-pitched roofs, which were carried on iron trusses. A large new legislative chamber was located in each wing, and over one hundred additional rooms were provided for committees and offices.

The basic style of the Capitol—a neoclassical design in the Roman Corinthian order, with columns, pilasters, and entablature—was established in Dr. William Thornton's original 1793 design. Walter was obliged to follow much of Thornton's composition, varying only such small things as the profile of the balusters and window details. By the 1850s, Roman architecture had long passed out of favor, superseded by a modern rage for ancient Greece. Both were distinct phases of neoclassicism, a late eighteenth-century revival of artistic order that characterized the art and architecture of Hellenic Greece and Imperial Rome.

On July 4, 1851, President Fillmore laid the cornerstone of the Capitol extension in a ceremony highlighted by Secretary of State Daniel Webster's two-hour oration.

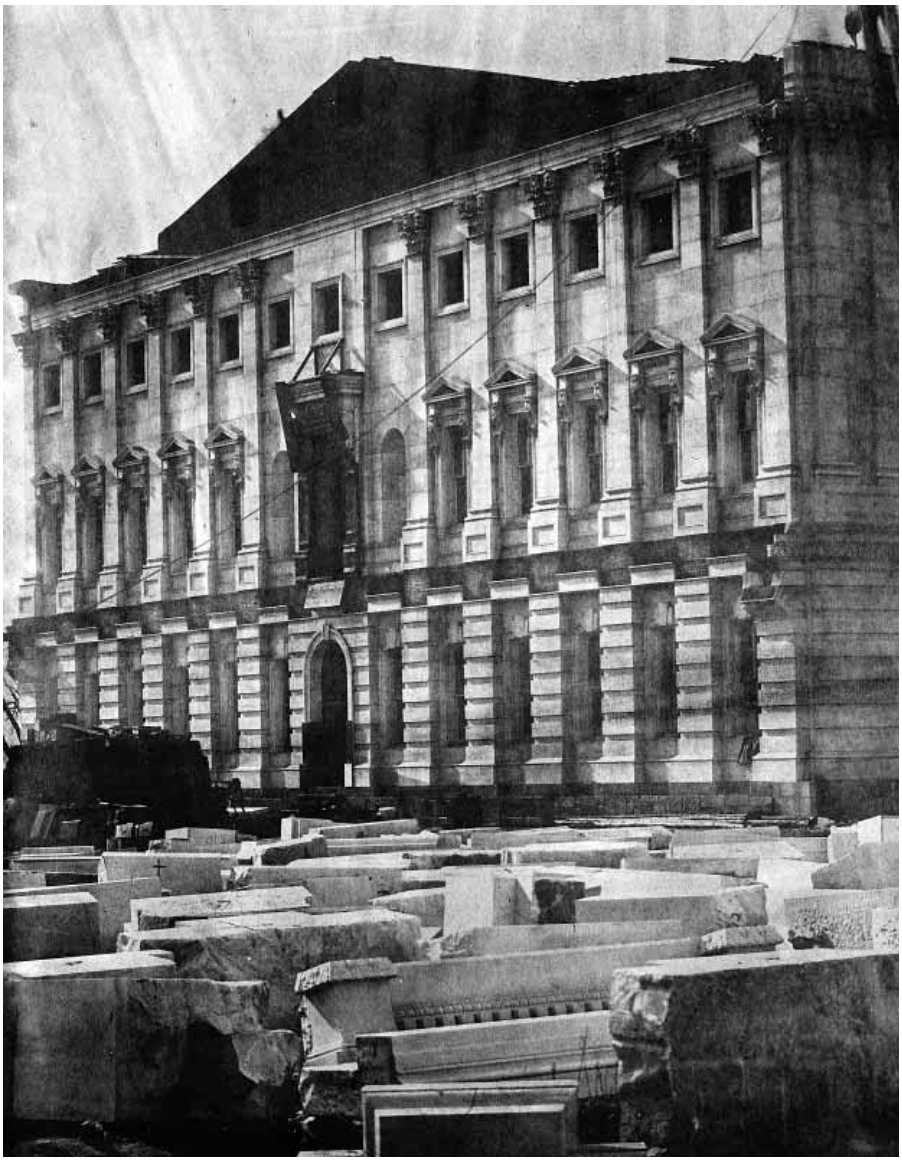

Fig. 4–4. Capitol extension under construction. *Carved marble awaiting installation is shown in the foreground of this view of the south wing.* Montgomery C. Meigs Photo Album. Architect of the Capitol.

In a few weeks Walter moved his family from Philadelphia to Washington, appointed a New York builder, Samuel Strong, as general superintendent, and placed advertisements for building materials in newspapers from Boston to Richmond. Soon he had contracts for stone, river sand, cement, and lime and began to build the foundations to a depth of 40 feet on the west and 15 feet on the east, uniformly 8 feet 9 inches thick. Walter and a "commission of scientific gentlemen"[2] tested a dozen types of American marble for strength, durability, and resistance to moisture; the contract—the most important and lucrative for the project—was awarded to John Rice and James Baird of Philadelphia for marble from their quarry near Lee, Massachusetts.

Work on the extensions stopped in December 1851 due to the cold weather and resumed in mid-April 1852, the day after another appropriation passed Congress. To resolve problems with slow delivery of granite, and the attendant need to dismiss idle stonecutters (who retaliated with an angry petition to the Secretary of Interior), the government contracted with the firm of Provost and Winter for all future stonecutting and carving (fig. 4–4). This seemingly simple arrangement was to have a surprising consequence, however: an alliance of disappointed stone contractors and workmen, including Commissioner of Public Buildings William Easby, decided to get even by accusing Walter of accepting bad stone and bad workmanship, paying inflated prices, receiving favors from contractors, selling public property for private gain, and so on. Although at first only a minor annoyance to Walter, these charges set off a chain of events that eventually put the architect under the authority of an ambitious military engineer who became Brumidi's principal government patron.

A congressional committee was formed under Senator Sam Houston of Texas in August 1852 to investigate "abuse, bribery or fraud . . . in obtaining or granting [government] contracts."[3] The committee heard testimony from three dozen witnesses; the most damaging led to the forced resignation of the general superintendent, Samuel Strong, who was said to extort money from workmen and to have a pecuniary interest in brick contracts. Walter rebutted the charges against him in a 123-page handwritten defense. While admitting that a few "dishonest, unprincipled, and indolent men" had committed fraud, he also expressed his hope that they would be prosecuted fully. He was confident that the frauds were limited and were "inconsiderable" compared to the size and cost of the project. Point by point, supported by his balanced accounts and meticulously kept records, Walter exposed Easby's accusations as rumor, hearsay, and lies.

Houston's committee ordered its 216-page report printed on March 22, 1853, two and a half weeks after the close of the Fillmore administration. It laid out the charges, testimony, and rebuttal but presented neither recommendations nor conclusions. The new administration of

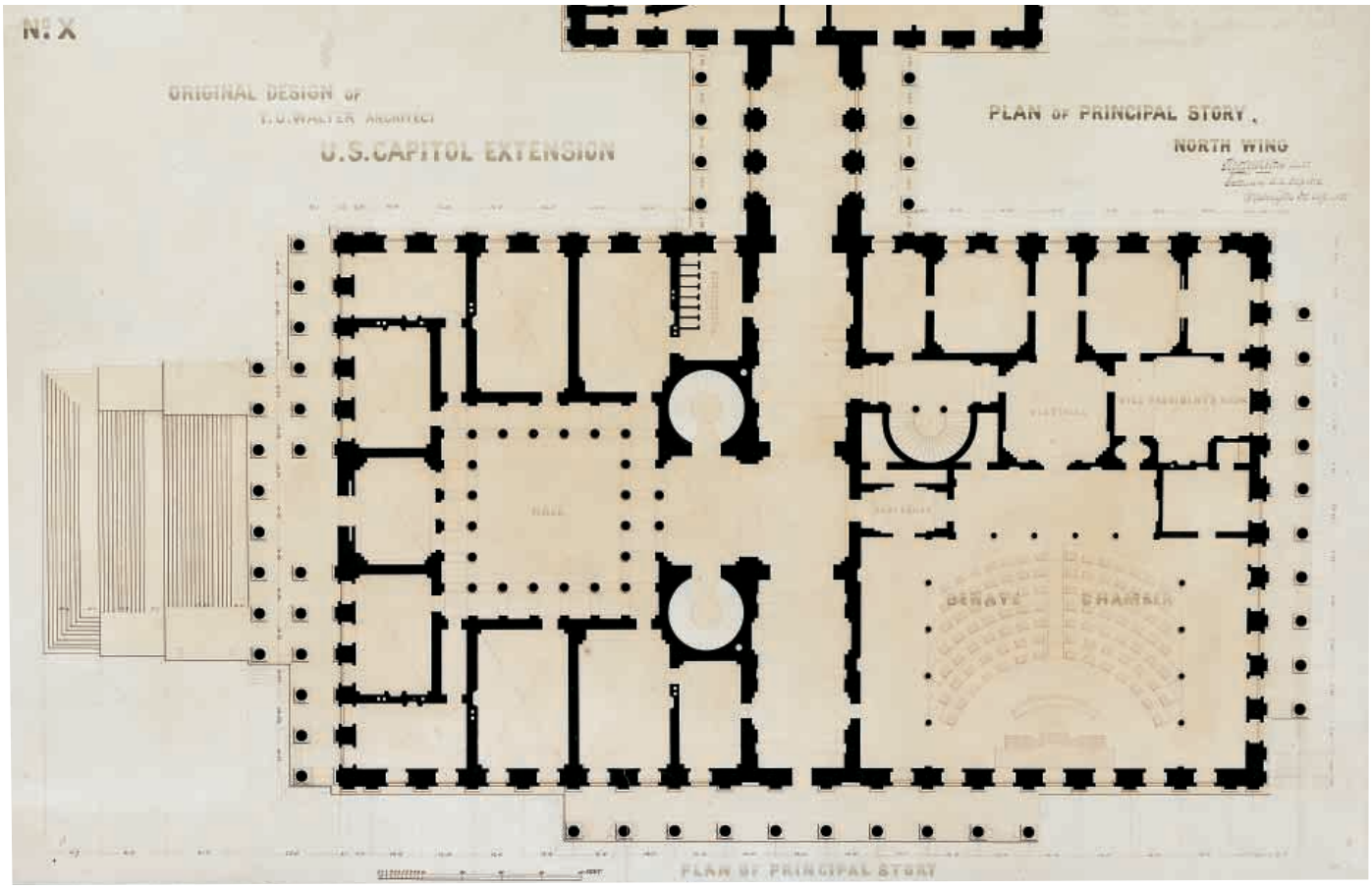

Fig. 4–5. Thomas U. Walter, *Plan of Principal Story North Wing*, 1851. *This plan placed the Senate Chamber in the northwest corner of the wing.* Architect of the Capitol.

Franklin Pierce included a new Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, who had been the driving force in the Senate Committee on Public Buildings behind the effort to enlarge the Capitol. Davis wanted to control the work, and the unflattering publicity that Walter had suffered during the recent investigation made it easy to convince the president that the Capitol extension project would be better handled by the Army Corps of Engineers. The corps was, after all, the government's construction contractor—although admittedly more accustomed to forts than capitols. The transfer was ordered on March 23, 1853. For Walter the change was a bittersweet pill to swallow. He was not dismissed, but neither did he receive a vote of confidence. However, with an army engineer detailed to the works, he would be freed from thousands of annoying administrative details. He could now concentrate on working out architectural details, a labor more suited to his taste and temperament.

To take control of the Capitol project, Davis appointed Montgomery C. Meigs, a thirty-six-year-old captain of engineers trained at West Point. Meigs was fully empowered to suggest changes to the design; in Walter's office, he enthusiastically examined the elevations and floor plans and soon ordered alterations. On the exterior, he decided only that the two eastern porticoes should have pediments to accommodate sculptural groups. He directed radical alterations to the floor plans, however. The original plan placed the legislative chambers in the western half of each wing, affording legislators fresh air and the garden view of the Mall away from the dust and noise of the east plaza. But Meigs saw one problem: members and senators going to and from their chambers were obliged to pass through large public corridors that would undoubtedly be clogged with annoying petitioners, lobbyists, and visitors. Meigs suggested relocating the chambers to the middle of each wing and surrounding them with corridors and lobbies, some of which could be made strictly private (figs. 4–5 and 4–6). Without windows, the chambers would be lit by skylights and ventilated by steam-powered fans. Doors could be placed on all four sides of the chambers, greatly improving access and circulation. From all accounts Walter liked Meigs's idea, cheerfully worked out the new plans, and redesigned the foundations to accommodate them. By July 5, 1853, President Pierce had approved the revised plans and elevations.

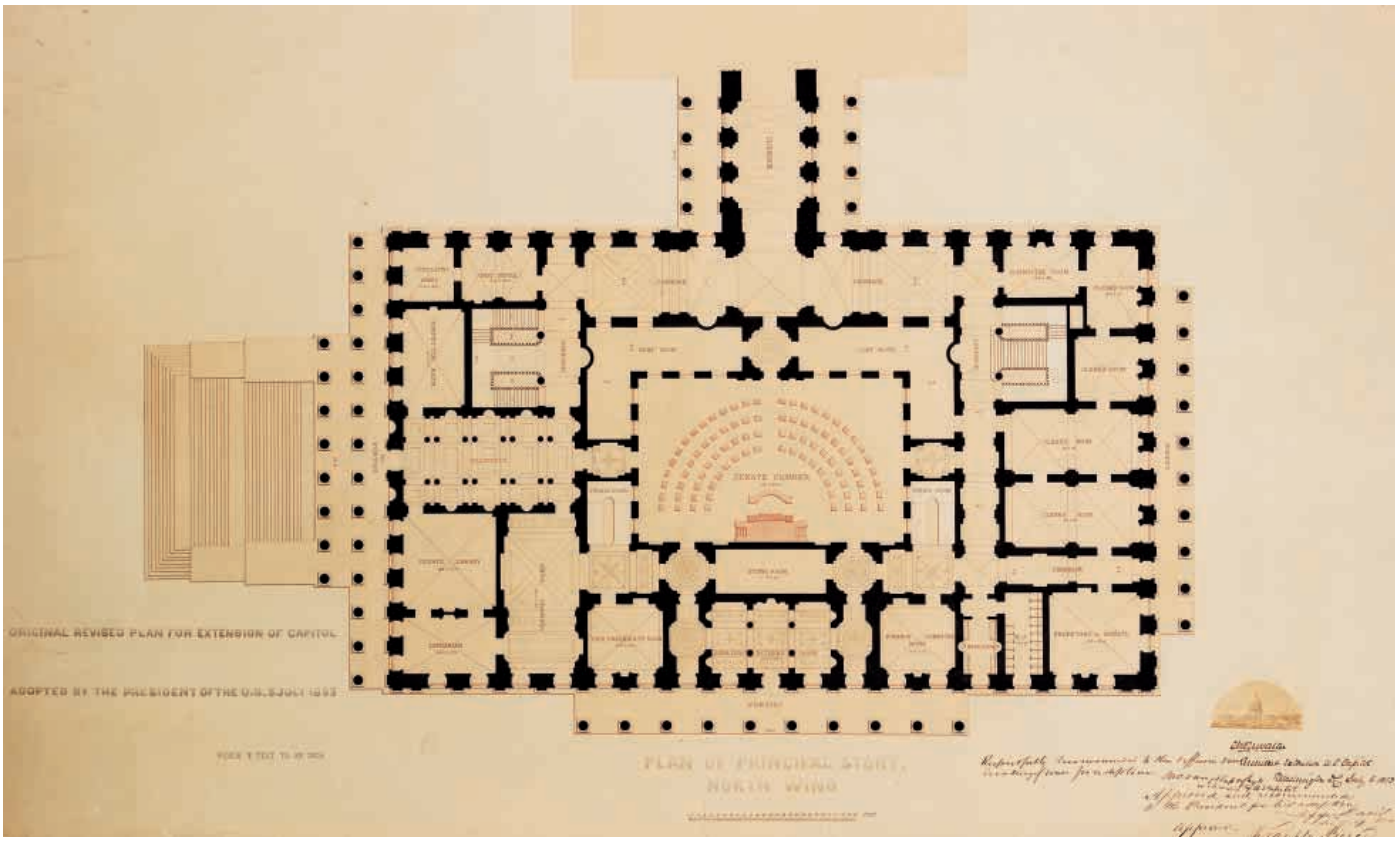

Fig. 4–6. Thomas U. Walter, *Original Revised Plan for Extension of Capitol*, 1853. *Meigs directed that the Senate Chamber be moved to the center of the wing; he made similar revisions regarding the House Chamber in the south wing. Secretary of War Jefferson Davis and President Franklin Pierce approved the changes.* Architect of the Capitol.

At the beginning of their association Meigs and Walter worked well together, each seemingly satisfied with his role in the enormous undertaking. Walter was happy to be free of administrative burdens and devoted his time to architectural studies for the Capitol extension and to other assignments thrust upon him by the government. For his part, Meigs thrived on the importance of his position, derived genuine satisfaction from knowing that his payrolls provided the livelihood for so many men and their families, and relished his scientific studies in acoustics, heating, and ventilation. He could not count on his paltry salary as an army captain to bring him fortune, but he counted on his command at the Capitol to bring him fame. Happily, Meigs preferred fame over fortune anyway. One of his favorite ways of helping history to remember his name was having it carved or cast in a variety of ways in many different locations. At the Washington Aqueduct, which Meigs began a year before taking over the Capitol project, his name was cast into all the pipes that brought water to Washington from the upper Potomac. An iron staircase he designed used the giant letters MCMEIGS as the riser for each step. At the Capitol, Meigs's name was cast into all the iron beams that formed the roof trusses. Copper plates bearing his name were routinely embedded in the mortar between marble blocks in the walls. Walter considered his colleague's appetite for fame a great weakness, and once wondered why Captain Meigs forgot to "order old Vulcan to stamp his name on the thunderbolts."[4]

One aspect of his work at the Capitol was particularly gratifying to Captain Meigs: it was his chance to become America's foremost patron of the arts. With its views of economy, the Fillmore administration had expected the interiors of the Capitol extensions to be finished in a plain manner. Except for the chambers and public lobbies, brick floors and whitewashed walls would suffice. Ornamentation was expected to be spare. But the Pierce administration thought that opulent decorations were more fitting for the greatest building of the age. Grand interiors unlike anything seen on this side of the Atlantic were a challenge that perfectly suited Meigs's ambition. With Jefferson Davis's encouragement and backing, Meigs intended the extensions to be finished in the most elaborate fashion possible. Like a latter-day Medici, he doled out

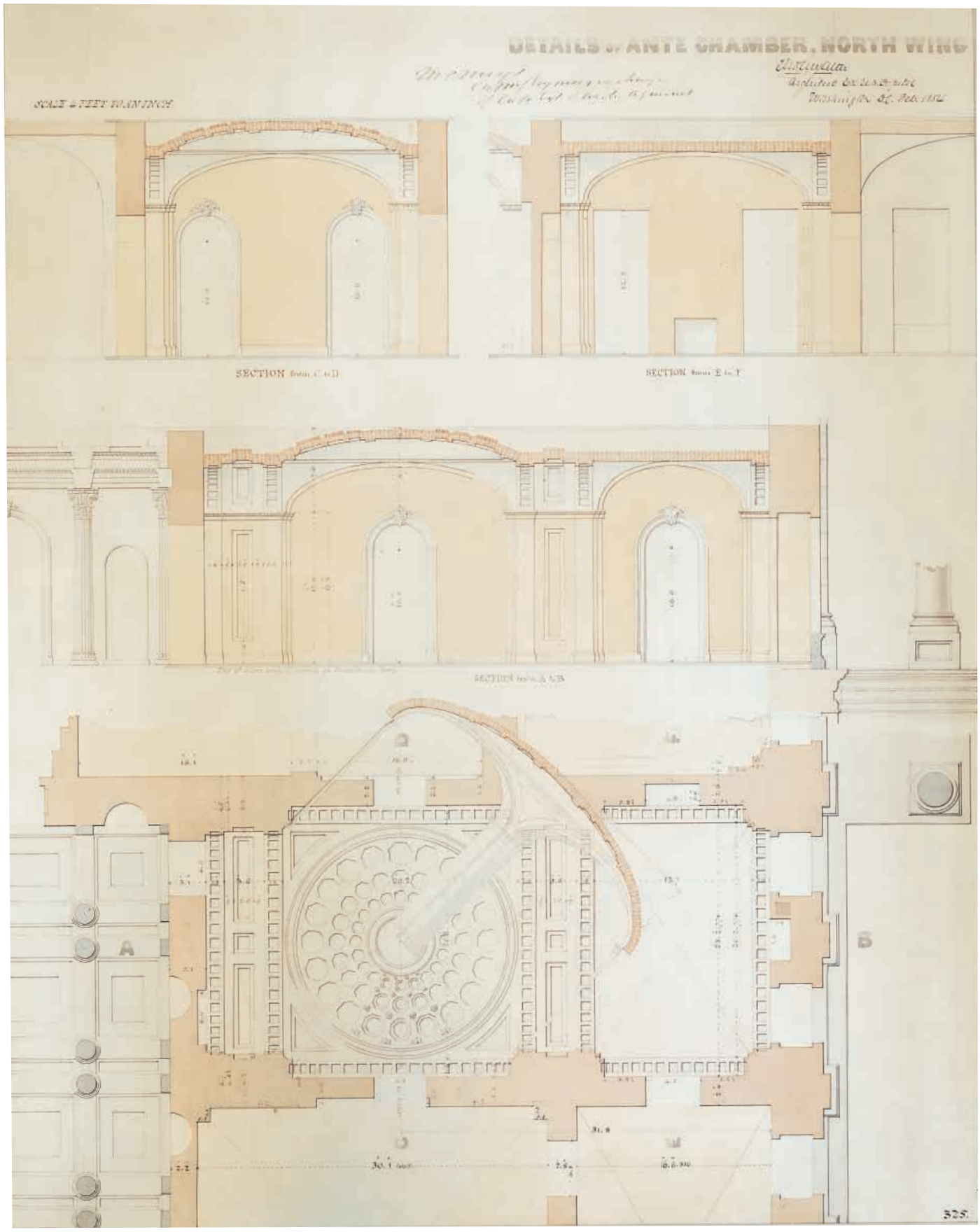
DETAILS OF ANTE CHAMBER, NORTH WING
SCALE 4 FEET TO AN INCH
SECTION from C to D
SECTION from E to F
SECTION from A to B
A
B
C
D
325.

Fig. 4–8. Stereoscope of Senate Reception Room, c. 1860. *The room is shown here shortly after its construction. Only a few of Brumidi's frescoes have been finished, but the plaster ornamentation by Ernest Thomas and the imitation-marble wainscot have been completed.*

Photo: American Stereoscopic Company, New York.

vast sums for paintings and sculpture that would, he hoped, enrich the nation's Capitol to compare favorably with the great buildings of Europe. If they were to have large entrances, why not commission bronze doors to rival Lorenzo Ghiberti's famous Baptistery doors in Florence? If the walls needed painting, why not employ artists to do the job in a high style? Most public buildings in America, he said, "starve in simple whitewash."[5] Artists flocked to the Capitol, hoping to profit from Meigs's ambition and largess.

Fig. 4–7. Thomas U. Walter, *Details of Ante Chamber, North Wing*, 1854. *Known today as the Senate Reception Room, the "Ante Chamber" was constructed with a remarkable variety of interdependent vaults and arches. Paneled and coffered elliptical arches framed a low dome on pendentives that adjoined a groin vault.* Architect of the Capitol.

Constantino Brumidi's appearance at the end of 1854, when the extensions were far enough along for decorations, was a case of perfect timing. The interior architecture presented a variety of spaces built in various ways, offering abundant opportunities for enrichment. The legislative chambers would be the most grand, with glass and iron ceilings, niches for sculpture, and large panels for paintings, in addition to sumptuous architectural detail. Lobbies, corridors, and committee rooms were built with brick vaults, the most durable and fireproof means of construction. Vaults could be groin or barrel, and low coffered domes carried on pendentives were also built for the sake of variety (fig. 4–7). Piers that helped support the vaults were treated like columns, with elaborate cast plaster capitals with egg-and-dart and other decorations (fig. 4–8). Window and door trim was cast iron, with a profusion of classical and rococo ornament. Colorful and long-wearing encaustic Minton tile from England was used as flooring except in the carpeted cham-

Fig. 4–9. Senate Corridor, Principal Story, c. 1902. *For the main passage into the Senate Chamber, Walter designed a heroic double colonnade of paired Corinthian columns supporting a richly carved marble ceiling with stained-glass panels. Walter incorporated tobacco, corn, and magnolia leaves in the capitals.*
From Glenn Brown, *History of the United States Capitol*, 1902.

bers and in the marble-floored entrance lobbies on the principal floor (fig. 4–9). These lobbies were further elaborated by Corinthian columns that Walter designed incorporating native American plants: corn, magnolia, and tobacco. In each wing two public staircases were designed with screens of marble columns with cast bronze Corinthian capitals. For the sake of variety, one of these grand staircases in the north extension was made wholly of white marble imported from Italy (fig. 4–10). These staircases provided skylit landings that were reserved for heroic history paintings twenty feet high and thirty feet long. Four private staircases were designed with sculptured bronze railings. Even the gas chandeliers made in Philadelphia were beautiful and useful sculptural decorations (figs. 4–11 and 4–12). Grandeur, variety, and permanence were Meigs's goals for the Capitol's interiors

Fig. 4–10. East grand stair, House wing, c. 1902. *Each wing was provided with two monumental public stairs designed with Corinthian columns and pilasters with bronze capitals, massive handrails and balusters, steps carved from individual blocks of marble, and niches for sculpture.*
From Glenn Brown, *History of the United States Capitol*, 1902.

Fig. 4–11. South corridor, principal floor, Senate wing, c. 1860. *These spacious corridors illustrate the complexity, variety, and beauty of vaulted construction.* Denys Peter Meyers Collection.

Fig. 4–12. North corridor, principal floor, House wing, c. 1860. *The bronze gas-burning chandeliers were made in Philadelphia by the firm of Cornelius and Baker.* Denys Peter Meyers Collection.

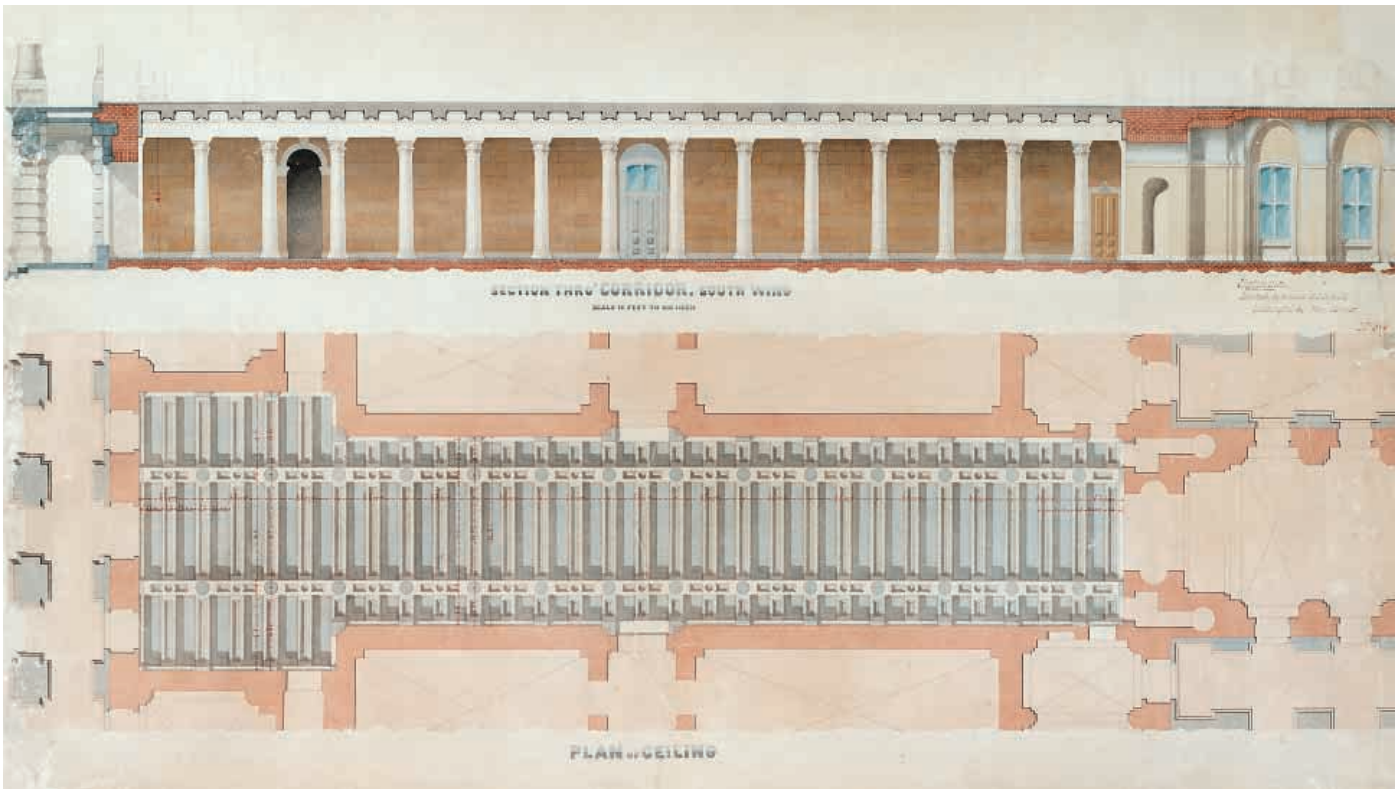

Fig. 4–13. Thomas U. Walter, *Section Thro' Corridor. South Wing* with *Plan of Ceiling*, 1855. *Running the full width of the House wing on the first floor is the so-called Hall of Columns. Twenty-eight columns made of Lee, Massachusetts, marble were designed by Walter with thistle and tobacco along with the conventional acanthus in an American variation of the Corinthian order.* Architect of the Capitol.

(figs. 4–13 and 4–14). Walter shared these goals but would later disagree with some of the methods employed to achieve them.

In his unprecedented fine-arts patronage Meigs sought only Jefferson Davis's approval. He never felt obligated to confer with Walter, who, he thought, had credit enough as architect. Meigs was determined to leave his mark on the design of the Capitol and considered the decorations a perfect way to do so. The conflict that ensued with Walter was both unavoidable and bitter. It simmered just below the surface until Jefferson Davis left office when President James Buchanan's administration began in March 1857. Davis returned to the Senate and John B. Floyd of Virginia took over the War Department. With the change of administration, Walter tried to reassert his rights as architect to control all aspects of design, including decora-

Fig. 4–14. Hall of Columns, c. 1902. *Walter made extensive use of cast iron in the Capitol extensions. The ceiling of the Hall of Columns was made of nearly a quarter of a million pounds of iron cast in Baltimore by Hayward, Bartlett & Co.*
From Glenn Brown, *History of the United States Capitol*, 1902.

tions. As Meigs and Walter battled over responsibilities, prerogatives, and authority, many of those working on the extensions were caught in the middle. But most remained loyal to Meigs, who held the purse strings. Brumidi often aroused Walter's ire, but it was Meigs's high-handedness that was the real root of the problem.

One early example of the conflict between art and architecture was the case of the frescoes Brumidi designed in 1856 for the Ladies Waiting Room (part of the third floor Senate Press Gallery (S–313A). Walter designed the domed ceiling with coffers enriched with architectural decorations. When he discovered the coffers altered to provide space for paintings he bitterly confided to his diary:

> Found that Brumidi has had all the octagonal lacunaes pealed [sic] off the arch over the ladies retiring room, north wing, weakening the arch and rendering it dangerous; for the purpose of putting fresco pictures in it instead of architectural decorating. . . . such things ought at least to be the subject of consultation with the archt.[6]

Walter's opinion of Brumidi's work reflected his own lack of influence on the designs and color palette. He liked the idea of decorated walls, and wrote privately: "My desire is, if we have pictures here at all, to have them in real fresco that they may form part of the wall."[7] He praised (again privately) Brumidi's decoration of the House Committee on Agriculture room, calling it "our best room."[8] By contrast, his public remarks on Brumidi's work fell just short of wholesale condemnation. In late 1857 he wrote officially to the Secretary of War to recommend

> that the very ornate and inappropriate decorations of the walls and ceilings of the committee rooms be dispensed with,—these rooms being intended for the transaction of the business of the committee can be seen by a very few, unless they should be kept open for exhibition, which of course, cannot be contemplated, as it would interfere with an important branch of legislation.
>
> . . . Some of these rooms are so extravagantly decorated with crude and disharmonious colors that it is painful to remain in them, and when they are overshadowed by the projecting arcades of the porticoes yet to be built, they will be dark and gloomy.
>
> . . . I object to the dark, and heavy, and excessively ornate painting that has been commenced in the entries and passages of the north wing, and I respectfully recommend that it be stopped immediately, and that all the passages and entries be finished, in light and harmonious tints with a very sparing application of foliated ornament and gold leaf, and the introduction of a few frescoes where the lights are favorable.[9]

Meigs availed himself of Brumidi's skill in areas other than fresco painting. He put the artist in charge of decorating the vast ceiling of the new Hall of the House. Measuring 139 feet long and 93 feet wide, it was made of cast iron supported from above by iron trusses. It was divided into 117 panels, nearly a third of which contained colored glass that gave "the effect of Mosaics set in silver."[10] Papier-mâché moldings and ornaments, selected for richness and light weight, were fastened to the ironwork. After Brumidi had finished painting a section of the ceiling, its complex and opulent style surprised and delighted Meigs:

> He has used much more gilding than I intended, and the effect is most magnificent. I am not quite sure that it is not too gorgeous, but I begin to think that nothing so rich in effect has ever been seen this side of the Atlantic. He has used, as I directed, strong, positive colors—blue and red and yellow—but has bronzed and gilded the molding to the highest degree.[11]

Not everyone agreed with Meigs's assessment of the new Hall of the House. In the Senate, Jacob Collamer of Vermont took exception to the color scheme and expressed his hope that the new, unfinished Senate Chamber would be spared a similar treatment.[12] Rising to defend the polychromatic color scheme of the Hall, Senator Jefferson Davis claimed no special expertise in the matter but expressed his faith in Brumidi's skill and talent, asserting that

> . . . there is not an artist who would attempt to ornament a building by painting with one color. His skill is shown in the harmony of the colors, blending them so that no one rests on the eye and commands its single attention. I would be surprised at the American Congress if it were to wipe out these great efforts of art and introduce as a substitute the crude notion of single color.[13]

Walter despised the color scheme of the House Chamber but could hardly blame Brumidi, whom he considered a tool of Meigs's ambition. In referring to the newly occupied hall, Walter wrote:

> The Capt. has taken upon himself to have all the painting and gilding done under his special direction, without any consultation with me and I must say that it is the most vulgar room I was ever in, I hope Congress will order it repainted and allow your old friend to have some say as to how it shall be done—it is susceptible of being made as handsome and dignified a looking room as any in the world. Now it

is the very worst I ever saw—and so says everybody.[14]

In another piece of correspondence, Walter took a more philosophical stance on the House Chamber and other decorating projects: "The only thing in which my taste has been disturbed is the gaudy coloring and gilding and daubing of my works but I console myself that all this may be cured by the paint brush."[15]

Meigs's handling of the decorations eventually stirred a backlash in Congress and prompted a petition signed by 127 American artists that called for the creation of an art commission (see chapter 7). By the time the commission issued its report, however, Meigs had been relieved of his command at the Capitol. His friend and patron, Senator Jefferson Davis, had not been able to stem the tide against him in Congress and the War Department. On November 1, 1859, Captain William B. Franklin of the Corps of Topographical Engineers was given charge of the Capitol extensions. Walter was delighted with the change in command.

With Meigs's departure, Walter's relationship with Brumidi warmed considerably. Walter commissioned Brumidi to paint and decorate his own house in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. On February 2, 1863, Walter sent Brumidi original drawings showing the rooms of the house to enable him to determine the "character of ornamentation."[16] He offered no words of advice, no direction, or anything else for Brumidi to interpret: "I leave the whole matter to you; your taste is never at fault."[17] Later that year Brumidi sent a copy of his painting *The Five Senses* as a present for Walter's wife, Amanda. In a letter to her, Walter gave detailed instructions on how the painting should be unpacked and where it should hang. He called it "the best picture I ever saw"[18] and urged his wife to gather the children around the package while it was being opened so that they might enjoy "the full effect."[19]

Perhaps the highest compliment Walter paid Brumidi was when he altered his design for the Capitol's new cast-iron dome to include a massive painting as the climax of its interior decoration. Authorized in 1855, the new dome was added on top of the old sandstone walls of the Rotunda constructed in the 1820s. Walter's first design for the new dome called for a vast enlargement of the Ro-

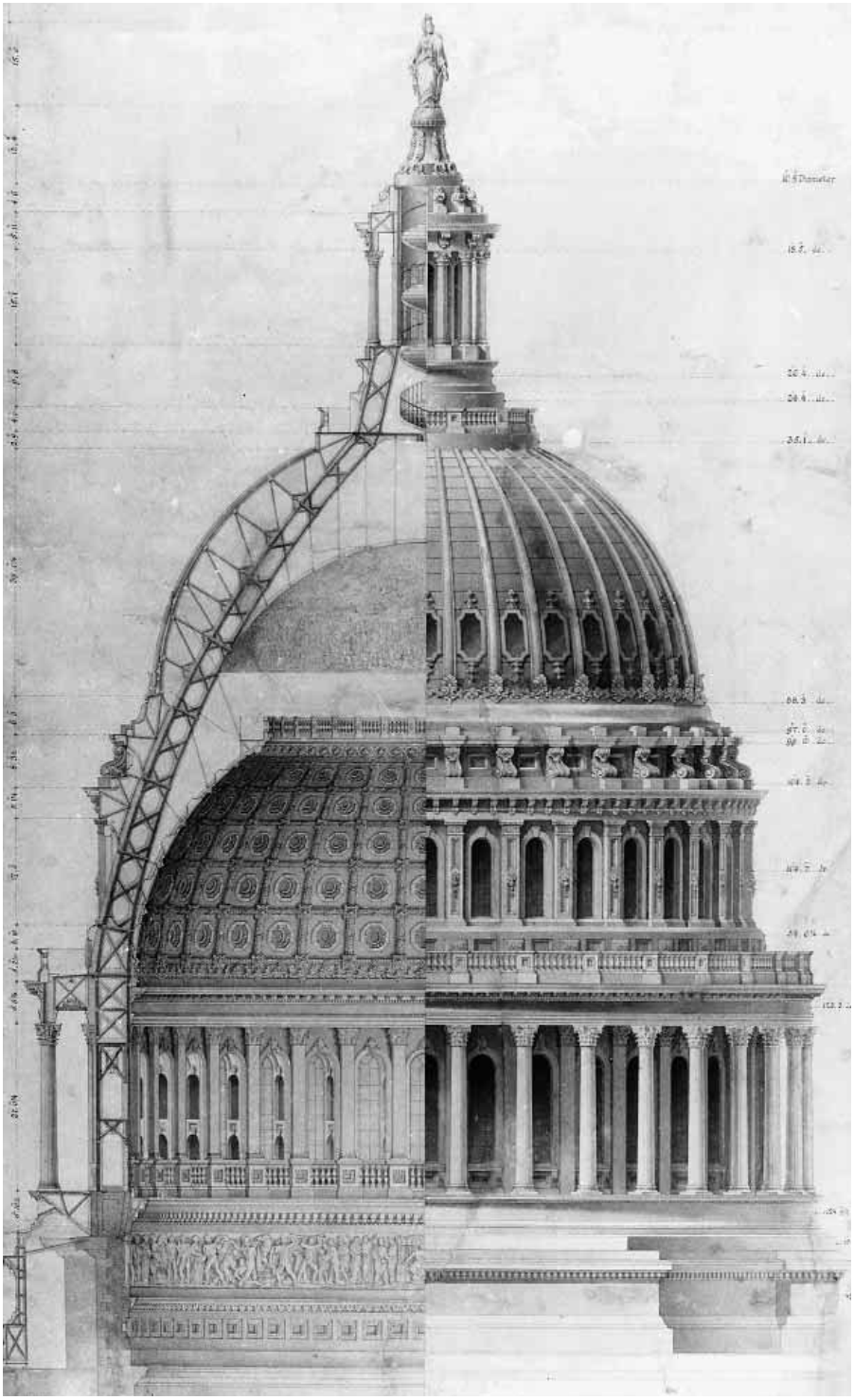

Fig. 4–15. Thomas U. Walter, *Design for Dome of U.S. Capitol*, 1859. *This combined elevation and section of the double dome illustrates the position of the canopy over the eye of the inner dome and of the frieze at its base.* Athenaeum of Philadelphia.
Photo: Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

tunda from its original height of 96 feet to 200 feet, but did not include any painted decorations.

In 1859, during the height of Walter's conflict with Captain Meigs, a period in which the architect never spoke to or transmitted drawings to the engineer, the design of the dome underwent a significant revision to its exterior proportions. While he worked out these changes Walter took the opportunity to revise the interior design as well. The revised interior scheme introduced a separate inner dome with an oculus through which a monumental painting would be seen (fig. 4–15). (The scheme was derived from the Panthéon in Paris, which Walter had studied during his European tour in 1838.) Covering 4,664 square feet, the painting would be carried on a canopy suspended over the oculus, with sufficient space between to allow natural light, reflected by huge mirrors, to illuminate it. There was never a question that Walter had Brumidi in mind when he included a grand painting in the revised design. It is also likely that Brumidi's fitness for the task prompted the revisions. The subject of the painting was an apotheosis of George Washington, and, according to Walter, there would be "no picture in the world that will at all compare with this in magnitude, and in difficulty of execution."[20] It offered Brumidi the unprecedented opportunity to give the Capitol and the American people a magnificent finale to the magnificent new dome. With this commission, even Meigs would have agreed that Walter, ironically, became Brumidi's most important patron.

In the spring of 1865, while Brumidi was working on the canopy painting, events led Walter to resign as architect of the Capitol extensions and new dome. Walter's office had been returned to the Department of Interior in 1862, and since that time he had been free to administer the works unencumbered by military rule. On May 23, 1865, however, his office was suddenly placed under the authority of the Commissioner of Public Buildings. This was the last straw: he quit three days later. Walter was sure the administration would find him irreplaceable and would restore the status quo. But on August 30, 1865, his former pupil and assistant, Edward Clark, was appointed by President Andrew Johnson to fill Walter's place at the Capitol. Clark, who held the office until his death in 1902, completed the few remaining parts of the Capitol extension and became an important figure in Brumidi's later career.

In his retirement, Walter was asked by the editor of *The American Architect* to write a biographical sketch of Brumidi and his works. Unfortunately, the architect's leisurely life was shattered by the Panic of 1873, and he was obliged to take on jobs that kept him busy day and night. To prepare his article he wanted to go to Washington to interview the artist but did not make the journey before Brumidi died in 1880. He sent the magazine Brumidi's obituary from the *Philadelphia Evening Telegraph*, saying that he could not undertake a biography: "I really have not time to devote to the subject as it would require a good deal of thought and some correspondence with Washington to do justice to the subject."[21] Tired and penniless, Walter died in 1887 without writing his eulogy to Brumidi. However, the Capitol extensions and the great dome still stand in testimony to the skill, hard work, and taste of their designers, builders, and decorators—chief among them, Walter, Meigs, and Brumidi.

Notes to Chapter 4

1. *Congressional Globe*, July 24, 1850.

2. Senate Executive Document no. 52, 32d Cong., 1st sess. March 29, 1852, p. 2.

3. Senate Rep. Com. No. 1, Special Sess. 33d Cong.: Senate Documents Special Session, 1853. This is the Houston Committee Report on which this discussion has been based. Six years after Senator Houston issued the report he asked Thomas U. Walter to design a retirement house for his family in Texas. Walter drew plans and elevations, but the house was never built.

4. TUW to Amanda Walter, May 22, 1858 TUW/PA (AAA, reel 4138).

5. *National Intelligencer* (Washington), December 7, 1857.

6. TUW Diary, May 4, 1857, TUW/PA (AAA, reel 4133).

7. TUW to G. W. Lawson, December, 1857, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4138).

8. TUW to John Boulton, February 5, 1863, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4141).

9. TUW to John B. Floyd, December 21, 1857, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4138).

10. Edwin T. Freedley, *Philadelphia and Its Manufactures* (Philadelphia: Edward Young, 1858), p. 278.

11. MCMJ, November 13, 1856 (B–340).

12. *Documentary History of the Construction and Development of the United States Capitol Building and Grounds* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), p. 677.

13. Ibid., p. 678.

14. TUW to Richard Stanton, December 8, 1857, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4138).

15. TUW to J. F. Bryant, December 14, 1857, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4138).

16. TUW to CB, February 2, 1863, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4141).

17. Ibid.

18. TUW to Olivia Walter, August 20, 1863, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4141).

19. TUW to Amanda Walter, August 29, 1863, TUW/PA (AAA, Reel 4141).

20. TUW to CB, December 24, 1862, AOC/LB.

21. TUW to W. P. P. Longfellow, March 4, 1880, TUW/PA (AAA, reel 4143).