
FOREWORD

One of the most important publications about the United States Capitol is Glenn Brown's *History of the United States Capitol*, published in two volumes by the U.S. Government in 1900 and 1903. These beautifully designed volumes are treasured by those interested in the history of the Capitol, and, despite being over 100 years old, they still provide important information on the building and its art collection. The plates documenting the appearance of the Capitol at the turn of the century often provide clues vital to both historical research and modern restoration projects. Now, as the Capitol enters its third century, it is fitting that we recognize and re-examine this important study.

In this new one-volume edition, William Bushong sets the original publication in context by the introductory essay on Glenn Brown and his place in the story of the Capitol and the city of Washington. Extensive annotations provide the reader with information regarding Brown's sources and offer valuable perspective on his viewpoints and limitations. They also note twentieth-century publications on topics that Brown discussed. Many of the drawings that Brown published are preserved in the records of the Architect of the Capitol and newly photographed for this edition.

While the *History of the United States Capitol* is today considered a pioneering work of architectural history, it was also crafted by Brown to be helpful in two of his favorite crusades. He used the *History* to promote the restoration of the capital city's original plan along the lines of Pierre L'Enfant's 1791 design (as interpreted by the emerging "City

Beautiful" aesthetic). Deviations from the plan and Victorian intrusions had, Brown believed, done untold harm to the beauty of Washington. Brown also credited George Washington and Thomas Jefferson with recognizing and appreciating the excellence of the city plan and the original design of the Capitol, an example worthy of emulation by modern political leaders; they should become patrons of the fine arts and, like Washington and Jefferson before them, insist that only the best American architects and artists work on the federal buildings in the capital. Through this work, Brown was able to make history a powerful force in his determination to improve the nation's capital.

The use of history as a force is, of course, a fascinating study in its own right, and the present volume is an excellent illustration of the way in which history seems to work. No matter how exhaustively researched and meticulously crafted, no study is truly definitive--there will always be room for reinterpretation, reconsideration, and revision as new information comes to light. William Bushong's work in this book exemplifies the value of the process, and as a result of his efforts we now have the benefit of Glenn Brown's knowledge and point of view but also that of a modern scholar's perspective on them.

The modern Capitol represents the work of generations of architects, engineers, artists, and builders. It also embodies the commitment of generations of Americans to our way of government. The publications and other educational projects undertaken by this office as part of the Congressional commemoration of the Capitol's bicentennial period are intended to increase the nation's and the world's awareness of how

the Capitol has come to be the building that it is today. This book is a unique and important element of our overall program. In addition to its own documentary significance, it affords an understanding of the way in which the Capitol's history has been told.

Our office has been pleased to make possible William Bushong's research on Glenn Brown and the *History of the United States Capitol* through the United States Capitol Historical Society Fellowship

program and by bringing the proposed publication to the attention of the United States Capitol Preservation Commission, which has funded its preparation. I am confident that the reappearance of Brown's *History* will be welcomed by the American public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alan M. Hantman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

ALAN M. HANTMAN, FAIA
ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL