

GLENN BROWN'S
HISTORY OF THE
UNITED STATES CAPITOL

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AERIAL VIEW OF THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL TODAY.

GLENN BROWN'S
HISTORY OF THE
UNITED STATES CAPITOL

Introduction and Annotations

by

William B. Bushong

Annotated Edition in Commemoration of
The Bicentennial of the United States Capitol

Prepared by the Architect of the Capitol for
The United States Capitol Preservation Commission

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Most black-and-white photographs in this book have been scanned from the plates produced from Frances Benjamin Johnston's negatives published in 1900 and 1903. In some cases, her turn-of-the-century views of some important rooms are contrasted with modern color photographs showing their present appearance. Modern color photographs of many paintings and drawings have been substituted for her black-and-white plates to enhance the reader's appreciation of them as works of art. In the case of architectural drawings, Brown often chose to show details or sections; in this edition the full drawing is shown if available.

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| <i>American Architect and Building News</i> | figure 4 |
| <i>American Competitions</i> | figures 6, 7 |
| <i>Architectural Review</i> | figure 9 |
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William B. Bushong

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Corcoran Gallery of Art

Frances Benjamin Johnston

(for Glenn Brown)

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PREFACE

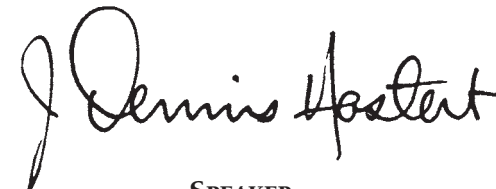
The United States Capitol Preservation Commission has been pleased to support the preparation of this new annotated edition of Glenn Brown's *History of the United States Capitol* as part of its mission to provide for the preservation of the Capitol. In addition to preserving and enhancing the building and the art collection, this mission includes preserving knowledge about the history of the Capitol and encouraging understanding of the building through research and publications.

The publication of this book is part of the celebration of the Bicentennial of the United States Capitol. The bicentennial period extended from 1993, the anniversary of the laying of the first cornerstone of the Capitol by President George Washington on September 18, 1793, to the year 2000, the two-hundredth anniversary of the year the Congress moved to the new national capital on the banks of the Potomac River.

The annotated edition of Glenn Brown's *History* follows a series of publications sponsored by Congress on the history of the Capitol. These include *The United States Capitol: A Brief Architectural History*, first published in 1990 and reprinted in 1994; *The Dome of the United States Capitol: An Architectural History*, 1992; "In the Greatest Solemn Dignity": *The Capitol's Four Cornerstones*, 1994; Barbara Wolanin's *Constantino Burmidi: Artist of the Capitol*, 1998; and William C. Allen's *History of the United States Capitol A Chronicle of Design, Construction, and Politics*, 2001. The Commission cooperated in the preparation of *The United States Capitol*, 1993, with outstanding photographs of the building by Fred J. Maroon. *Capitol Builder: The Shorthand Journals of Montgomery C. Meigs, 1853–1859, 1861*, edited by Wendy Wolff, 2001, was a collaborative effort. We commend the Architect of the Capitol for preparing these much-needed and informative publications for the use of the Congress and the American people.



PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
U.S. SENATE



SPEAKER,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

CO-CHAIRMEN, U.S. CAPITOL PRESERVATION COMMISSION

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 fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

ALAN M. HANTMAN, FAIA
ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE United States Capitol is revered by Americans because it manifests the contributions of successive generations who have built, ornamented, remodeled, restored, or preserved a monument that symbolizes the growth and evolution of our representative form of government. It was the desire to understand this historic character of the building's architecture that inspired Glenn Brown to research and to produce a two-volume *History of the United States Capitol* (1900 and 1903). Through his research into the history of the Capitol, Brown became absorbed in the modern planning and development of Washington. His scholarship renewed public appreciation of Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 plan for the city of Washington and would ultimately inspire its revival in new urban plans for the capital. Initially published as a Senate document, the *History* was a sumptuous book, the product of the Progressive era in which the United States emerged as a major nation-state and was seeking symbols to commemorate its status as a world power.

The purpose of this annotated edition is to revive a classic work of American architectural history that not only provides important information on the development of the Capitol but also is a remarkable visual record of the building and the art collection at the turn of the century. The publication is not intended to substitute for a new architectural history of the Capitol, nor is it a simple facsimile of the original book. In 1970 the Da Capo Press of New York published a smaller one-volume reprint of the *History*, which has long been out of print. The present book has been designed as a new critical edition of Glenn Brown's architectural history. I explore the author's background, biases, and achievements in an introductory profile and provide annotations to the text when necessary to correct errors, identify sources, describe controversial issues, or point readers to further modern published versions of cited documents or

information on selected topics. Misspellings or factual errors and inconsistencies in Brown's original text, including those in the table of contents, list of plates, captions, and tables, have not been altered.

Brown largely reproduced drawings and works of art from the collections of the Library of Congress and the Architect of the Capitol, but he also copied prints in the collections of prominent Washingtonians. In the present edition, contemporary high-quality color or black-and-white photographs of architectural drawings, prints, and paintings have been used in place of the original black-and-white plates; entire images have been used in place of cropped versions. Special care has been taken to reproduce the book's original photographic views, which are invaluable images of the building at the turn of the century and represent a major body of architectural photography produced by master photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston. Johnston's photographs of architectural views have been scanned.

Research on this volume was completed in 1993, at the beginning of the bicentennial period. Additional major works concerning the Capitol published since that time are not reflected in the footnotes but are listed in the bibliography. These include Charles E. Brownell and Jeffrey Cohen's *The Architectural Drawings of Benjamin Henry Latrobe*, Pamela Scott's *Temple of Liberty: Building the Capitol for a New Nation*, Barbara A. Wolanin's *Constantino Brumidi: Artist of the Capitol*, William C. Allen's *History of the United States Capitol: A Chronicle of Design, Construction, and Politics*, and William Kloss and Diane K. Skvarla's *United States Senate Catalogue of Fine Art*.

The research and the preparation of the draft manuscript for this new edition of Brown's *History* was made possible by a fellowship program funded by the United States Capitol Historical Society and jointly administered by the Architect of the Capitol. Research conducted with