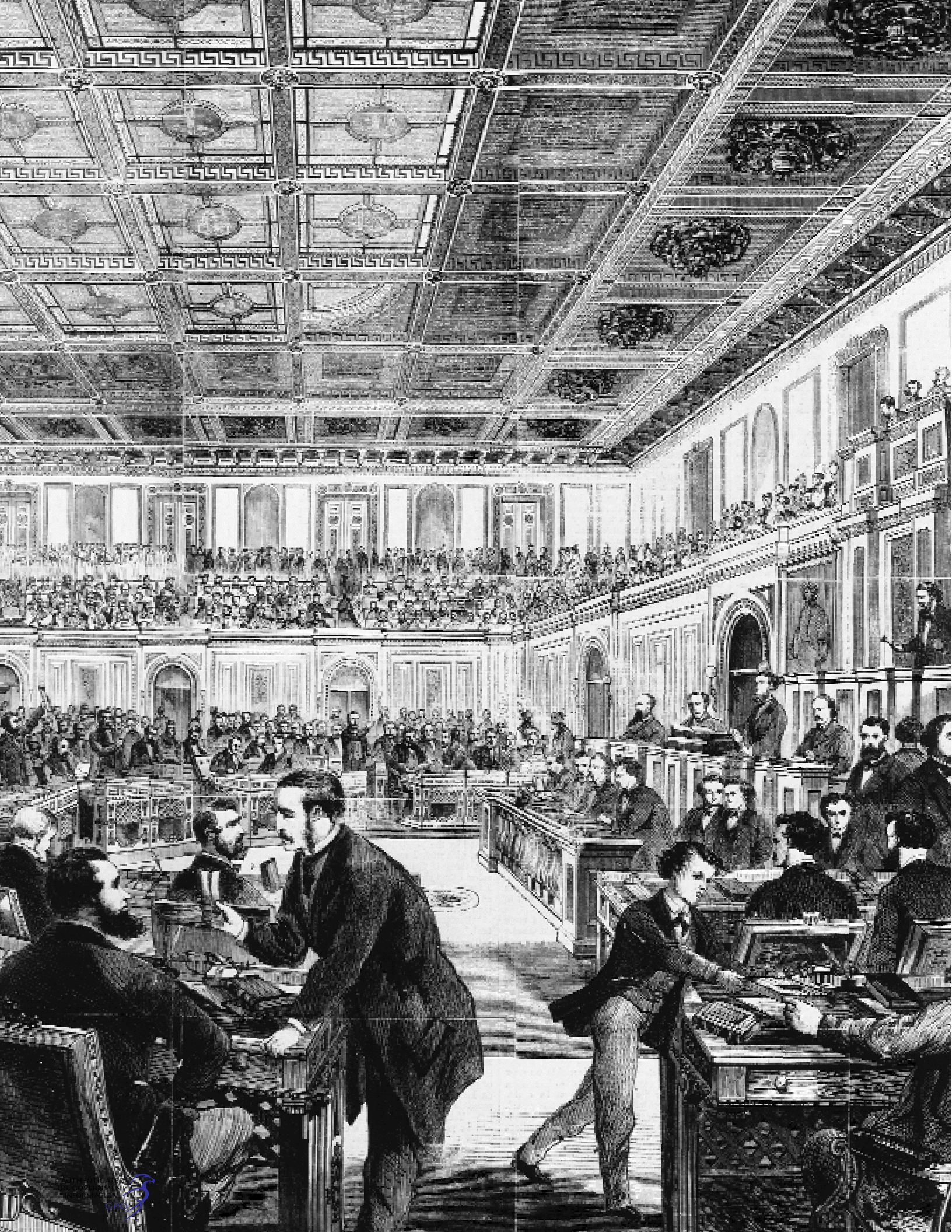

Chapter 7
Art and Politics

Fig. 7–2. Photograph of the Hall of the House showing Brumidi's *Cornwallis* fresco in situ, 1868. *The fresco at the far right remained on view here for almost a century.*
From a stereoscopic slide published by Bell & Bro.

By the end of 1857, when Brumidi had designed or begun painting murals in many areas of the Capitol, tensions over the decoration were escalating. As detailed in chapter 4, Architect Walter took issue with the way Supervising Engineer Meigs was having the new extensions decorated, once even commenting on "the hideousness of his ornamentation."[1] One of the few mural projects on which Walter and Meigs agreed was having Brumidi paint historical scenes in the new Hall of the House of Representatives. However, the single fresco Brumidi painted there proved to be a lightenining rod for criticism. The struggle between Walter and Meigs for control over the construction of the Capitol was part of a broader climate of political upheaval, in which a new party, popularly called the Know-Nothings, gained brief ascendancy, stirred up criticism against foreigners, and lent support to the idea of a commission of artists in charge of selecting art for the Capitol.

Fig. 7–1. Theodore R. Davis, *Interior of the House of Representatives at Washington—The House in Session*, 1868 (detail). *This print shows the patterns on the cast-iron and stained-glass ceiling, but Brumidi's rich color scheme can be appreciated only through written descriptions.*
From *Harper's Weekly,* March 14, 1868.

The Hall of the House

Brumidi was responsible for designing various aspects of the decoration of the new spaces for the House of Representatives. He sketched bronze stair railings; cherub light sconces and classical patterns for the pilasters in the Speaker's Room (now the Members' Retiring Room, H–213); and possibly the decoration on the cast-iron ceiling of the lobby, now covered by later patterns. He may also have created designs for the House Post Office, now part of the Speaker's Office (H–209), with borders and pilasters filled with flowers, fruits, birds, and shields. The semicircular blank spaces on the ceiling may have been intended for frescoes.

For the new meeting place for the House, Brumidi was responsible for the colors of the red seat cushions and the color scheme for Carstens's designs, which Meigs described as "positive" and "strong." For the cast-iron ceiling beams supporting stained-glass panels with seals of the states, Brumidi selected primary colors—red, blue, and yellow—enhanced with areas of gold and bronze (fig. 7–1).[2] Meigs at first was unsure of the effect: "Brumidi is painting a portion of the ceiling of the House of Representatives in bright colors as a trial. I fear he will make it too gay for the use of the building. However, he knows much more of the laws of color than I do. . . ."[3] When Brumidi finished the sample, Meigs found the effect "magnificent. I am not quite sure that it is not too gor-

Fig. 7–3. ***Cornwallis Sues for Cessation of Hostilities under the Flag of Truce*, 1857.** *Brumidi showed General Washington surrounded by his staff and gesturing toward the British emissary sent by Lord Cornwallis, who is accompanied by a drummer boy holding the white flag of truce.* H–117.

geous, but I begin to think that nothing so rich in effect has ever been seen this side of the Atlantic," and he directed Brumidi to oversee the painting of the rest of the ceiling in the same way.[4]

Meigs's fears about the reception of the bold decorations were well founded. *Harper's Weekly* reported: "Some critics have caviled at the profuse and gaudy decorations of the new Hall . . . . The general effect, says one of the Washington correspondents, is dazzling and meretricious; one is reminded of a fashionable saloon in a gay capital, rather than the place of meeting of national legislators." However, the decoration received some praise as well: "The new Hall is certainly a complete success, and reflects the highest credit on those who designed it . . . it is a beautiful specimen of the art of interior decoration . . . . "[5]

To complete the decoration of the room, Meigs envisioned paintings of Revolutionary scenes in the panels on the lower walls. As of October 1, 1857, when the Hall was being readied for the representatives, the plastered walls were not dry enough to be painted in any medium other than fresco. Therefore Meigs directed Brumidi to prepare a design for a fresco that could be finished quickly. Walter agreed with Meigs that the chamber should be embellished with fresco, because it would be more durable than oil on canvas, and he intended to have Brumidi fill all of the panels.[6]

By the end of October, Brumidi had selected as his subject General Washington receiving an emissary from Lord Cornwallis at the end of the Revolutionary War and was developing his sketch, with the aid of a profile portrait of George Washington that Meigs borrowed for him. By mid-December, Brumidi's scene in the southwest corner of the room was finished and attracting comment (fig. 7–2).[7]

In *Cornwallis Sues for Cessation of Hostilities under the Flag of Truce* (fig. 7–3), Brumidi depicted an event that took place in Yorktown on October 17, 1781. An aide to the British commander brought to Washington a letter requesting a twenty-four hour cessation of hostilities to

Fig. 7–4. Detail of the corner of *Cornwallis.* *Brumidi's inscription "C. Brumidi Artist Citizen of the U.S." is unique to this fresco.* H–117.

consider the terms of surrender. Washington, aware that the British fleet could arrive at any time, granted only a two-hour cease fire. His decision led to the surrender of Cornwallis two days later and to the end of the Revolutionary War.

On the strap of the dispatch case Brumidi proudly signed "C. Brumidi Artist Citizen of the U.S." (fig. 7–4). Just a few weeks earlier, on November 12, he had filed his final naturalization papers.[8] The unique inscription was undoubtedly a response to criticism of him as a foreigner. However, despite his legal citizenship, negative comments about the fresco fueled the controversy over the assignment to an Italian of so much work at the national Capitol.

The fresco was also attacked for its artistic quality. On December 14, an anonymous letter signed "Officious" was sent to Meigs, charging that "the wall painting—The Surrender of Cornwallis—is universally condemned. The subject is considered inappropriate & the execution execrable, in view of all which I suggest to you to have the painting wiped out." Meigs defended himself in a note written at the bottom of the letter: "One of many indications. The picture is as good as could be painted in 6 weeks[;] it shows to them what the effect of pictures in the panels will be which is all I believed[;] it cost little & I have not the least objection to a better painting being by Congress put over it but it is the best that could be done in the time & no more time was at my disposal."[9]

Two days later, on December 16, 1857, the House of Representatives met in its new chamber for the first time. Brumidi was never allowed to paint any other historical scenes in the chamber, and the panels were left filled with illusionistic molding. Later, in the 1870s, Congress purchased landscapes by Albert Bierstadt to fill two of the spaces.

In 1950, the fresco was covered over during the remodeling of the Hall of the House. It was cut out of the wall and moved to the new Members' Dining Room (H–117) in 1961. Not surprisingly, the fresco sustained considerable damage, which was repaired by muralist Allyn Cox. It was professionally cleaned and restored in 1989.[10]

Know-Nothings and Critics

The reception of Brumidi's work was affected by national political turmoil as well as by the power struggle between Meigs and Walter. In the vacuum caused by the disintegration of the Whigs, the nativist American or Know-Nothing Party surged into prominence in the 1854 elections. Rooted in a small secret society popularly known as the Know-Nothings, because members replied only "I know nothing" when queried about their meetings, the American Party had a million members for a brief period near the beginning of the 34th Congress. The Know-Nothing movement peaked in 1855, when 51 members of the House identified themselves as American Party and 100 were listed as Opposition, compared with 83 Democrats. In 1856, former president Millard Fillmore ran as the presidential candidate for the American Party, which was in control of the local government in a number of cities, including the District of Columbia. Many local and east coast newspapers espoused its viewpoint.

The goal of the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic American Party was to elect native-born Protestants, in reaction to the influx of poor Irish, who flooded the cities seeking work after the potato famine, and of "Forty-Eighters," political refugees from Italy and Germany, among whom Brumidi could be counted. The party proposed extending the waiting period for citizenship from five to twenty-one years. The party's sudden growth was augmented by fear of the growing political power and militancy of the Catholic Church and by the mistaken but widely held beliefs that the Know-Nothing Party opposed slavery and supported temperance.[11]

Tensions surrounding the Know-Nothing party affected Meigs, as construction superintendent responsible for hiring and contracting, despite his efforts to stay clear of politics. Although not personally sympathetic to the Know-Nothings, in 1855 he resisted pressure to fire the party's members among his crews, even though President Pierce "begged [him] not to appoint any of these miserable Know-Nothings. . . ." Later, the Know-Nothing vote became crucial to the appropriation for constructing the Capitol, and Meigs believed that Know-Nothings were behind the effort to remove from him control of the

art in the extensions.[12] It was a Know-Nothing, Representative Humphrey Marshall of Kentucky, who introduced a bill to create a commission to select art for the Capitol.[13] Thus, the criticism voiced during congressional debates of Meigs for hiring foreign-born artists and of Brumidi's art for not being American was clearly connected to the nativist and anti-immigrant stance of the Know-Nothing movement. Meigs commented that the New York *Express* "abuses me in the Know-Nothing interest" after an article appeared supporting the accusations about few American artists being hired at the Capitol, listing seventy-four names and claiming that only twelve could "be pleaded as Americans," and criticizing Meigs for his "adverse, pro-foreign will and favoritism."[14]

Overlapping the party politics was the indignation of many American artists who had not been hired to create art for the new extensions. Some had petitioned Congress for commissions even before construction started, and others had applied but been rejected. Now they saw foreign-born artists busy at work.[15] One of the most influential of the disgruntled artists was Henry Kirke Brown of New York (fig. 7–5), whose proposal for a pediment sculpture had been rejected by Meigs.[16] He was a leader of the American artists who petitioned the Congress. His congressman, one-term Democrat George Taylor of New York, led attacks against Meigs. The artist George West, whose work for the Naval Affairs Committee (S–127) had been found unsatisfactory, complained to Meigs that he felt it was his misfortune that he was not foreign-born.[17]

Another angry artist who stirred up feeling against Meigs was Johannes Oertel, an independent artist Meigs recruited in 1857 on the recommendation of John Durand, the son of painter Asher B. Durand and editor of the New York art magazine *The Crayon*. Meigs directed him to paint designs for the state seals for the stained glass ceiling of the House of Representatives, after having first asked him to make designs for the Senate Library (S–211). A year later, Oertel returned to that room to find Brumidi executing his own designs there. He complained to Meigs that there was "scarcely a single room of importance left which is not at present occupied or anticipated by Mr. Brumidi." Even though, in a Solomon-like move, Meigs offered to let him paint half of the library, Oertel resigned. Although Oertel himself was German born, his indignant letter to Meigs was used by the engineer's enemies to stir up resentment against him and Brumidi.[18]

Oertel's sponsor, *Crayon* editor John Durand, was also a leader in the push for an art commission, and he had urged in 1856 that American artists be employed in creating designs for the Capitol, even though he conceded that Americans were not trained in fresco painting.[19] In reply, Meigs defended his strong record in hiring American artists to create architectural sculpture for the Capitol and pointed out his lack of authority to commission free-standing sculpture or framed pictures. He described to Durand the positive response to Brumidi's first work at the Capitol in the Agriculture Committee room. While expressing his interest in hiring American painters who would be willing to work at reasonable rates, he stressed the difficulty of finding an American with expertise in fresco or even in mural painting. He praised Brumidi: "The artist is engaged at a salary and his task and industry have been of great service to the building. I wish I could find an American his equal in modesty, in knowledge of art, in fertility and in speed. . . ." He firmly believed that "Brumidi is for our work better than any painter we have." [20]

The Washington Art Association, instrumental in making an art commission for the Capitol a reality, was founded in late 1856 under the presidency of the sculptor Horatio Stone, primarily to organize large national art exhibitions. Meigs perhaps shortsightedly declined an invitation to help organize the group because of limited

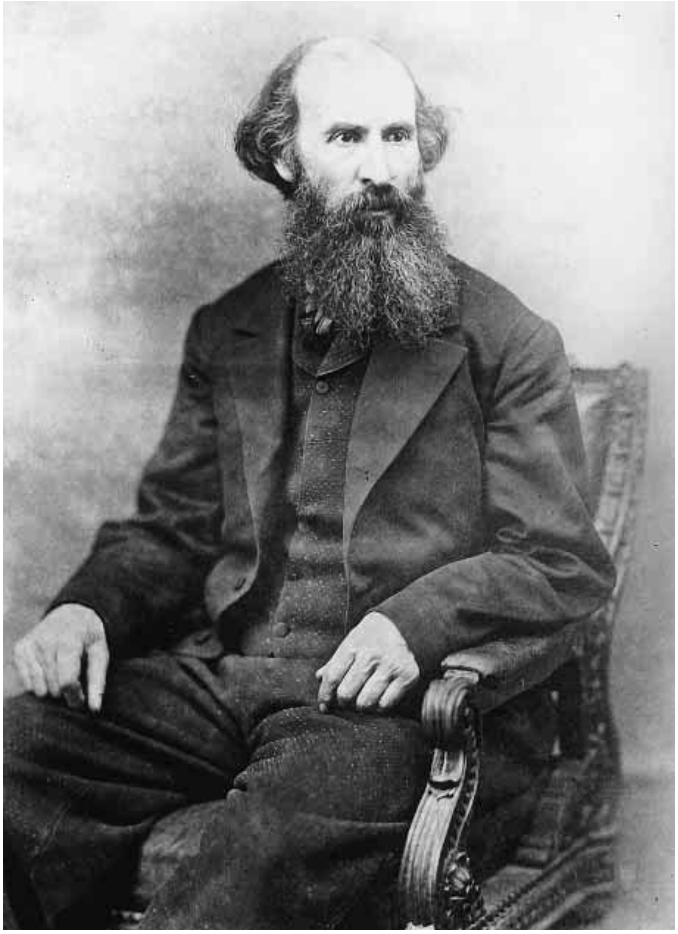

Fig. 7–5. Henry Kirke Brown, one of three artists appointed to the Art Commission formed in 1860. *The sculptor was one of Meigs's strongest critics.* Brady-Handy Collection, Library of Congress.

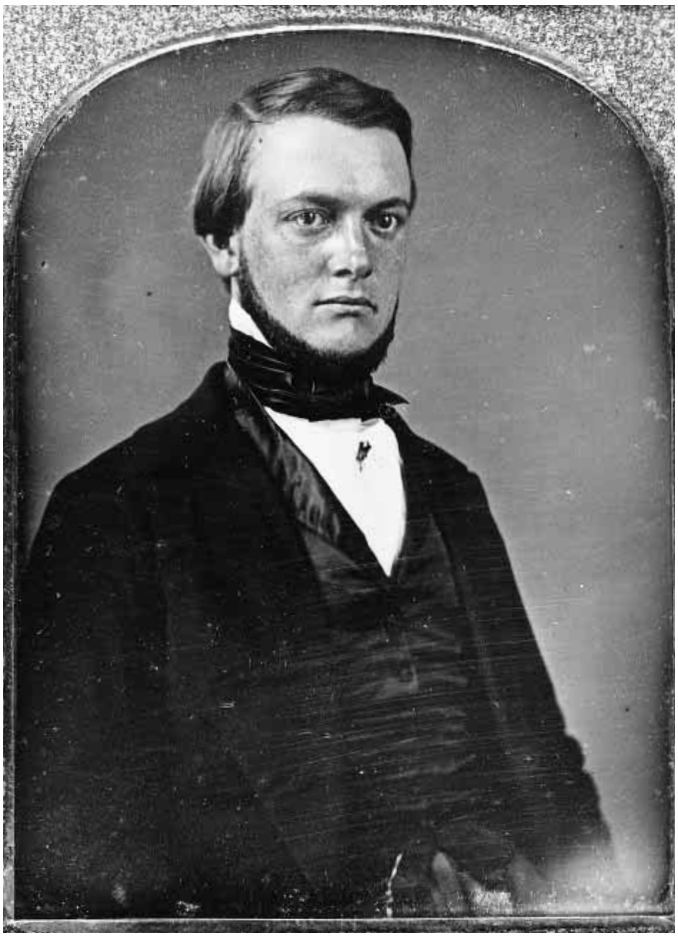

Fig. 7–6. Benjamin Perley Poore. *The journalist, shown here around 1850, verbally attacked the decoration of the Capitol in his articles published in a number of newspapers.* Library of Congress.

time.[21] The association eventually included among its members many of his enemies, such as Johannes Oertel, Peter Baumgrass, and George West, who had come into conflict with him and Brumidi at the Capitol. Speakers at the group's meetings included Thomas U. Walter and Representatives George Taylor and Horace Maynard of Tennessee, a member of the American Party, who criticized Brumidi's art and who worked closely with Horatio Stone. In February 1858, the day after Taylor had introduced a bill to create an art commission and to remove Meigs's authority over art for the Capitol, Stone gave an address and circulated a letter complaining that the decoration of the Capitol was in charge of an engineer instead of artists.[22] Stone's organization evolved into the National Art Association, which at its March 1858 convention prepared a "Memorial to Congress" petitioning for the formation of an art commission whose members would be "the channels for the distribution of all appropriations to be made by Congress for art purposes." Among the better known of the 127 signers were painters Rembrandt Peale, Albert Bierstadt, George Inness, William Rinehart, and Thomas Sully.[23]

In May, the petition was accepted by the House and referred to a select committee of five, which included Humphrey Marshall and George Taylor, appointed on June 1, 1858.[24] Discussions of the decoration of the Capitol were most heated during the debates that month over funds for completing the Capitol in the appropriation bill for 1859, which was finally passed on June 12, 1858. Tensions were high because the previous appropriation for the Capitol had expired on April 30, and workers had been discharged.

The debate over the merit of the decorations of the Capitol took place in the press as well as on the floors of Congress. One of the most outspoken and eloquent critics of Brumidi's art was Benjamin Perley Poore (fig. 7–6). His Washington column for the Boston *Union*, a publication sympathetic to the Know-Nothings, and articles published and quoted in many other papers, including the *New York Tribune*, did much to articulate and foment criticism of Brumidi and other foreign artists. He published Oertel's letter against Meigs and called Brumidi "a dauber of speckled men and red horses in true oyster-saloon style," and he urged Congress to take the decoration away from "Meigs, Brumidi & Co."[25] He was probably the author of a series of stories on the decoration of the Capitol published in the *New York Tribune*, which were sharply critical of Meigs's direction:

> The best artists of the country, with scarcely an exception, have offered their services and asked to be employed upon the Capitol. Without an exception their applications have been rejected, and the work of decoration is going rapidly forward under the direction of an Italian whose reputation is little better than that of a skillful scene painter, and who employs under him a crowd of sixty or seventy foreign painters, chiefly Italians and Frenchmen.[26]

Meigs wrote in his own defense:

> The point that is made of neglect in employing American artists is unfounded and unjust. He [Meigs] has a national pride, and is gratified when he can assist native talent, and is not likely to overlook it when the public interest will be benefitted. It matters not where an artist is born: that is beyond his control.[27]

Between 1857 and 1860, in addition to the general concerns that foreigners rather than American artists were receiving commissions and that an engineer was making decisions about art, every aspect of Brumidi's decoration was criticized by members of Congress or the press. First, many people were uncomfortable with the ornate style of Brumidi's art, describing it as "flashy,

snobbish," "gingerbread and tinsel," and "inappropriate to a Republic," unlike the plainness and simplicity of the decoration of the old Hall of the House: "One sighs for something more in keeping with the gravity of the interests to be adjusted in that room, and the sober air which ought to pervade the debates of an American Congress." Benjamin Perley Poore ridiculed the decoration of the Senate Corridors:

> On passing through the corridors, and viewing the various committee-rooms in the north wing, on the one hand may be seen a group of imported artists, adorning the walls and ceilings with groups of figures, animate and inanimate—duopedal, quadrupedal, and multipedal—representing objects in heaven and on earth, and some which have no existence beyond the fertile brain of the delineator—in all the colors of the rainbow, and many others which are not in the rainbow—with flowers and fruit which could only have grown in Utopia—ornamented with scrolls, volutes, and circumvolutes; modillions and all other imaginable forms which can be made by the combination of straight lines, curved lines, and crooked lines, and covering every visible inch of surface, with the most lavish profusion, apparently with the idea that, as nature abhors a vacuum, so does the intelligent eye abhor a plain surface.

Representative Taylor complained: "We have expended already thousands of dollars on this contemptible decoration, which is disgraceful to the age and to the taste of the country . . . it is absolutely disgraceful." [28]

In addition to its ornateness, Brumidi's work was strongly criticized for not being sufficiently American. Another article, probably also by Poore, drew attention to the "foreign element" in *The Calling of Putnam from the Plow*: "The whole tone of the latter picture is Italian, not American. The landscape, the grouping, the attitudes and the expression, are of the Roman Campagna and not of Connecticut, as they should be. The foreign artist has done his best, with the aid of native pictures and engravings, to make the thing American, but he has succeeded no better than a Chinese artist succeeds in copying a Western painting. He copies with the most minute fidelity, but his work has still an inevitable strangeness of tone and feeling."[29] Even less charitable was an article in *The Crayon* ridiculing the ceiling of H–144, the Agriculture Committee room, as "loaded with a senseless tangle of finery, which entirely destroys the repose and dignity of the apartment. The eye and mind rest nowhere, but are harassed by images of flying, tumbling, and reclining Cupids, involved in a wilderness of garlands, in which, of course, there is no special reference to the American Flora." Despite singling out for praise the two small pictures showing methods of reaping (fig. 7–7), the writer otherwise decried the "bitter stupidity which overlooks this teeming life of a continent for Cupids and garlands."[30] Members said they wanted to see more of the national history and character, and some made specific suggestions, such as depictions of a variety of ships in the Senate Naval Affairs Committee room, or current agricultural methods in the House Agriculture Committee Room. Though far from averse to such subject matter, Meigs noted that he was constrained to carry out the decoration of the Capitol with an eye to practicality: "The idea of making everything in the Capitol express an American idea, that all must be of the highest order of art, is fine enough, but to accomplish it, where are the artists to do the work? In the meantime shall we not wish to use such appropriate decorations as will make the building beautiful and pleasant to the eye? This I have done, and tried not to leave the other undone."[31]

Fig. 7–7. South lunette in Agriculture Committee Room. *Critics approved of the scene of reaping wheat as American, but criticized the mythological figures as foreign.* H–144.

Brumidi's scenes in the Agriculture Committee room were also the subjects of comments during a heated debate over the agricultural appropriation on the floor of the House, and they were even used to bring up the question of slavery. Congressman Owen Lovejoy, chair-

man of the Committee on Agriculture and an abolitionist Republican from Illinois, suggested that not only maize and the western plow but also the contrast between free labor and slave labor should be depicted in the Agriculture Committee room.[32]

In addition to its subject matter, some critics attacked the quality of Brumidi's work, calling it mediocre and the artist himself incompetent, a creator of "tawdry and gaudy ornaments, vile in taste, poor in design and offensive in color."[33]

Beyond this range of criticism of Brumidi's art, some members saw art in general as an extravagance, superfluous to the construction of the wings: "All this ornamentation is surplusage; it can be better done afterward than now." [34]

As is often true, critics found it easier to lampoon Brumidi's work than to make a serious, informed assessment of its artistic quality. However, although in the minority, positive and supportive comments about his work did appear in print. In 1856, the *Crayon* was enthusiastic about the decoration of the Naval Affairs Committee room (S–127), reporting "its ceiling and walls are being most tastefully and fittingly frescoed and painted. Neptune, Amphitrite, the Tritons, and all the gods and goddesses of the deep find spirited representations somewhere on the walls of this unique room." The *New York Tribune* pointed out in regard to the House chamber: "Much of the unfavorable criticism on the decoration of the hall comes from the friends of inferior artists who could not get employed upon the work, and is the mere outpouring of envy and malice. Some of it, however, is from sheer ignorance." Later, in response to a strong attack published in the *Tribune* on May 17, 1858, Guglielmo Gajani, an Italian sculptor who had known and admired Brumidi in Rome, wrote a forceful letter to the editor in support of his compatriot's art. He first explained the skill needed to paint in fresco, and concluded: "I would challenge any man of sound judgment to enter the room of the Agriculture Committee without being struck by the good choice of the subject and the excellent execution."[35]

Senator Jefferson Davis wholeheartedly supported Meigs's decorative program, recalling the approval with which the Congress received Brumidi's work in the Agriculture Committee room (H–144): "It was not given by any vote, but it came to me in every other form that they wanted the building finished in the very highest order of modern art. One expression I recollect most distinctly was very general, that Brother Jonathan was entitled to as good a house as any prince or potentate on the face of the earth, and they wanted the best materials and best style of workmanship and highest order of art introduced into the Capitol of the United States."[36] Davis offered an amendment to protect the sculpture already begun, using language drafted by Meigs.

The Art Commission

Following the long and heated debates, funds for continuing the construction of the Capitol in 1859 were authorized by the 35th Congress on June 12, 1858, with a significant new condition imposed:

> Provided, that none of this appropriation shall be expended in embellishing any part of the Capitol Extension with sculpture or paintings, unless the designs for the same shall have undergone the examination of a committee of distinguished artists, not to exceed three in number, to be selected by the President, and that the designs which said committee shall accept shall also receive the subsequent approbation of the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress; but this provision shall not be so construed as to apply to the execution of designs heretofore made and accepted from Crawford and Rogers.[37]

Fortunately for Brumidi, decorative mural painting continued on the basis that it was part of the construction. The art commission authorized by the bill was not appointed for almost a year, until after the report of the House select committee of five was submitted on March 3, 1859. The select committee pointed out that the work had been carried out under a foreigner by foreigners and claimed to find "nothing in the design and execution of the ornamental work of the Capitol, thus far, which represents our own country, or the genius and taste of her artists." It disparagingly concluded, borrowing words from Walter's report, that a "plain coat or two of whitewash" would be preferable as a temporary finish to the "'tawdry and exuberant ornament with which many of the rooms are being crowded.'" Also on March 3, the appropriations bill for 1860 was passed, restating the proviso authorizing the art commission but in addition allowing "the completion of the painting of rooms in the north wing already painted."[38] Meigs took credit for influencing the wording of the final version of the bill to protect the art already begun.[39]

As authorized by the appropriations bills, on May 15, 1859, President Buchanan appointed to the United States Art Commission three artists recommended by the National Art Association: sculptor Henry Kirke Brown, portrait painter James R. Lambdin, and landscape painter John F. Kensett.[40] A month later, Meigs gave the members of the commission a tour of the work in progress. On November 1, 1859, however, he was replaced by Captain William B. Franklin, and much of the planned decorative work for the Capitol was stopped. Thomas U. Walter prepared a cost estimate for completing work in the extensions, "made in consultation with Mr. Brumidi,"

which he submitted to Captain Franklin; he also gave his estimates to the Art Commission.[41]

The United States Art Commission submitted its report on February 22, 1860, probably not coincidentally George Washington's birthday. The report echoed many of the criticisms heard in the halls of Congress and published by the press. It was pointedly critical of the art of "an effete and decayed race which in no way represents us" on the walls of the Capitol. Brumidi's qualifications were indirectly questioned in the statement: "It is not enough that the artist select an American subject for his work. He must also be imbued with a high sense of the nature of the institutions of the country, and should have a certain assimilation with its habits and manners." His classical sources were pointedly attacked:

> We are shown in the Capitol a room in the style of the "Loggia of Raphael;" another in that of Pompeii; a third after the manner of the Baths of Titus; and even in the rooms where American subjects have been attempted, they are so foreign in treatment, so overlaid and subordinated by symbols and impertinent ornaments, that we hardly recognize them.

They praised with reservations the decoration of the Senate corridors (fig. 7–8):

> Our chief delight in this survey is in a few nicely painted animals and American birds and plants, in some of the lower halls; and even here one familiar with foreign art sees constantly intermingled and misapplied symbols of a past mythology, but wanting in the exquisite execution and symbols of the originals.

The report also criticized the "display of gaudy, inharmonious color," which they judged "unsuited to the hall of deliberation, where calm though and impassion reason are supposed to preside." They recommended that the corridors be painted in flat colors.[42]

The art commission recommended expenditures totaling $166,900 to complete the decoration of the Capitol. Discussion of the report led to a heated debate on June 5, 1860, over taste in art in the House.[43] Criticized for the weakly stated recommendations contained in the report as well as for the high cost estimate, the commission, rather than being given the authority to select art it requested, was abolished on June 20, 1860. It had lost political support by this time: neither George Taylor nor Humphrey Marshall had been reelected to Congress; the Know-Nothing party had dissipated, and its antislavery members were being absorbed by the new Republican Party.

While the art commission prepared its report, even though Meigs had been replaced by Franklin and Carstens had been fired in 1859, Brumidi continued to work on murals already begun. Although he worked without compensation from January to June 1860, he was finally paid retroactively in July, after the commission was abolished. Neither the brief-lived art commission nor the change in command derailed the decorative program Meigs had established, and Brumidi would continue to carry it out over the following two decades.

Fig. 7–8. Detail from the Brumidi Corridors. *One of the few things in the Capitol that the Art Commission praised in its report was "a few nicely painted animals and American birds and plants, in some of the lower halls. . . ."*

Notes to Chapter 7

1. TUW to Amanda Walter, August 10, 1858, TUW/PA (AAA reel 4138).

2. *Annual Report of Capt. M.C. Meigs, in charge of the Capitol Extension,* 34th Cong., 3d sess., November, 1856, Sen. Ex. Doc. No. 5, v.2, p. 217. Brumidi's designs were executed by Emmerich Carstens and his crews. Some parts of the decoration were also designed by Carstens himself. MCM, Letter of recommendation for Emmerich Carstens, March 18, 1859, AOC/LB.

3. MCMJ, October 21, 1856 (B–325).

4. MCMJ, November 13, 1856 (B–340).

5. "The Capitol Extension and New House of Congress," *Harper's Weekly*, February 6, 1858, p. 90. "The Latest News," *New York Tribune*, December 14, 1857, p. 4.

6. TUW to Rev. G.W. Samson, TUW/PA (AAA, reel 4138); MCM to CB, October 1, 1857, AOC/LB; "Local Intelligence: Capitol Extensions," *Evening Star*, September 17, 1857.

7. Meigs requested the loan of the portrait in a letter to Mr. James P. McKane, October 29, 1857, AOC/LB. Brumidi's working sketch was preserved by Lola Germon and was owned in 1950 by Mrs. Ashmun Brown, grandniece of Lola Germon. Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *Constantino Brumidi: Michelangelo of the United States Capitol* (Washington, D.C.: Monumental Press, 1950), p. 92. Brumidi was paid for 25 days of fresco work in November on December 4, 1857, Murdock, *Brumidi*, p. 108.

8. Naturalization papers, November 12, 1857, NARA/RG 21.

9. "Officious" to MCM, December 14, 1857, AOC/CO. The letter was misquoted in Murdock, *Brumidi*, 1950, p. 16; Meigs's comments were also slightly misquoted in Charles Fairman, *Art and Artists of the Capitol of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927), p. 177.

10. The removal was described by Henri G. Courtais, "A Blind Approach to the Removal of Fresco," *Studies in Conservation*, 8 (February 1963). Also see the treatment reports by Allyn Cox, 1961, and Bernard Rabin, 1989, AOC/CO.

11. Charles Fairman first suggested the relevance of the Know-Nothings in a note, AOC/CO. The Know-Nothing fear that Catholics owed their first allegiance to the pope was heightened because the growing American Catholic Church, led by Archbishop John Hughes of New York, was demanding government support for parochial schools and actively seeking converts, while at the same time influencing the outcome of elections. See Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

12. MCMJ, May 19, 1855 (A–557). For example, in 1855 a group called the Union Association objected to Meigs's hiring of a man fired at the Navy Yard for being a Know-Nothing, and resolved "that the retention in important positions of other champions of the Know-Nothing party by Capt Meigs is an outrage upon popular sentiment, unjust to the friends of the present administration, and ought to be corrected by Executive interposition." Resolution of Meeting of the Union Association of the City of Washington, September 11, 1855, AOC/LB. Meigs received letters accusing half a dozen men of being Know-Nothings, including foreman of the blacksmith shop Samuel Champion, who was accused of being a member of a "secret midnight order." July 13, 1855, AOC/LB and MCMJ, July 9, 1855 (A–606). MCMJ, February 3, 1858 (C–78).

13. *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., p. 638

14. MCMJ, May 7, 1858 (C–212); "Americus" (probably Benjamin Perley Poore); "American Artists at the New Capitol," *New York Express,* May 1, 1858. The list itself is an important document of the men decorating the Capitol and their rate of pay.

15. Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 68.

16. MCMJ, December 15, 1856 (B–364) and May 25, 1858 (C–254).

17. George R. West to MCM, December 15, 1856, AOC/CO.

18. MCMJ, January 2, 1857 (B–386); Oertel to CB, April 23, 1858; Oertel to MCM, April 17, April 22, and April 27, 1858; Johannes A. Aertel [*sic*], "A Letter to Captain Meigs," April 27, 1858, published in *The States*; MCM to Oertel, April 23, 1858; CB to MCM April 26, 1858, AOC/CO. MCM to CB, June 21, 1858, AOC/LB.

19. "Sketchings—The Capitol Extension," *The Crayon*, October, 1856, p. 311; see also "The Leader," *The Crayon*, July 1855, p. 26.

20. MCM to J. Durand, October 11, 1856, AOC/CO; MCMJ, March 26, 1855 (A–502).

21. MCMJ Nov. 3, 1856 (B–334 and B–335).

22. Josephine Cobb, "The Washington Art Association: An Exhibition Record, 1856–1860," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society of Washington, D.C., 1963–1965* (Washington, D.C.: Columbia Historical Society, 1966), p. 130.

23. Select Committee, *American Artists*, 35th Cong., 2d sess., March 3, 1859, H. Rept. 198, Appendix A.

24. The other members were Laurence M. Keitt of South Carolina, Edward Joy Morris of Pennsylvania, and George H. Pendleton of Ohio, *Congressional Globe,* 35th Cong., 1st sess., May 31, 1858.

25. Perley [Benjamin Perley Poore] , "The Old Capitol," letter to the editor of the *Boston Journal* dated November 25, 1857, MCMJ, December 2, 1857 (B–768). Poore's articles appeared in *The States*, *New York Express*, and *New York Tribune*. He was at the same time Clerk of the Senate Printing Committee and editor of the Congressional Directory.

26. "The Decoration of the Capitol," *New York Tribune*, May 17, 1858.

27. *National Intelligencer* (Washington), May 24, 1858.

28. Perley, "The Old Capitol"; "The Capitol Extension and New House of Congress," *Harper's Weekly*, February 6, 1858; "The Capitol Extension," *The Union*, June 11, 1858; *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2759.

29. "The Decoration of the Capitol."

30. "Sketchings: Art on the Capitol, Washington," *The Crayon*, October 1858, p. 296.

31. MCMJ, August 4, 1859 (C–903).

32. *Congressional Globe*, 35th Cong., 1st sess., May 19, 1858, pp. 2243–2244.

33. *New York Express*, April 24, 1858, and June 16, 1860; "The Decoration of the Capitol."

34. *Congressional Globe,* 35th Cong., 1st sess., May 28, 1858, p. 2464.

35. "The Decoration of the Capitol"; "The Decorations of the Capitol," *New York Tribune*, May 31, 1858.

36. "The Ceiling of the New House of Representatives," *The Crayon*, December, 1856, p. 377; *New York Tribune*, December 15, 1857; "The Decorations of the Capitol"; *Congressional Globe*, May 28, 1858, 35th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2462.

37. *Statutes at Large of the United States of America, 1789–1873* (Washington: 1850–1873) vol. 11, p. 323.

38. Select Committee, *American Artists*, 35th Cong., 2d sess., March 3, 1859, H. Report 198; *Statutes at Large*, vol. 11, p. 428.

39. MCM to Henry Dexter, March 18, 1859, AOC/CO.

40. James Buchanan, letter of appointment, May 18, 1859, AOC/CO. For the history of the art commission, see: Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism*, chapters 6 and 7.

41. MCMJ, June 24, 1859 (C–827). TUW estimate, November 26, 1859, TUW/PA (AAA reel 4146); TUW to WBF, November 29, 1859, AOC/LB; TUW "Notes for Art Commission," February 2, 1860, AOC/LB.

42. *Report of United States Art Commission*, Ex. Doc. No. 43, House of Representatives, 35th Cong., 1st sess.

43. *Congressional Globe*, 36th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 3043–5.