

Richard Chenoweth AIA

Visiting Assistant Professor // Mississippi State University // College of Architecture, Art and Design
P.O. Box 2908 Mississippi State MS 39762 // rchenoweth@caad.msstate.edu // 609.865.1483

Architecture website: www.chenarch.com

Architectural History website: www.mostbeautifulroom.com

Teaching Experience

Visiting Assistant Professor, Mississippi State University, College of Architecture, Art and Design (MSU CAAD) (2018-2020); Professor of studio design and architectural history. Created course: *Photoshop for Architects* (Fall 2019)

Courses Taught (and projected)

Spring 2020	ARC 2546 Architectural Design 2B - Coordinating Professor (3 Professors // 47 students)
	ARC 2313 Architectural History I (95-100 students)
Fall 2019	ARC 2536 Architectural Design 2A (3 Professors // 47 students)
	ARC 3313 Architectural History II (46 students)
	ARC 4000 Photoshop for Architects (10 students)
Spring 2019	ARC 2546 Architectural Design 2B (3 Professors // 54 students)
	ARC 2313 Architectural History I (97 students)
Fall 2018	ARC 2536 Architectural Design 2A (3 Professors // 54 students)
	ARC 3313 Architectural History II (54 students)

Professional Licensure

Architecture License, Commonwealth of Virginia, 1993 (#0401008806)

Architecture License, State of Maryland, 2004 (#13387)

Architecture License, State of New Jersey, 2009 (#21AI 01812600)

Education

Master of Architecture, University of Virginia

Bachelor of Science, Vanderbilt University

Professional Experience

Richard Chenoweth Architect (1993-present). Architecture, Architectural History, Design, Fine Art. Projects include: transit architecture; residential architecture; architectural history; historical resources; classical architecture; writing and editing on architecture; digital visualization.

Lourie & Chenoweth LLC (2001-2007, 2013-2015, 2017-present). Project Designer and Principal, DC Metro Canopy Pilot Program, Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA). First Place in a national design competition for a prototype canopy for the DC Metro system (2001).

Phases of the canopy projects: (1) Pilot Canopy Program; (2) Canopy Program II; (3) Dupont Circle Special Canopy; (4) National Parks Service Canopies. Lourie & Chenoweth LLC was Architect of Record, and Arup (Boston Office) was Engineer of Record.

Lourie & Chenoweth LLC was responsible for the design and detailing of the project, construction administration, communications with the Contractor and the Client, inspection of fabrication and installation of structures. Thirty-two (32) canopies built from 2002-2018. Dupont North Station and six (6) specialty canopy designs underway in 2019 by Lourie Architects LLC and Richard Chenoweth Architect for sensitive National Park Service sites in DC and Virginia.

Project Architect (1989-1993). Project Architect and Staff Architect for Williams & Dynerman Architects (Washington DC). Residential and small institutional projects.

Intern Architect (1988). Kohn Pedersen Fox Architects (New York NY).

Professional Service and Affiliations

Harrison Lecture Series Committee, MSU CAAD (2018-2020).

Awards Committee, MSU CAAD (2019-2020).

Faculty Sub-Committee for Virtual Reality, MSU CAAD (2019-2020).

Commissioner, Princeton Historical Commission, Princeton NJ (2015-2018).

Commissioners appointed by Mayor. Commission offers guidance to town planners, zoning boards, and homeowners regarding the historical significance of certain structures. PHC has created Princeton's dozen Historical Districts and guidelines.

Council Member, Princeton Future Council, Princeton NJ (2015-2018).

Princeton Future is a Council of concerned design professionals who assist the town pro bono in offering guidance and public workshops to develop ideas and solutions to planning problems and concerns regarding the growth of the town.

President, American Society of Architectural Illustrators (2005). ASAI is an international illustration society, the mission of which is education and advocacy for the architectural arts of drawing, painting, perspective, and digital visualization.

Produced ASAI's 2005 annual four-day conference for 150 attendees at venues including Catholic University, the Library of Congress, and the National AIA; conducted a drawing competition and awards ceremony; curated several traveling exhibits for the AIA National HQ Gallery and the Museum of American Illustration in New York NY. See: www.asai.org

AIA Member, Washington DC Chapter. (1997-2007 and 2018-present).

Society of Architectural Historians. (2018-present).

Center for Palladian Studies in America. (2019).

American Architecture Foundation (1993-2000). Assisted AAF activities (the education wing of the AIA at that time). Curated or co-curated exhibits; designed and produced exhibits; produced peripherals, graphics, and physical installations with AAF staff.

Gave museum tours and watercolor workshops.

Member: Portrait Society of America.

Member: American Watercolor Society.

Member: National Watercolor Society.

Distinctions

- Selected designs (2018). Six WMATA Metro canopies selected for sensitive National Park Service sites in a limited competition. Design similar to Prototype Design of 2001 but with different heights and curvatures. Richard Chenoweth Architect and Lourie Architects LLC.
- Merit Award (2017). National Portrait Society. *Negative Capability - A Portrait of John Keats*, Dohm Alley, Princeton NJ.
- U.S. Capitol Historical Society Research Fellow (2017). Latrobe's Egyptian Revival Library of Congress (1808).
- Merit Award (2013). National Portrait Society. *Portrait of Alison Boden, Dean of the Chapel*, Princeton University, Princeton NJ.
- Award of Excellence (2012). ASAI. Digital reconstruction of the U.S. Capitol (1806).
- Award of Excellence (2011). ASAI. Digital reconstruction of the Paris grain market (1786).
- U.S. Capitol Historical Society Research Fellow (2010). Latrobe / Franzoni Statue of Liberty design (1807).
- Washington Chapter AIA Award (2003). Designer, Metro Canopy Pilot Program, Four Prototypes, WMATA.
- Gabriel Prize (2001). Winner of national drawing competition for the graphic study of French classical architecture. Western European Architecture Foundation. Program of study: drawing firsthand Thomas Jefferson's favorite buildings in Paris and surrounding environs.
- First Place National Design Competition (2001). Washington Metro Area Transit Authority (WMATA) - Metro Canopy Competition. Lourie & Chenoweth LLC.
- U.S. Capitol Historical Society Research Fellow (2001). Latrobe / Jefferson Hall of Representatives (1809).
- Washington Chapter AIA Award (2000). Drury-Austin House Restoration and Addition, Boyds MD. With Mark Broyles Architect AIA.
- Washington Chapter AIA Pro Bono Award (2000). Co-curated an exhibit for the Octagon Museum on the history of perspective drawing.
- Washington Chapter AIA Award (1997). A New Steeple for St. Paul's Church, Oxford MD.
- Award of Excellence (2006). ASAI. Watercolor painting of a country house.
- Award of Excellence (2000). ASAI. Watercolor painting of the U.S. Capitol during renovation.
- Award of Excellence (1998). ASAI. Watercolor painting of the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing.
- Award of Excellence (1997). ASAI. Watercolor painting of American University, Washington DC.
- Award of Excellence (1996). ASAI. Watercolor painting of Phillips Site Plan, Boiling Springs PA.
- Award of Excellence (1994). ASAI. Watercolor painting of St. Paul's Church in Oxford MD.

Recent Papers Accepted, Abstracts Accepted, and Invitations

- ACSA 108th Meeting, San Diego CA (12-14 March 2020). Abstract and paper accepted; double-blind, peer-reviewed. Title: "*The Very First Miss Liberty; The Collaboration of B. Henry Latrobe and Giuseppe Franzoni to Create the Nation's First Statue of Liberty (1807-1814).*"
- Invitation to apply for Signature Status. (2019). Portrait Society of America.

Presentations, Lectures, and Panels

Architectural History at the University of Virginia: Richard Guy Wilson and Our Community of Scholars: A Symposium and Celebration, Charlottesville VA (15-16 November 2019). Sponsored by TJSAH Chapter. Juried Paper: “*Jefferson Versus Latrobe: The Struggle to Complete the South Wing of the U.S. Capitol - A Digital Investigation.*”

Southeastern Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians (SESAH), Annual Conference, Clemson SC (10-12 October 2019). Juried Paper: “*Jefferson Versus Latrobe: The Struggle to Complete the South Wing of the U.S. Capitol - A Digital Investigation.*”

AIA Alabama 2019 Conference, Gulf Shores AL (28 June 2019). Invited Speaker. Title of talk: “*Innovating The Past; Digital Techniques in Historical Architectural Research.*”

Architectural Tour, Sewanee and Beersheba Springs TN (28 April 2017).

Sponsored by the Atlanta Preservation Center. Title of tour: “*The Cottages of Beersheba Springs, Tennessee.*”

Atlanta Preservation Center, Atlanta GA (26 January 2017). Presentation. Title of talk: “*The Cottages of Beersheba Springs, Tennessee - Classical Vernacular Craftsmanship in its Time.*”

The Woolly Mammoth Theater, Washington DC (21 February 2016). Panel Discussion. Title of discussion: “*The Price of Beauty.*”

White House Historical Association, Decatur House, Washington DC (3-4 September 2014). Chenoweth research presented by Historian Pamela Scott. Title of Symposium: “*America Under Fire Symposium.*”

Evergreen House Museum, Johns Hopkins University (26 March 2014). Presentation. Title of presentation: “*The Most Beautiful Room in the World? - B. Henry Latrobe’s Work on the U.S. Capitol.*”

U.S. Capitol Historical Society, Washington DC (19 February 2014). Presentation. Title of presentation: “*The Most Beautiful Room in the World? - B. Henry Latrobe’s Work on the U.S. Capitol.*”

The Jewish Center of Princeton, Princeton NJ (15 November 2011). Presentation. Title of presentation: “*The Most Beautiful Room in the World? - B. Henry Latrobe’s Work on the U.S. Capitol.*”

Articles

“*Latrobe, Strickland, Napoleon and the Egyptian Revival Library of Congress,*” *The Capitol Dome: The Journal of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society*, (projected 2020).

“*Latrobe, Franzoni and the First Statue of Liberty, 1807-1814,*” *The Capitol Dome: The Journal of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society*, Summer 2016, Vol. 53, No. 1, pages 2-15.

“*Jefferson’s Peregrinations and the Verniquet Plan of Paris,*” *Le Libellio d’Aegis*, École Polytechnique, Winter 2015, Vol. 11, No. 4, pages 25-30.

“*The Most Beautiful Room in the World? - Latrobe, Jefferson and the Early Capitol,*” *The Capitol Dome: The Journal of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society*, Fall 2014, Vol. 51, No. 3, pages 24-39.

“*The Very First Miss Liberty; Latrobe, Franzoni and the First Statue of Liberty,*” *Le Libellio d’Aegis*, École Polytechnique, Summer 2012, Vol. 8, No. 2, pages 67-74.

“*The Most Beautiful Room in the World? - Latrobe, Jefferson and the Early Capitol,*” *Le Libellio d’Aegis*, École Polytechnique, Autumn 2011, Vol. 7, No. 3, pages 39-48.

“*The (Yankee) Stadium We Deserve,*” *The New York Times Magazine*, 15 September 1996, page 23. Co-author.

Editor

Editor-in-Chief, *Architecture in Perspective 20*, exhibition catalogue (2005).
Associate Editor, *Preservation & Progress; Architecture Journal at the University of Virginia* (1989).

Illustrator

Images and Animations for “*One Fiery Night*,” CBS Sunday Morning (broadcast: 31 August 2014). Images used in a TV segment on the 1814 burning of Washington DC.
Principal Illustrator, *Cottage Living Magazine / Southern Living Magazine* (2004-2009).
Illustrations and drawings published: *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *Architectural Record*, and others.

Book and Film Inclusions

Baker, Jean. (2020). *Building America: The Life of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, Oxford University Press, recreation image, page 97.
Euchner, Charles. (Fall 2019). *The Elements of Writing for Architects*, textbook for course at Columbia University GSAPP (example of a case study narrative plus cover image of book).
Western European Architecture Foundation, Editor. (2017). *Twenty-Five Years of the Gabriel Prize* (paintings and drawings produced under aegis of the Gabriel Prize).
Luebke FAIA, Tom. Editor. (2013). *100 Years of the Fine Arts Commission*, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (several drawings).
Leggitt, Jim. (2010). *Drawing Shortcuts*, Hoboken NJ, John Wiley & Sons (drawings and drawing process description).
Kunhardt McGee Productions. (2009). documentary film under the aegis of the National Endowment for the Humanities: *Benjamin Latrobe: America's First Architect* (contributor).
Bennett, David. (2004). *Metro - The Story of the Underground Railway*, London, Mitchell Beazley Art & Design (Metro Canopy Program prototype design featured in book).

Collections

Library of Congress, Washington DC (design materials, drawings, and photographs).
Octagon Museum, Washington DC (drawings).
Vanderbilt University, Nashville TN (portrait).
Various private collections (drawings and paintings).

Exhibits

The Romantic Poets, Dohm Alley, Princeton NJ. Commissioned sculpture bust of John Keats, cast concrete. (June 2017- present).
Juried Group Exhibit, D&R Greenway Gallery, Johnson Education Center, three watercolors, Princeton NJ (4 December 2017-9 February 2018).
Finalist, Dacia Gallery Solo Show competition, New York NY (Oct 2017).
Linda Slaughter Watercolor Prize for a Bucks County Theme, 88th Annual Phillips Mill Juried Art Exhibition (2017).
Juried Group Exhibit, 88th Annual Phillips Mill Juried Art Exhibition, watercolor, Bucks County PA (23 September-29 October 2017).
Juried Group Exhibit, D&R Greenway Gallery, Johnson Education Center, watercolor, Princeton NJ (24 October-16 December 2016).
WMATA Metro Canopy Competition, Group Exhibit All Entries, National Building Museum, Washington DC (January 2002).
Architecture in Perspective, Co-Curator, Octagon Museum, Washington DC (21 February 1998-5 July 1998).

Little Bighorn National Monument Competition, Group Exhibit of Selected Competition Entries, National Park Service (1997).

Additional Competencies

Expert in the following architecture-related fields: Vernacular architecture, American and European painting and sculpture, furniture, decorative arts, material culture, early American construction methods and tools, early American cultural landscapes, historical topography and infrastructure, cartography.

Additional Skills

Expert in various equipment, procedures, and programs: Traditional photography and darkroom techniques, traditional film, Photoshop, After Effects, Final Cut Studio, FormZ, Electric Image Animation System, open source HTML/CSS coding.
Accomplished in framing and trim carpentry, wood-working, furniture design, stone carving, and stone masonry.

Related Projects

Dymaxion Project (1991-1992). Created a project that brought the plight of Buckminster Fuller’s 1946 Wichita Dymaxion House (at that time in an advanced state of disrepair and decay outside Wichita) to national press attention in *The Washington Post*, *Architectural Record*, and *the Wichita Eagle-Beacon*. Attained a land donation for the house. Ultimately house was rescued by the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn MI.

Eagle Scout Project. Recovered an early African American cemetery in Princessville NJ.

Military

1st Lieutenant, USMC (four years active duty). Served as Logistics Officer and Company Executive Officer in Camp Lejeune NC and deployed overseas with 32nd Marine Expeditionary Unit.

@@

Writing Sample Attached:

Juried paper attached on following page for the *Richard Guy Wilson Symposium* sponsored by the University of Virginia School of Architecture and the Thomas Jefferson Chapter of the SAH (TJSAH), Charlottesville VA (16 November 2019).

Writing Sample Linked:

<http://www.mostbeautifulroom.com/images/pdf/2016-summer-dome-liberty.pdf>
Magazine format article for *The Capitol Dome*, the Journal of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society (Summer 2016). Article adapted as ACSA-ARCH juried paper for 2020.

Portfolio Linked:

<http://chenarch.com/app-port-2019/chenoweth-portfolio-22MB.pdf>

Student Work Linked:

<http://chenarch.com/app-port-2019/chenoweth-studentwork-13MB.pdf>

2020-01-30

RICHARD CHENOWETH AIA - 2019-11-16

Richard Guy Wilson Symposium

Co-sponsored by the Thomas Jefferson Chapter of the SAH (TJSAH)

Charlottesville VA

INTRODUCTION

Between 1803 and 1809 President Thomas Jefferson and his *Surveyor of Public Buildings*, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, collaborated with unique synergy and sympathy to complete the construction of the U.S. Capitol. In fact, their association would be without parallel in the history of the construction of the Capitol.¹

I use the term *collaborated* loosely. Their relationship, in a broad sense, was traditional: an architect working for a client. After 1801, it was Jefferson whose approval and approbation Latrobe needed - both officially and psychically. He proudly embraced his role and his title, and signified it with great flamboyance.

[Image-01 - BHL's signature]

At the beginning of Jefferson's tenure, the inchoate nation was struggling to establish itself. L'Enfant's plan for Washington, a grid crossed by grand intersecting avenues, was mostly forests and fields. The soul of L'Enfant's plan, however, was that it symbolically represented the structure of the new government. The Capitol building was key to the plan, taking the loftiest position. At the very outset, the project was a source of high drama among gigantic personalities. From the laying of its cornerstone in 1793, the Capitol's

¹ William C. Allen, *History of the U.S. Capitol; A Chronicle of Design, Construction, and Politics* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 2001) p. 49.

construction embodied conflicting interests, competing aesthetics, jealousy, calumny, intrigue, bad press, lack of funding, and leaking roofs. Squabbles ensued between professional architects, amateurs, commissioners, and contractors. Essentially, it was a unique situation in world history - in which a seat of government was emerging from the landscape at the same time a new form of government was being formed within.²

[Image-02- L'Enfant Plan *pedestal*]

Latrobe continued to design and build the Capitol well into the Madison Administration — a period known as Latrobe's ***first building campaign***. It didn't last long. British troops invaded the city of Washington in August 1814, and burned the public buildings, including the Capitol. The Hall of Representatives in the South Wing, which Jefferson had speculated might be the handsomest room in the world, was gutted. Latrobe's rich neoclassical interiors were destroyed, and the nation's first Statue of Liberty, which had presided over the entrance was reduced to lime.

THE ENIGMA

Under the auspices of the Gabriel Prize, I spent a summer in Paris studying several of Thomas Jefferson's favorite buildings — in an attempt to better understand him. My research led to the Halle aux blés (the grain market), and then to the story of the Capitol. I was transfixed by this enigma of the *most beautiful room*, but was frustrated by the lack of visual evidence. How is it that no artist paused to record the scene? Not even Latrobe himself, a prolific sketcher? Could this American treasure be pieced back together so we can see

² An idea proposed in James Sterling Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966).

it? What can we learn about the design and construction of the Capitol by recreating it? Whose ideas were better regarding the lighting of the chamber? How could I recreate this American masterpiece? Clues do exist. There are roughly twenty construction documents and renderings, most being of small scale; scores of letters between the principals; and a few surviving parts of the building.

I resolved to forensically piece together this period of the Capitol using digital methods, in an effort to answer my own questions and to clarify and illustrate Jefferson's and Latrobe's complicated dialectic. Latrobe himself wrote, "To give an adequate description of a building unaccompanied by drawings, is always a vain attempt."³ During my investigation, I discovered many disparate sources of information between drawings and letters, scores of change orders occurring in letters, clues from topographical sketches, and many discrepancies. In the end, I believe my computer model accurately represents the state of the 1814 design *and* it can be digitally tested.

[Image-03 - portraits]

BACKGROUND

By 1801, the year Thomas Jefferson was inaugurated as President, the U.S. Capitol had been the most ambitious building program on the continent for nearly eight years. A great deal was invested in the building; besides being a physical seat for the legislature, the Capitol was to be a symbol for a new nation. In 1785, Jefferson had modeled Virginia's Capitol on the Maison Carrée for the same

³ Latrobe to Samuel Harrison, Editor of the National Intelligencer, 22 Nov. 1807, in John C. Van Horne et al., eds., *The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin Henry Latrobe* (3 vols.; New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1984-1988) 2:499-506.

reason - that the noble beauty of the Roman temple would be suggestive of a timeless and noble future for America. Latrobe also understood the Capitol's symbolic importance, plus he brought to bear his professional experience. This razor's edge of classical timelessness and modern construction was something which Jefferson and Latrobe could agree upon as the touchstone for a national image.

In 1793, amateur architect William Thornton was declared the winner of the competition for the Capitol and Stephen Hallet was declared the runner-up. Thornton's scheme lacked a structural strategy, however, and in the years that followed, few ideas for the Capitol went unchallenged.

[Image-04 - Animation showing Capitol site]

[Image-05 - Animation to Birch drawing]

By 1801, rutted and muddy Jenkins Hill featured a North Wing of questionable construction. Both houses of Congress met there. In 1803, the House of Representatives was moved to a temporary structure at the South Wing, where it would eventually belong.

[Image-06 - Thornton's ellipse]

The result was the *bake oven*, a three-dimensional extrusion of Thornton's ill-conceived elliptical chamber, for which a foundation had been laid. The bake oven was roofed, fenestrated, and connected to the North Wing by a covered gangway. Optimists maintained that the rest of Thornton's South Wing would somehow rise around this odd chamber, but after ten years of construction under five architects, the works were already woefully off-schedule.

[Image-07 - Bake Oven reconstruction by AoC]

President Jefferson appointed Latrobe the Surveyor of Public Buildings in 1803. He was impressed by Latrobe's plans for the Washington Navy Yard and his successes in Philadelphia. Jefferson's keen hope was that the *sui generis* Latrobe, a professional architect and engineer, would be able to complete the Capitol. Conversely, Latrobe knew of Jefferson's fame and reputation and held him in very high esteem as, "... *the planter of arts in America.*"⁴ They each likely knew that their fortunes *somehow* would be entwined; and each likely did not know that their strong opinions would put them at odds.

LATROBE'S ARCHITECTURE

Upon taking charge of the Capitol's construction, Latrobe quickly found fault with Thornton's troubled plans - a concoction of figural rooms that were not organically unified by a structural system. Latrobe's architecture, by contrast, was rationally organized as a structural system. A believer in the strength and simplicity of forms and volumes, Latrobe's architecture relied on determinate light, or unified light. The idea was that solid and projected architectural masonry forms appear more distinct and more clear when presented in unified light.⁵

⁴ Latrobe to Jefferson, 13 August 1807, *ibid.*, 2:463-65

⁵ An essay describes Latrobe's ideas on indirect lighting in detail by Charles E. Brownell, eds., Jeffrey A Cohen and Charles E. Brownell, *The Architectural Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Part 1* (2 vols.: New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994) pages 30-33.

Latrobe shunned superficial decoration, preferring that elegant surfaces and volumes be the strength of his architecture. In 1807, Latrobe wrote to Jefferson, “It is not the *ornament*, it is the *use* that I want.”⁶

His strong volumetric forms, use of lighting, reduction of ornament, and modernization of building systems establish Latrobe as an architect of the Enlightenment. But he also describes himself as a “*bigotted Greek*.” He borrowed heavily from Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens*, a copy of which was available to him at the Library Company of Philadelphia. His use of Greek moldings was more conducive to invention and played a role in the creation of light and shadow within his interior arrangements.

[Image-8 - Latrobe lower story plan 1804]

THE REDESIGN OF THE SOUTH WING

Latrobe recommended that the crude elliptical bake oven and its foundation be removed. It made no sense to Latrobe that Thornton’s elliptical legislative chamber was on the ground level. By March of 1804, Latrobe speedily devised new South Wing plans and sections, and presented them to the President. He placed the legislative chamber twenty feet above the entry level on a *piano nobile*. He altered the shape of the room from an ellipse to a hippodrome. The hippodrome consisted of a wide band running north-south abutted by two semi-circles to the east and west. Carving entablature on the ellipse would require half of the blocks to be unique; semi-circular geometry would be much more forgiving. At the entry level he created an intricate program of support offices, spiral stairs

⁶ Latrobe to Jefferson, 21 May 1807, Van Horne, et al., eds., *Latrobe Correspondence*, 2:427-29.

within the poché, privies, a courtyard, lobbies leading to public galleries, and a sequence that included a spectacular skylit vestibule.

The President *was not happy*. The approved plans had been fundamentally changed. Jefferson wrote to Latrobe, “Nothing impedes progress so much as perpetual changes of design.”⁷ But Latrobe’s drawings were so convincing that the President did agree to the changes and pleaded with him to make haste with construction.

[Image-9 - Latrobe plan 1806]

LIGHTING OF THE CHAMBER

A principal focus of my investigation was the lighting of the South Wing. The President and his architect had different ideas about how to light the chamber. Using digital lighting techniques I have simulated light levels and light diffusion to illustrate their two concepts.

[Image-10 - BHL EW section 1804]

The 108-foot by 84-foot block of the South Wing began to rise from new foundations. The internal structural arrangement of twenty-four columns included a beveled seat on top of the entablature for the spring of the roof framing. *What would be the nature of this roof?*

In August of 1786, forty-three year old widower Thomas Jefferson was introduced to Londoners Richard and Maria Cosway by his compatriot, John Trumbull, then living in London. At their initial meeting in the Paris grain market, Jefferson

⁷ Jefferson to Latrobe, 28 Feb. 1804, *Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, Founders Online, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

seemed particularly smitten by Maria Cosway, a twenty-six year old Italian-English artist.

[Image-11 - Portraits of Cosway-Jefferson]

[Image-12 - Marechal drawing]

Over the course of the next six weeks, Jefferson and his new friends engaged in a whirlwind of activities in and around Paris. As might be expected, the venues were architectural and intellectual in nature. When the Cosways left for London, Jefferson seemingly fell into a depression. It was then he wrote his famous *Head and Heart* letter to Maria Cosway, dated 12 October 1786.⁸

In the letter he discusses their companionship, their contrasting cultures, their wonderment of the sights in and around Paris - all in his charming self-effacing style, and all reflected by the dichotomy of his *rational* and his *emotional* minds. Specifically, with regard to our interest in the Capitol, he describes in the letter his first meeting with the Cosways at the Halle aux blés, “... *oh! it was the most superb thing on earth!*” But sly Jefferson, writing in dialogue, actually makes two claims in the same paragraph. His *Head* claims the most superb thing on earth is the architecture of the Halle aux blés, while simultaneously his *Heart* claims the most superb thing on earth is the visage of his companions - to wit Maria Cosway.

Clearly there was both a Romantic vision and a romantic memory at work in Jefferson’s imagination nearly twenty years later when, in 1804, he asked Latrobe to put a glass roof over the Hall in the South Wing. The ecstatic memory

⁸ Jefferson to Maria Cosway, 12 October 1786, *Letters of Thomas Jefferson*, Founders Online, NARA.

of dazzling light obviously mixed with the melancholic memory of a young woman most likely he loved — perhaps were inextricable. In any case, Jefferson’s memory now became Latrobe’s mandate.

[Image-13 - RC interior of grain market]

The Halle aux blés (now the site of the Bourse) was a doughnut-shaped building built for light and air quality. It was one of the foremost modern industrial buildings in all of Europe and very recently had been fitted with a glass roof by Legrand and Molinos. One can imagine direct light streaming through patterns of glass and clouds of grain dust, illuminating the bustling interior warehouse floor.

How could the fractured light of a granary suit the solemn proceedings of a congress of legislators? Latrobe struggled with this charge. Privately, he complained of the President’s reliance on old French books. Philosophically, he disagreed with the idea - a legislative chamber should not be illuminated by constantly changing direct sunlight. Graciously taking his stand, he wrote to Jefferson, “So spangled a ceiling, giving an air of the highest gaiety, will I think destroy the solemnity that is appropriate to the object of the edifice.”⁹ And: “As all the Architecture (in the Hall) is solid and projected, its whole effect will be lost by the destruction of determinate shadows, on which it depends.” Going head-to-head with his determined client did not go well. Over the course of months, Latrobe tried two things to bolster his position: He (1) reinforced his position against a glass roof on technical grounds, claiming that through direct leakage and condensation the Hall would be subject to constant dripping. He then (2) tried to convince the President that a more appropriate turn would be to employ a

⁹ Latrobe to Jefferson, 29 October 1806, Van Horne, et al., eds., *Latrobe Correspondence*, 2:277-81.

lantern, or a light monitor, of fixed vertical planes of glass, which would be a far better solution suited to the seriousness of the business, and would be less susceptible to leakage.

The President was not seduced by any of Latrobe's arguments, either the ones based on philosophical notions or the ones based on technical difficulty. A stickler for the rules of classical architecture, Jefferson pointed out that there was no precedent for a lantern. Finally, Jefferson wrote to the architect in September 1805, suggesting the final decision was Latrobe's, but made his own point quite clear: "I cannot express to you the regret I feel on the subject of renouncing the Halle au bless (sic) lights in the Capitol dome. That single circumstance was to constitute the distinguishing merit of the room, & would solely have made it the handsomest room in the world, without a single exception."¹⁰

In this standoff between client and architect, it was Latrobe who blinked. By November 1805, the prolific Latrobe had designed a beautiful sheet for a wood-framed roof with one hundred skylights in twenty radial bands.

[Image-14 - Roof framing sheet]

It was not a replication of the Halle aux blés, as each lite in this roof was contained within a framed light box. The thickness of the roof was minimal to maximize the illuminative effect, and based on Philibert de l'Orme's detail. Latrobe, ever hopeful, however, accommodated a lantern within the structural framing of the roof. In a sense, he built a knockout plug for later use, just in case the skylights didn't work out.

¹⁰ Jefferson to Latrobe, 8 September 1805, *ibid.*, 2:140.

[Image-15 - RC interior of Jefferson inspecting the roof]

Late in 1806, when the glass for the roof had been ordered, Latrobe produced an exquisite watercolor drawing of the entire edifice, depicting a completed Capitol with matching lanterns on the North and South Wings. Dedicating the drawing to his esteemed client, whose favor and approval he desperately sought, the drawing was a last-hour appeal by the eternally optimistic Latrobe.

[Image-16 - BHL drawing of Capitol 1806]

GETTING READY FOR THE CONGRESS

The colossal *Sitting Liberty* designed by Latrobe and carved by Giuseppe Franzoni was unveiled in September 1807. Visitors would enter the room from the dark compressed space of the stair enclosure, and step into the great light-filled chamber facing the Liberty. That same month, upholstery and drapes were ordered. Platforming was built and carpeted. Specifications were sent out to bid for mahogany desks and chairs, and argand lamps and chandeliers were purchased. The glass roof so desired by the President was in place, and in the late summer of 1808 George Bridport of Philadelphia finished his spectacular faux-painted ceiling.

CONCLUSION

Jefferson had speculated that the chamber would be the *handsomest room* in the world — Latrobe declared in his report to Congress that, “it will be the most splendid Legislative Hall that has ever been erected...”.¹¹

This interior was destroyed, however, and this chapter of history has been lost to time. To me, it was an opportunity to thoroughly investigate an architectural history using digital and visual methods. The problems, the solutions, and the conflicts of the story were hyperbolic, visual, deeply-rooted in the psyche, and could not be fully understood through letters and drawings. Jefferson and Latrobe were, in fact, on the same team. But the subtleties and nuances of the differences seemed great. By using various digital methods, I was able to bring together every discoverable fact, dimension, detail, and change-order concerning the work. By doing this, I attempted to elucidate a difficult story and allow the viewer to decide.

My goal was to bring the chamber to its full glory and allow visitors to see for themselves what Latrobe’s grandson recalled in a speech to the AIA in 1881: “I can still recall, among the shadowy impressions of my earliest boyhood, the effect, approaching awe, produced upon me by the old Hall of Representatives... there can be no question that (the Hall) was a noble room. Even the British officer, who was ordered to destroy it, is reported to have said, as he stood at the entrance, *that it was a pity to burn anything so beautiful.*”¹²

¹¹ Latrobe to National Intelligencer, 22 Nov. 1807, *ibid.*, 2:499-506.

¹² John H. B. Latrobe, “*The Capitol at Washington at the Beginning of the Present Century*,” An Address by John H. B. Latrobe to the American Institute of Architects (Baltimore: William K. Boyle, 1881).

[Image-17 - RC animation from BHL to Munger]

[Image-18 - RC exterior view from NE]

[Image-19 - RC interior high in chamber TJ]

[Image-20 - RC interior high in chamber BHL]

[Image-21 - RC animation tracking of TJ]

[Image-22 - RC animation tracking of BHL]

[Image-23 - RC interior view at entry]

[Image-24 - RC interior view from NE corner]

[Image-25 - Jefferson influence in Washington - 2003 Canopy Program]

A CODA

At the same time as I was studying Jefferson's magnificent obsession with skylights, I also happened to submit a design to a national competition for the Washington DC Metro Canopy Program. We won the competition, and, in fact, it's still going on today. One of the truly fascinating aspects of architectural history is how an idea travels across continents and across time. I can confidently assert that our canopy design is a direct descendant of the Jefferson vision...