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THOMAS CONSTANTINE:

CABINETMAKER AND MAHOGANY MERCHANT IN

EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW YORK

by

Matthew Adrian Thurlow

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Early American Culture

Summer 2004

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This thesis is dedicated to my family

and

to poor Phyfe and all of those third-rate Englishmen out there

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ABSTRACT

Despite the heavy concentration of scholarship on the early nineteenth-century decorative arts of New York City, historians continue to strive for a sense of the diversity that defined this time period. A cabinetmaker, entrepreneur, wood merchant, mahogany inspector, and mill owner, Thomas Constantine exemplified the almost schizophrenic nature of craftsmen as they struggled to achieve economic security and personal satisfaction. By comparing his story to contemporary giants such as Duncan Phyfe and Charles Honoré-Lannuier and forgotten peers such as William Mandeville and Abraham Egerton, a framework for evaluating the field can be developed.

This thesis systematically analyzes Constantine's career, which in many facets can be considered atypical, through an investigation of surviving objects and documents. After just three years of serving as a journeyman at the shop in which he apprenticed, the cabinetmaker opened his own establishment. Just four years later, Constantine would gross $20,000 by filling the two most notable public commissions of the early 1800s on behalf of the United States House of Representatives and Senate. Along with his work on other civic contracts, Constantine helped to illustrate the manner in which aesthetically pleasing objects defined the built environment of the young United States. His extant furniture also reflects the stylistic interests of customers of various socioeconomic levels.

What makes this artisan notable is the quick abandonment of a trade in which he had achieved such notoriety at an early date. After pursuing new markets through patent

furniture and heavy advertising, Constantine left the field at the age of thirty-four. Those lucky enough to establish themselves in a profitable manner could hope to spend their career in a single occupation and at the same address, but Constantine continued to change jobs and location throughout the rest of his life. However, he stayed within the network that connected the producers, venders, and consumers of valuable hard woods and established a family dynasty around the retailing of high quality cabinetmaking materials.

Introduction

"Practically unknown a few years ago, the name of Duncan Phyfe has today become the plaything of every auctioneer, every furniture dealer, and every furniture buyer in the country. Every man's work during the first years of the nineteenth century is foisted on poor Phyfe, and then he has also to shoulder many an Englishman's third rate product."[1]
--Louis Guerineau Meyers, 1929

Amid scanty records and a sea of anonymous furniture, early nineteenth-century New York stands as an age of wonderful complexity and alluring drama. Early financial powerhouses such as John Jacob Astor marked the city's transition toward worldwide economic preeminence. Craftsmen and artists of the day enabled a similar ascent to the nation's artistic and cultural capital by providing ornamental furnishings that would complement the upwardly mobile New Yorker and his home. Many of these successful, talented, and highly regarded artisans achieved levels of skill and prosperity that astounded contemporary consumers and continue to impress modern scholars.

Witnessing the zeal with which material culture scholars have attacked the first decades of the nineteenth-century in recent years, one might question why yet another monograph is needed on cabinetmakers of that era. This concern is valid, especially in light of other time periods and crafts that have been largely ignored and in recognition of the relative obscurity surrounding this particular

artisan, Thomas Constantine. My answer is simply this: only by the intensive study of a large number of mechanics working in one field at one time can we hope to learn something valuable about the cultural and economic context in which they lived. As such, the true significance and pedagogical value of investigating New York cabinetmakers like Duncan Phyfe, Charles-Honoré Lannuier, Abraham Egerton, or Thomas Constantine is to develop a nuanced understanding of the milieu that acted upon and reacted to their careers.

Of course Constantine has not been completely anonymous in the century-and-a-half since his death. The lumber business he began in the 1820s is now operated by his great-great-great-grandson and still bears the family name. Furthermore, decorative arts historians have occasionally included references to Constantine in furniture studies over the past fifty years. Lorraine Waxman mentioned to him in her 1958 master's thesis on Lannuier.[2] The 1960s saw two important articles relating to Constantine's career, the first on a suite of desks and chairs he provided for the United States House of Representatives in 1818-1819 and the second on John Hewitt, the cabinetmaker with whom Constantine apprenticed and for whom he worked as a journeyman.[3] Since 1993, his work has appeared in five scholarly works, including three major catalogues: Wendy A. Cooper's *Classical Taste in America: 1800-1840*, Catherine H. Voorsanger and John K. Howat's *Art and the Empire City*, and Peter M. Kenny's *Honoré Lannuier: Cabinetmaker from Paris*.[4] Constantine's continued resonance with scholars suggests that the field could gain valuable insight from a holistic investigation of his career.

The public furniture produced by Constantine deserves special note. While other cabinetmakers solicited similar contracts, no one appears to have done so at the level of national prominence achieved by Constantine. His work appeared in civic buildings in New York City, Washington, DC, and Raleigh, NC. As such, this cabinetmaker played an integral role in the visual appearance of the American public interior in the decades that followed the revolution. Between 1785 and 1825 legislative bodies at the federal, state, and municipal levels engaged in a series of construction projects that would solidify the architectural styles and decorative symbols connoting democracy in the United States. The furniture introduced into these spaces reveals as much about the organization and activities of American government as it does these new built environments. Thus, the desks and chairs Constantine produced for these settings can be interpreted not only as artifacts of American political history but also as metonymic representations of the people who used them.

Constantine's professional choices are noteworthy for a number of reasons. Some, such as his attempts to diversify production and to achieve an economy of scale, adhere to the established patterns found among his contemporaries. Others, such as this propensity for public commissions, portray his unique response to the fluctuating market. Like all tradesmen, Constantine was most concerned with the bottom line and adapted his business to the ebb and flow of consumer interests and economic cycles. After spending just twenty years in the cabinetmaking field as an apprentice, journeyman, and mechanic, Constantine chose to leave while in the prime of his life. Having participated in

the processing and sale of lumber throughout this period, he knew the value of and consistent demand for high quality wood. He embarked on a second career vending lumber brought from the Midwest via the Erie Canal and the Caribbean via the Atlantic Trade, and then a third that took him to Michigan in search of untapped wood supplies. His final occupation brought him back to New York as a government appointed inspector of imported mahogany.

As I have chased Constantine around New York City and State, then south to the District of Columbia, Virginia, and North Carolina, and west to Michigan, I have cursed the winding trail while relishing the colorful route. When writing this analysis, I endeavored to encompass each of his exploits, which are broadly based over time, geographic location, and topic. I ultimately resorted to a format that reflects his unique career. This thesis is divided into two parts. The first section is comprised of one chapter that examines the socioeconomic environment and cabinetmaking industry of early nineteenth-century New York and a second that juxtaposes Constantine's career against this setting.[5] Part 2 will focus more specifically on his four major public commissions: his work for the United States House of Representatives and Senate (1818-1819), the contract filled for the North Carolina State House (1822-1823), and his commission from Christ Church of New York City (1824-1825). The reader can consider these as individual case studies that illustrate the impact of decorative arts on specific built environments, the momentous role played by a cabinetmaker constructing furniture for a public building, and the meanings of democracy, religion, hierarchy, and taste that are contained in these artifacts.[6]

NOTES FOR INTRODUCTION

[1] Louis G. Meyers, "Duncan Phyfe," in *Loan Exhibition of Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Century Furniture and Glass* (New York: Girl Scouts, Inc., 1929), opposite entry 751. The Phyfemania that began in the early twentieth century can be held partially responsible for the latter day interest in New York furniture of the period. Since such great emphasis was placed solely on the merits of his work at an early date, scholars have worked doubly hard to prop up the significance of his competitors. Especially since Phyfe remains poorly understood, much of this resulting attention comes from the uncertainty about the furniture attributed to him. Among the countless pieces thought to be from Phyfe's workshop, are dozens of artifacts produced by his competitors. This includes the famous case of the table assigned to Phyfe until the late 1900s when an inquisitive curator found Lannuier's label and brand on the frame. See Deborah Dependahl Waters, "Is it Phyfe?," *American Furniture* 1996 (Milwaukee: Chipstone Foundation, 1996), 63-80.

[2] Lorraine Waxman, "The French Influence on American Decorative Arts of the Early Nineteenth Century: the Work of Charles-Honoré Lannuier," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Delaware, 1958).

[3] Margaret B. Klapthor, "Furniture in the Capitol: Desks and Chairs Used in the Chamber of the House of Representatives, 1819-1857," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1970), 190-211; and Marilyn A. Johnson, "John Hewitt, Cabinetmaker," *Winterthur Portfolio* 4 (1968), 185-205.

[4] Wendy A. Cooper, *Classical Taste in America: 1800-1840* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1993); Raymond L. Beck, "Thomas Constantine's 1823 Senate Speaker's Chair for the North Carolina State House: Its History and Preservation," *Carolina Comments* 16:3 (January 1993), 25-30; Peter M. Kenny, et al., *Honoré Lannuier: Cabinetmaker from Paris* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998); Catherine H. Voorsanger and John K. Howat, *Art and the Empire City: 1825-1861* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000); and Peter M. Kenny, "From New Bedford to New York to Rio and Back: The Life and Times of Elisha Blossom, Jr., Artisan of the New Republic," in *American Furniture* 2003, ed. Luke Beckerdite (Milwaukee: Chipstone Foundation, 2003): 238-270.

[5] In the hope of further developing the context of early nineteenth-century New York cabinetmaking, I devote a portion of Chapter 1 to suggesting some patterns that appear to exist among craftsmen of this period. I make no claims of empirical certainty and merely offer these points to facilitate an informed discussion of the period and to offer a sounding board against which Constantine's career can be considered in a relative manner. The topics discussed include the juxtaposition of variables such as wealth, success, location, movement, and skill.

[6] Since this is the first complete evaluation of Constantine, I fully expect that inconsistencies or errata have crept into my analysis. Just as we can now look at McClelland's work on Phyfe or Waxman's study of Lannuier with a more critical eye, in the future this material might appear overtly simplistic or compromised.[6] My primary hope is that by placing my research and conclusions into the consciousness of material culture scholars, I will have affected further discussion and dissemination of the topics contained herein.

Part 1

THOMAS CONSTANTINE IN EARLY NINEENTH-CENTURY NEW YORK

Part 1, Chapter 1

CABINETMAKING IN EARLY NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW YORK: A CONTEXT

"Situated on an island, which I think it will one day cover, it rises like Venice, from the sea, and like that fairest of cities in the days of her glory, receives into its lap tribute of all the riches of the earth."
--Frances Trollope, 1832[1]

By the turn of the nineteenth century, New York City stood as a wealthy, bustling, and highly sophisticated urban center. The wharves along the Hudson and East Rivers provided local residents, merchants, and craftsmen with unprecedented access to natural resources and manufactured goods: from Birmingham brass to Bay mahogany, and from Canadian furs to Chinese porcelain. Although the Virginia aristocracy occupied the presidency and the capital had left Federal Hall for Philadelphia and then the banks of the Potomac, New York served as a powerful conduit for American finance, political power, and economy.

Economy, Craft, and Consumerism in Early Nineteenth-Century New York

As the young republic's commercial beacon, New York would surpass Philadelphia as the largest American city by the census of 1800. Provided with one of the world's finest harbors, New York was destined to control a

lion's share of domestic and international commerce. With successful business "came a mounting population, fed by rural migrants from the city's hinterland, vagabonds, and small waves of immigrants from Britain and Ireland."[2] New York was a great departure point, as well. Southern cotton and northern foodstuffs headed east across the Atlantic at a brisk pace. The proud city's status would only escalate over the next century as people and products poured into Manhattan via ships arriving from Europe, Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and the Erie Canal.

A "lovely and noble city," New York's wealth and size attracted talented furniture makers.[3] Those with the drive, determination, reputation, and patronage to sustain their business could prosper and flourish. As the United States government continued to pry open the American interior, thousands passed through New York seeking land and economic advancement in the west. The artisan who chose to stay in the city contributed to the national renown for New York's manufactured goods. By 1800, *The New Trade Directory for New York* listed 91 cabinetmakers, 15 joiners, 9 turners, and 24 upholsterers plying their trade along the narrow streets of the city.[4] With the ability to fabricate products suitable for this highly respected decorative arts market, New York-trained cabinetmakers could also escape the heady competition by seeking work elsewhere in the young republic. These well-established artisans incorporated imported designs, fashionable materials, and honed skills to steadily supply local and export markets with products of the latest fashion and laudable craftsmanship.

Many travelers remarked on the talent of New York cabinetmakers and their ability to satisfy the fetish for European fashions that existed among the city's moneyed consumers. There are the oft quoted passages of English visitor Henry Fearon concerning superiority of American craftsmen over their British counterparts and of Frances Trollope on the pervasive penchant in the United States for all things French. When visiting the city in 1807, Englishman John Lambert recognized that the cabinetmakers' "workmanship would be considered elegant and modern in London."[5] On the tastes of its consumer's and the scope of the city, in 1826 John Pintard remarked, "we are rapidly becoming the London of America. I myself am astonished & this city is the wonder of every stranger."[6] The capability of New York artisans and the gentility of their customers would ultimately influence the residents of towns and cities throughout the country.[7]

Flush with the profits of mercantile interests and the brisk pace of sales, professional and working-class New Yorkers alike eagerly patronized local craftsmen. Even Trollope, who disappointed easily, thought highly of domestic spaces in the city.[8] The accumulation of goods from New York's fashionable stores resulted in her lasting impressions of well-designed homes and rich furnishings. Broadway provided the "handsome shops, neat awnings, excellent *trottoir,* and well-dressed pedestrians," expected of a commercial town whose residents kept an eye on the current mode.[9]

Up-and-coming merchants sought the accouterments required of the genteel class and surrounded themselves with imported fancy goods and

domestic wares. For many, the furniture of London and Paris exceeded their aesthetic sensibilities and their pocketbook. Whether the result of connotations to aristocracy and royal patronage, a desire to support local mechanics, or a genuine preference for American forms and ornament, they turned to the city's cabinetmakers who were eager to meet their desire for interior refinements.

Consumers who did purchase New York wares were still influenced by European tastes, though, and Americans actively sought out household goods that referenced foreign motifs. The decorative arts of the Western Hemisphere have always been rife with foreign influence. Material culture scholars have tracked this movement of style through the importation of craftsman, patrons, objects, and design sources. As sources of inspiration for manufacturers and consumers, all these methods of transference held powerful sway over the furnishings available on the American market.

Both cabinetmakers and their patrons could find printed images of the latest trends in European fashion. One of the most commonly referenced publications in the period was Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of Arts, Literature, Commerce, Manufactures, Fashions, and Politics*. Within the pages of this London periodical, Americans learned of the recent developments in *au courant* dress and furniture.[10] In 1819, A.T. Goodrich and Co. advertised that their "Circulating Library" contained "Ackermann's Repository of Arts, Fashions, etc. with numerous coloured embellishments."[11] Amidst many others, an 1806 advertisement alerted curious customers of

books that could influence their purchasing habits. Under the title "NEW BOOKS. Just received, by the late arrivals from London...an elegant assortment of new Books," Brisban & Branan offered a variety of titles to influence aesthetic interests. Those listed included: Burdon's *Life of Bonaparte*, Heron's *Journey thro' Scotland*, Owen's *Fashionable World Displayed*, the *Spirit of the French Anas*, Kotzebue's *Travels through Italy, in 1804, and 1805*, and American architect Asher Benjamin's *Builder's Assistant*.[12]

American trained artisans did not simply slavishly copy the latest styles in furniture sent from abroad, though. Both native and immigrant craftsmen adapted and refined the decorative fashions appearing in Great Britain and on the continent. Thus, while Duncan Phyfe incorporated forms and motifs familiar to English and continental designs, his ultimate product is wholly unique and could not be found in European parlors, warerooms, or publications. Although much of Charles Honoré Lannuier's furniture remains true to his French roots, the need to compete in a competitive market encouraged him to introduce decorative features more typical of British examples and, hence, more desirable to a broader market.[13]

Private Patronage and New York Cabinetmaking

Successful cabinetmakers were able to balance the interests of both wealthy and middle-class consumers. The significance of patronage from New York's non-elite communities partially explains the need for craftsmen

to cater to a broad socioeconomic spectrum. Although wealthy residents may have requested the most exceptional products manufactured in the warerooms of Phyfe and Lannuier, all cabinetmaker's depended on a steady stream of middling consumers, as well. Frequently, the tastes of the lower socioeconomic classes were formed by the fashions sought by their social superiors. Historian Richard Bushman explains that through the furniture, ceramics, and wall and floor coverings they brought into the parlor, these consumers sought a foreign culture of polish and repose.[14] He finds that "in the name of comfort the humble and obscure could present their claims to an honorable existence against the overwhelming pretenses of the polite assemblages that shone so brilliantly in the palaces of the mighty."[15]

Craftsmen were obliged to cater to the consumption patterns of the middle class, for in any given year the size of its expenditures represented a powerful percentage of New York's gross spending. The majority of the advertising seen in newspapers of this period had those of middling socioeconomic status in mind with their references to moderate prices, proven quality, and ready-made stock. The elite certainly held the same concerns but their superior wealth allowed them more direct access to reputable cabinetmakers and high quality bespoke work often designed to their specifications.

This process of gentrification and the search for respectability among the working and professional classes is also manifested in the early nineteenth-century interest in fashionable architecture. Along with modish

belongings came concerns with desirable neighborhoods, a chic home, and refined manners. These attributes combined to secure the status of the elite against the ever-changing character of the city's districts. Even with the cultural expectations of gentility in a constant state of flux, by ensuring that the interior of their home featured goods to support their status, the propertied class could battle the incoming tide of commercial and tenant activities that threatened to upset this urbane environment.[16]

While a number of wealthy families remained situated in the lower sections of the city, others relocated to more residential neighborhoods to the north. Craftsmen who did not require direct and constant access to the wharves often settled in New York's upper extremities, as well. The working class would be forced still further north by the increased rents associated with more desirable locations. For instance, by 1805, a vibrant artisan community had been established just west of City Hall Park, in the area bounded by Greenwich, Hudson, Warren, Murray and Chambers Streets. However, merchants and professionals "edging their way northward, away from downtown disease and disorder, bid up land prices," and by 1812, the area "had been gentrified."[17]

A positive byproduct of this pattern of relocation came in the form of the regular need of new furnishings. Despite the high turnover among the city's skilled craftsmen, those who survived the economic downturns found regular business among the rapid construction and reconstruction of New York's residential and commercial structures. For example, a great detriment

to the survival of eighteenth-century furniture was the fires that frequently razed large sections of the city. These were a boon, though, to the craftsmen who sold the furniture needed to replace the extensive loss of household goods.[18]

Business was enhanced by a more general trend of upward mobility, too. As the economic conditions of New York's inhabitants improved so did their homes and furnishings. These periodic spurts of architectural revitalization astounded visitors and residents alike, and led New Yorker Philip Hone to exclaim, "overturn, overturn, overturn! is the maxim."[19] He concluded that, "the spirit of pulling down and building up is abroad. The whole of New York is rebuilt about once in ten years."[20] A new householder might not necessarily purchase new furniture after each move, but he might seek interior decorations that reflected his status and his home.

These observations are significant, for they imply the active clientele that awaited an industrious craftsman. A steady demand is an essential component of a successful business. Without the presence of regular patronage, a cabinetmaker, or any artisan or professional for that matter, could not expect a profitable career. Duncan Phyfe received a great deal of consumer recognition early on and gained such heady business that his patrons occasionally complained about his delay in filling their orders.[21] A prosperous craftsman relied not only on the quantity of the work he produced but the net sum gained from his efforts, as well. A wise mechanic maximized profits either through selling a high volume at low cost or a lower volume at

high costs. He produced less expensive furniture in large numbers to satisfy the large population of laborers and immigrants passing through the city, built refined, costly décor for the few families that could afford it, or synthesized these two approaches. While fancy chair manufacturer Thomas Ash succeeded on providing bulk furniture at wholesale and retail prices, Lannuier's shop offered furniture at rates that reflected its superior quality and limited audience.

If craftsmen wanted to continue helping the professional and working classes in their drive to maintain the appropriate styles of home furnishings, they had to keep the public aware of their whereabouts. Such information was shared through directory listings, advertisements, and word-of-mouth communication. Successful cabinetmakers rarely moved, thereby enabling return customers to maintain easy access to their wares and avoiding the inefficiency of regular relocation. Although the private sector may have been continuously marching northward, away from the commercial centers of New York, those mechanics with staying power maintained sitting power, as well. When Duncan Phyfe retired in 1847, a man of his wealth would have been more likely situated around Grammercy Park or Union Square, yet for fifty-two years he remained in business at the same location on Fulton Street.

Other New York cabinetmakers exhibited similar consistency. After 1809, William Mandeville appears to have never wandered far from his Courtlandt Street stand.[22] After initially working out of his brother's confectionery shop at 100 Broadway, Lannuier remained at 60 Broad Street

from 1804 until his death in 1819.[23] Joseph Meeks established himself on Broad Street in the 1810s and, with the assistance of his sons and nephews, remained a fixture of lower Manhattan well past the 1833 publication of his infamous broadside.[24]

In contrast, the inability to gather a steady clientele ensured a mobile lifestyle. Abraham Egerton, who vacillated between the role of journeyman and master, moved five times among the 1st, 4th, 5th, and 6th Wards in the seven-year period between 1814 and 1820.[25] Carpenter and joiner Elijay Guion moved every year from 1821 through 1825 within the 5th and 8th Wards.[26]

Trollope and many others commented on the frenzied period of relocation that descended upon New York every May as working class families participated in the annual move from one rental property to the next.[27] She applauded those friends of hers who had the means and sense to purchase a home and avoid this mess. The ability to remain situated was a privilege granted to only those master cabinetmakers and craftsmen that could continuously draw customers back to their store. Such consistency of location represents product quality and customer satisfaction of a similar regularity and can be considered the mark of a reputable and successful craftsman.

While endurance at a given address is significant, the specific location of a cabinetmaking stand ensured neither prosperity nor failure. As previously mentioned, craftsmen originally gathered in artisan communities along the waterfront and interior streets of the eighteenth-century city. Working class

neighborhoods were established throughout the 1st Ward and, later, moved into the 2nd Ward. An additional area of craft activity sprouted in the first decades of the nineteenth century to the west of Broadway in the 3rd Ward. It was here that Phyfe, Michael Allison, Mandeville, and Thomas Constantine developed their businesses. Although this group included the two wealthiest cabinetmakers of the day, Phyfe and Allison, by no means had New York's older sections lost their appeal as commercial districts.

In 1821, 1st Ward craftsman John Gruez and the firm of Asten & Hyslop owned property worth $3000 and $4000, respectively. Barzila Deming and Nathaniel Philips of the 2nd Ward maintained stores valued at $3300 and $5300, respectively. In the 3rd Ward, Mandeville, Allison, Phyfe, and Constantine possessed workspaces assessed at $6300, $12,000, $18,300, and $4,700, respectively. Allison and Phyfe both owned multiple workshops, though, which were valued at just over $6000 per property.[28] Therefore, while those working west of City Hall appear more successful on average, the prosperous cabinetmakers of the lower neighborhoods retained shops of respectable value.

On the contrary, the location of journeymen cabinetmakers in the city is very indicative of their lack of financial security. Unless housed at the shop in which they were employed, journeymen could rarely afford to live in the same neighborhood as their master's shop. Thus, of the furniture craftsmen living in Wards 3, 5, and 8 in 1816, fifty-seven percent of the masters lived in the 3rd Ward where rents were higher, while an overwhelming eighty percent

of the journeymen inhabited the less expensive fifth ward.[29] From their tenant properties, they would travel south each morning toward the shops and manufactories, gravitating toward the commerce that drove the city's economy.

Export Furniture and the Search for New Markets

Considerations of patronage and he property values aside, few craftsmen could afford to contain their business within the limits of New York. The drive to increase sales and hence expand one's client base created an active export market for the city's manufactured goods. The trade routes that allowed mechanics to negotiate these transactions had been solidified by New York's mercantile control of imports, such as southern cotton and South American foodstuffs, and the financial backing of commercial ventures in these areas.

Although export furniture had been carried up and down the Atlantic seaboard since the late seventeenth-century, the 1810s and 1820s witnessed a revitalization of furniture production for extralocal markets. This blossoming was especially true for northern cabinetmakers looking toward the south where wealthy merchants and planters yearned for fashionable household goods. Craftsmen seized this opportunity both by speculative wholesaling and commission-based retailing.[30] The former allowed them to ship a large quantity of furniture for distribution through auction houses and warerooms. Cabinetmakers could also provide an extension of the local bespoke-based

network whereby interested consumers ordered agents or family members in New York to purchase goods on their behalf.

A number of Constantine's contemporaries pursued the export market. Phyfe shipped his wares to the American South and Caribbean on a number of occasions.[31] The cabinetmaker's agent in Savannah, J.W. Morell, advertised in 1822 that "orders will be received for furniture of the newest fashions made by D. Phyfe of New York."[32] Phyfe's export furniture might not have been of the high quality expected by local consumers, though. Michael Brown argues that all artifacts shipped from New York with the Phyfe label are "without exception...of middling design and execution."[33] The wares that New York cabinetmakers Deming and Bulkley sent to Charleston, however, indicate the type of exports made available to the Southern market by Phyfe's competitors.[34]

Lannuier appears to have more selectively tapped into these opportunities, preferring to fill extralocal needs by commission rather than shipments of venture cargo. While the French ébéniste may have sent bulk consignments to Savannah and Cuba, only a limited number of wealthy businessmen and planters, such as James Bosley of Baltimore, and the Wickhams of Richmond, and the Ravenel-Frost family of Charleston, acquired his furniture otherwise.[35] Unlike the furniture Phyfe sent south, these consumers purchased goods that exemplified the skill and taste of Lannuier's finest work.

The export market was not a guaranteed success, though. A cabinetmaker took great risks in entering the speculative trade. There are numerous references to cabinetmakers losing entire shipments of furniture because of rough voyages and improper handling and their difficulties in extracting payments from Southern patrons.[36] Conservative artisans were obliged to limit their production, overhead, and labor to what would fill the demand in the vicinity of New York.

New York Cabinetmakers and Public Commissions

Public commissions were another market for New York wares, albeit a less significant source of business for the city's cabinetmakers. Unlike some of their European counterparts who regularly benefited from extensive royal patronage, American craftsmen rarely received steady business from local, state, or federal government offices. Despite a conscious effort to raise the standards of American public architecture in the early nineteenth century, the country's elite craftsmen were retained only sporadically to furnish these civic spaces. While Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe were familiar with European palaces and reception halls, they were not provided the unlimited budgets for renovating the President's House, as was the Prince Regent when he refinished Carlton House and Brighton Pavilion in the late 1700s and early 1800s. When American presidents carried out their limited modernization of the executive "mansion," they relied on an ad-hoc mixture of chic imported

goods and modish domestic wares from craftsmen in Washington, Philadelphia, and New York.[37]

As alluded to in the introduction, Constantine's predilection for public commissions is anomalous for this period. Even during the era of active construction that defined the early national period, these opportunities remained scarce. Only a handful of New York cabinetmakers are known to have constructed furniture for a civic purpose, and the majority of these were involved solely in the completion of New York's impressive City Hall in the 1810s. Architects Joseph Francois Mangin and John McComb, Jr. had provided America's largest city with a public structure worthy of praise from urbane foreign visitors who found little architecture to applaud, and the Common Council was eager to furnish it in an appropriate manner.[38]

Lannuier had some interest in filling civic commissions and, in 1812, made a set of twenty-four armchairs he produced for the Council's chamber at City Hall.[39] Lannuier's seating furniture combined influences from the open arm French fauteuils of the Louis XVI style with the English motifs seen in Sheraton's *The Cabinet-Maker and Upholsterer's Drawing Book.* Featuring a square back with a central carved tablet, a bowed front, outward curving rear legs, and arms braced by carved, urn-shaped supports that are a continuation of the straight, swelled and reeded front legs, the chairs are elegant and delicate.[40] True to his appreciation for the French Empire style, the cabinetmaker inset brass stars at the corners of the crest rail and in rectangular blocks above the reeded front legs. Henry Andrew of Maiden Lane

upholstered Lannuier's chair frames with a French seat and covered them in a crimson fabric accented with a twisted black tape and brass nails.[41]

The alderman in charge of furnishing the hall, Nicholas Fish, does not reveal how Lannuier earned the commission, but the official's selection of craftsmen suggests a broad familiarity with the local furniture trade.[42] At least two other New York cabinetmakers are known to have constructed furniture on behalf of City Hall at this time. William Mandeville earned $519.34 for supplying desks and chairs of an unstated purpose for the room.[43] The Council contracted Charles Christian in 1814 and 1815 to provide furnishings for the Governor's Room and Mayor's Office.[44] On November 14, 1814, the council referenced a payment of $894 to Christian for "furniture Govr Room," which included a set of twenty-four chairs with upholstered seats and backs.[45]

The need to furnish the nation's new capitols and state houses provided civic commission opportunities for American craftsmen in other cities, as well. Boston cabinetmaker George Bright made thirty armchairs at the cost of $8 each for Charles Bulfinch's Massachusetts State House in 1797.[46] That same year, John Shaw sold a large set of desks and chairs for use in the Maryland State House at Annapolis.[47] In 1818, Lannuier offered Thomas Constantine the greatest competition for a contract to furnish the United States House of Representatives chamber in Washington, DC. Lannuier was one of thirteen cabinetmakers to submit proposals for the commission, but lost the contest with a bid of only $500 more than Constantine.[48]

One might expect an artisan of Duncan Phyfe's reputation to have fulfilled a number of significant public commissions. Since he stood as a symbol of ultimate achievement among his fellow craftsmen and his furniture served as a sign of elegance for elite consumers, his work would have garnered accolades in civic settings throughout New York and perhaps the greater United States. Phyfe, however, appears to have stepped into this role infrequently. The Common Council credited Phyfe on two occasions for work done on the behalf of the city. In 1812, the cabinetmaker earned $350 for two "writing tables," and, five years later, the Council gave him $3 for "mending chairs."[49]

Souvenirs for the celebration that marked the opening of the Erie Canal are Duncan Phyfe's major contribution in this arena.[50] They had been requested by a celebration committee headed by wealthy merchant William Bayard—a patron of Phyfe, as well as Lannuier and Mandeville. He produced a group of bottle sleeves in 1825 to hold containers of water that had been brought from Lake Erie for the festivities. According to contemporary accounts, the "group of boxes" was to be constructed "by Mr. D. Phyfe from a log of cedar brought from Erie," to hold "bottles of American fabrick [sic]," and then sent to the city's "distinguished friend Major-General Lafayette."[51] Unfortunately, the bottle cases do not appear to have survived, nor do any images of them exist.[52] However, they are referred to specifically in two contemporary narratives of the event.[53] These commemorative reports on the celebration highlight the recognition received by Phyfe for his participation,

but do little to explain why he evidently chose not seek many other public commissions.

According to Nancy McClelland, John Banks had presented a worktable to Lafayette during his visit to the city earlier in the year.[54] This artifact thankfully survives in the Winterthur Museum's collection and offers a noteworthy tribute to both the role of decorative arts in civic celebrations of the early nineteenth-century and the interpretations of classical taste found in such objects. **(Figure 1)** Although Banks had only been listed in the New York directory since 1819, he must have affected some acclaim to earn the selection for such a prominent commission. Recognizing the significance of this contract, Banks stenciled his name on the underside of a drawer in hopes his work would garner further attention. **(Figure 2)**

In a manner similar to Constantine's chairs for Christ Church and the North Carolina State House, Banks's furniture is unconventional and appears overwhelmingly so when contrasted against the typical productions of New York's classical period.[55] The table reveals a hand familiar with period motifs but unable to corral them into a coherent, aesthetically pleasing whole. Lafayette's name appears in a gilt painted diamond-shaped reserve on the top of the table. The prominent stature and intent of Banks's public commission appears odd in comparison to the more utilitarian bottle sleeves provided by the esteemed Phyfe.

Constantine's Competition, 1815-1825

As one can see, cabinetmakers met with success depending on their ability to tap the various markets of patronage: local, extralocal, and civic. Other important concerns included controlling costs, advertising a quality product, accessing raw materials, and managing the available labor force. Neither Constantine nor many of his contemporaries located an equilibrium among these variables that provided commercial achievement and long-term security. However, a discussion of his fellow mechanics will place Constantine's career in a more informative context.

Without debate Phyfe stands as the most recognized cabinetmaker of his time. His financial success was unmatched by any contemporary, and he is the default reference in modern discussions of the furniture trade in New York.[56] Phyfe emigrated from Scotland in 1784 at the age of sixteen along with his widowed mother and siblings. He is thought to have completed his apprenticeship in Albany before relocating to New York in the early 1790s. Phyfe first appears in public records there in 1792 as a member of the city's newly formed General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen. Since this organization only initiated masters of a certain standing, one is left to imply that Phyfe arrived in New York with some capital in hand. Retaining the spelling Fife until 1794, he was originally listed as a joiner on Broad Street but established himself further uptown by mid-1795 as Duncan Phyfe, cabinetmaker.[57]

Through extensive patronage and wise investments in real estate, Phyfe became extremely wealthy. A broad spectrum of society enjoyed his furniture, for Phyfe produced a wide selection of cabinetwares that met the purchasing abilities of both middle and upper-class patrons.[58] Members of the mercantile elite—including John Jacob Astor and William Bayard of New York and Charles Bancker of Philadelphia—adorned their fashionable parlors with suites of Phyfe's furniture, but residents of slightly lesser socioeconomic status had a similar opportunity through his more economical line of wares.[59]

In 1816, Partition Street, on which his house and shop sat, was subsumed by a major cross-island thoroughfare named Fulton Street, and Phyfe used the profits of his cabinetmaking business to become a major landowner in the area. A watercolor of Phyfe's manufactory and warerooms on Fulton Street in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art testifies to the volume of his production and the wealth of his estate.[60] Previous estimates of a workforce of a hundred employees are likely exaggerated, but by the 1810s Phyfe certainly may have retained laborers to engage in a broad range of craft specialties, such as chairmaking, gilding, carving, upholstering. This allowed his operation to be largely self-contained.

From 1803 through 1819, French émigré Charles Honoré Lannuier stood as Phyfe's main competition for the business of New York's elite.[61] Trained in Paris before relocating to New York, the master cabinetmaker exemplified the introduction of European style through an immigrant craftsman. In the France, Lannuier received an early introduction to the

techniques of fashionable furniture production from his older brother Nicolas-Louis-Cyrille Lannuier and his uncle Jean-Baptiste Cochois, who had brought Nicolas into the trade, as well.[62] Honoré-Lannuier came to the United States with a thorough knowledge of the French Directoire, Consulat, and Empire styles. In recognition of the American taste for imported goods, Lannuier consistently promoted himself as a Parisian trained cabinetmaker, capable of providing the most elegant wares.[63] His synthesis of superb design, harmonious proportions, exquisite materials, and extraordinary craftsmanship places him as one of the most renowned cabinetmakers of early America.

In contrast to Phyfe, Lannuier's operation was contained within a single property on Broad Street. His wareroom and manufactory were both located there, and, presumably, he employed fewer than a dozen artisans at any given time.[64] Nevertheless, Lannuier likely employed the most skilled French and American-trained cabinetmakers available in order to retain the high quality that earned him his favorable reputation.[65] While Lannuier sold furniture to Southern patrons, the size of his store and the consistency of excellence found throughout his work suggest that his production was largely limited to high-end commissions and not the speculative and middle-class markets pursued at various times by Phyfe.[66]

Another highly successful and equally competent craftsman in this period was Michael Allison. The son of Captain John Allison, Michael did not have the early support of relatives allied in the cabinetmaking trade that Lannuier did may have received some financial support from his successful

father. Although today his name is not as celebrated as Phyfe's, Allison experienced wealth, longevity, and artistic success surpassed only by Phyfe. Allison's Vesey Street store was less than three blocks from Phyfe's stand on Fulton Street, and, to allow the competition to continue over so many years, both must have maintained a loyal clientele. The quantity, quality, and artistry of Allison's known work suggest the skill of his employees and the scope of his shop. Outside of Phyfe, Allison is the only other cabinetmaker known to have occupied three properties on a single street.[67]

John Hewitt, the master with whom Constantine served his apprenticeship, represents the second tier of cabinetmakers who followed Phyfe and Lannuier's stylistic lead. Hewitt's career is especially significant for the variety of surviving documents left behind that detail his shop practices. His account book includes specific measurements taken from furniture produced by Phyfe and Lannuier, and his conscious intentions of imitating their work.[68] Hewitt recorded that one customer, a Mr. McQueen, specifically requested a "French Sideboard like Phyfes."[69] Facts such as these are essential to create a more nuanced understanding of the New York cabinetmaking industry, as they challenge McClelland's assertion that, "contemporaries of Phyfe not trained by him...never succeeded in closely copying these various touches...not one of them ever turned a leg or carved an acanthus leaf in the Phyfe manner."[70] Additionally, as part of a large order for Mr. King in Richmond, Virginia, Hewitt's store provided a "Secretary &

bookcase (Like L) $87.50."[71] The cabinetmaker may referring to a design produced by Lannuier, or perhaps John Linacre.[72]

Involved extensively in the export trade for the first four decades of the nineteenth century, Hewitt's shipping network and longevity in the trade are notable. Furthermore, the extensive documentation of Hewitt's business practices presents a unique opportunity to gauge the transferal of shop techniques and marketing strategies from one generation to the next. While the extent to which Constantine imitated Hewitt's predilection for venture cargo is unknown, Constantine doubtless learned the importance of maintaining and marketing a supply of mahogany.[73] Hewitt appears to have moonlighted as a wood merchant and vended some of his excess supply of mahogany to local cabinetmakers and carpenters, just as his former apprentice would later do.[74]

One of Constantine's most enigmatic contemporaries, John Banks, appears as a cabinetmaker in New York directories for a brief eight-year span. Spending the entire period in relative obscurity on Beekman Street, like Constantine, Banks career was short lived. Banks's best known work includes a suite of seating furniture manufactured for the Beekman family and the aforementioned work table he allegedly produced for Lafayette during his visit to New York.[75] His simple label offers a sense of the scope of his operation: "John Banks/Cabinet Chair & Sofa Maker/60 Beekman St. New York."[76] As did so many craftsmen of this period, Banks inexplicably disappears from New York records after 1825.[77]

Like Constantine, a number of craftsmen left the cabinetmaking trade in pursuit of commercial success in another field. For Michael Allison's brother, Richard, family connections and financial support certainly did not ensure success. The brothers both entered the cabinetmaking trade in the early nineteenth-century and worked independently on Vesey Street, just west of Broadway.[78] While Michael became one of the most accomplished and prolific artisans of the day, Richard failed to establish a profitable shop. Although producing aesthetically successful furniture in much the same style as his brother, the younger Allison's career ended abruptly in 1814 after only eight years in the business. Richard went on to become a grocer and continued in that profession until his death in 1825.[79]

Abraham Egerton, a cabinetmaker who alternated between the roles of master and journeyman, worked alongside Constantine in Hewitt's shop. As with Richard Allison, Egerton stands as an illustration of brothers achieving disparate success. The youngest son of Matthew Egerton, a well-established craftsmen of New Brunswick, NJ, Abraham never achieved the notoriety of his oldest brother, Matthew Egerton, Jr., whose labeled work is as abundant as his father's.[80] They both trained with their father at the Egerton family's shop but Matthew Jr. inherited the business upon his death.

This likely forced his younger brother to seek business opportunities elsewhere. Abraham first appears in the New York City directory of 1811, working at 25 Beekman Street with partner David Loring.[81] Although none of his labeled work survives, Abraham possessed the skills required of a

desirable journeyman, and he remained in business at various 1st Ward addresses on Beekman, Beaver, and Broad Streets through the 1820s.[82] By 1818, Abraham had not accumulated wealth as quickly as Constantine had. He was renting a room on Beaver Street with a personal estate valued at $500.[83] His nomination to the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen in 1823 by prominent New York cabinetmakers William Mandeville and Stephen Young, though, does imply a certain level of success and respectability later in life.[84]

Wealth, Estate Value, and Commercial Success Among New York Cabinetmakers

Although one can estimate the financial standing of New York cabinetmakers based on the size and location of their shops, the length of their career, and the quantity of furniture they produced, these characteristics do not provide an explicit illustration of their financial standing. Furthermore, because the appraisals of real estate and personal belongings cannot be linked to an objective set of architectural or decorative features, they cannot be considered an empirical documentation of wealth. During this period, the tax records can be vague, if not misleading. The value set for a lot and any improvements upon it was difficult to establish, especially in New York where prices fluctuated regularly.[85] Placing a dollar figure on someone's household goods was an equally subjective process, as the Common Council allowed the assessor to determine what "necessary wearing apparel and bedding" would

not be included in the final tally.[86] Since the majority of an artisan's assets were tied up in credit, materials, and finished goods, the official yearly assessment of an estate fails to incorporate much of their true net worth. For instance, in 1819, Lannuier's assessed estate, real and personal, totaled $6000, yet the inventory taken at his death later that same year—which included real estate less mortgage; cash in the bank; notes, drafts, and sums due him; his stock in furniture and supplies; and household contents—added to $17,749, almost three times his taxed wealth.[87]

In the value of his estate, Duncan Phyfe had no peers among craftsmen. He stands as the first American cabinetmaker to achieve wealth on a level that rivaled merchants and investors. In 1842, Phyfe's $300,000 fortune was referenced in *The Wealth and Pedigree of the Wealthy Citizens of New York City*.[88] On his death, Phyfe was due almost $310,000 in promissory notes, and he had wisely placed his profits into property in Manhattan, New Jersey, and Connecticut.[89] He owned an additional $27,000 in various stocks and bonds and an untold amount of real estate, as well, and stood among the wealthiest five percent of New York society. However, on his death in 1854, assessors valued his personal estate at only $1420, a minute percentage of his total wealth.[90]

Other successful craftsmen, such as Allison and Mandeville, accumulated personal estates that were not as large as Phyfe's but represented a greater proportion of their total recorded wealth.[91] In 1820, Allison owned three lots on Vesey Street, including workshops at 44 and 46 Vesey and his

home at 48 Vesey. The total value of the property was $16,500, as compared to a personal estate of $3000. In spite of a career equal to Allison's in longevity, Mandeville appears to have owned only his house and shop at 8 Cortlandt that year. Assessors valued his real estate holdings at $7000 and his personal property at $2000.[92]

In comparison to other artisans and manufacturers, cabinetmakers as a group were not wealthy. Of the eighty-three craftsmen possessing a personal wealth of $5000 or more in 1815, only three (less than four percent) were in the furniture trade.[93] A study that juxtaposed the 1816 Jury Book with the New York City tax assessment of that year, revealed that only twenty percent of all cabinetmakers and only four percent of journeyman cabinetmakers reported taxable property, real or personal.[94] Further mystifying the distribution of wealth in the city, thirteen percent of New Yorkers with personal estates of $5000 or more in 1815 were not even mentioned in the directory of that year.[95]

For some of America's elite craftsmen, most notably Lannuier and Boston cabinetmaker Thomas Seymour, the quality of their furniture is not reflected in an assessment of their personal wealth. As Kenny reasoned in reference to the limited wealth of Lannuier at the time of his death, "sums of money, regardless of the amount, can provide little measure of the courage, determination, and genius of this French immigrant artist, or of the priceless legacy of the furniture that he has left us."[96] Ultimately, for historians today, a cabinetmaker's true significance is not in the dollar value attached to his

probate, but in the knowledge that can be gained from the objects and documents he left behind. In the next chapter, the reader will discover why Thomas Constantine is noteworthy for his role in the competitive New York furniture market, his participation in the furnishing of important public buildings, and his decision to leave the business in favor of the lumber trade.

NOTES FOR PART 1, CHAPTER 1

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[1] Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (Guilford, G.B.: Billing and Sons, 1927), 297.

[2] Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 25.

[3] Trollope, 297.

[4] *The New Trade Directory for New York* (New York: n.p., 1800). New York Public Library, Humanities and Social Sciences Branch, New York, NY.

[5] Still, Bayrd. *Mirror for Gotham: New York as Seen by Contemporaries from Dutch Days to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 72.

[6] John Pintard, *Letters from John Pintard to his Daughter Eliza Noel Pintard Davidson, 1816-1833*, New York Historical Society, *Collections*, LXX-LXXIII (1937-1940). Cited in Paul E. Cohen and Robert T. Augustyn, *Manhattan in Maps: 1527-1995* (New York: Rizzoli, 1997), 114.

[7] Trollope is frequently quoted for her comments on the French taste that occupied New York: "...Broadway might be taken for a French street, where it was the fashion for very smart ladies to promenade. The dress is entirely French; not an article...must be English on being stigmatised [sic] as out of the fashion. Everything English is decidedly *mauvais ton*..." see Trollope, 310.

[8] Trollope, 298.

[9] Trollope, 297-298.

[10] Cooper, 36. The reader should recognize that Ackermann did not exclusively illustrate designs of an English origin. Scholars have located numerous examples of his borrowing from renowned French designers Charles Percier and Pierre Fontaine.

[11] *New-York Daily Advertiser*, December 3, 1819. Cited in Waxman, 52.

[12] *New-York Daily Advertiser*, April 17, 1806, 4. Brisban & Brannan were located at 186 Pearl Street and offered "an elegant assortment of new Books, in addition to their former collection."

[13] Kenny et al., 67. Kenny references the modification of a French form, a *table à trictrac*, for the New York market "by grafting onto it the ubiquitous New York reeded-and-turned leg."

[14] Richard Bushman, *Refinement in America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 264.

[15] Bushman, 268

[16] Merchants desired homes near the wharves and counting houses where they conducted business, but by 1800 these areas had become inundated by wage-earning craftspeople. With this population increase came escalating outbreaks of yellow fever and the working class impingement upon the refined lifestyle. As Blackmar surmised in her study of New York housing, "the geography of disease followed a geography of boarding and tenant houses." Elizabeth Blackmar, *Manhattan for Rent, 1785-1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 85.

[17] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 388.

[18] On the eve of the Revolution, a 1776 blaze consumed almost one-third of New York's homes. Eric Homberger, *The Historical Atlas of New York City* (New York: Henry Holt, 1994), 50. This was followed by major fires in 1778, 1796, 1804, "The Great Fire of 1811," 1821, 1828, 1833, and another Great Fire in 1835. Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., *The Encyclopedia of New York City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 410. These infernos were fought not only with water but also by tearing down nearby homes in hope of stymieing the fire's progress. Burrows and Wallace, 362. The Common Council also ordered the leveling of those dwellings deemed a danger to the welfare of the city. Burrows and Wallace, 363.

[19] Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1927), 394. Cited in Homberger, 74; and Still, 80.

[20] Hone, 394. Cited in Still, 80.

[21] Sarah Elliot Hunger of Charleston, living in New York, wrote home to her cousin Harriott Pickney Horry to explain why she could not predict when the furniture that a mutual friend had ordered would be ready. Hunger lamented, "Mr. Phyfe is so much the United States rage, that it is with difficulty now, that one can procure an audience even of a few moments." Sarah Elliot Hunger to Harriott Pickney Horry, October 21, 1815, Mrs. St. Julien Ravenel Family Papers, South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, SC. Cited in Maurie D. McInnis and Robert A. Leath, "Beautiful Specimens, Elegant Patterns: New York Furniture for the Charleston Market, 1810-1840," in *American Furniture* 1996 ed. Luke Beckerdite (Milwaukee: Chipstone Foundation, 1996), 147. Also cited in Michael K. Brown, "Duncan Phyfe," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Delaware, 1978), 68.

[22] Mandeville announced his move in the May 9, 1809 issue of the *New-York Evening Post*: "William Mandevill [sic], desirous to inform his friends and the public, that he has removed to no. 8 Courtland-street, where he offers for sale an assortment of fashionable cabinet work of superior quality." Cited in Waxman, 33. The cabinetmaker remained at that location at least through 1824. New York City Tax Assessments, 3rd Ward, 1824, Microfilm, Municipal Archives, New York, NY. Like Phyfe, Mandeville benefited from the patronage of the Bayard family and was a member of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen. Undated bill, Box 9, Bayard-Campbell-Pearsall Families Papers, 1659-1898, Humanities-MSS, Special Collections, Humanities and Social Sciences Branch, New York Public Library, New York, New York. Hereinafter MANY. I would like to thank Elizabeth Bidwell Bates for generously supplying this reference.

[23] Kenny et al., 34.

[24] For start on Broad Street, see New York City Tax Assessment, 1st Ward, 1815, MANY. For continuation on Broad Street through 1833, see broadside in Cooper, Catalogue # 168, Page 210-212.

[25] Egerton lived at 44 Oak (4th Ward) in 1814 and 1815, 15 Catherine (6th) in 1816, 12 Thames (5th) in 1817, 10 Beaver (1st) in 1818 and 1819, and 46 Beaver (1st) in 1820. See *Longworth's*.

[26] Guion's name arose for his contribution to the new home of Christ Church on Anthony Street. Guion lived at 550 Broadway (8th) in 1821, 15 Franklin (5th) in 1822, 14 Franklin (5th) in 1823, 34 Church (5th) in 1824, and 34 Walker (5th) in 1825. See *Longworth's*.

[27] Trollope, 309; and Still, 91-92.

[28] The success of Allison and Phyfe and the higher property values commanded in that district skew this sense of success driven solely by location.

[29] Wilentz, Table 4, Page 400.

[30] For a discussion of the methods used by Northern cabinetmakers to vend their products in southern markets, see Forsyth M. Alexander, "Cabinet Warehousing the Southern Atlantic Ports, 1783-1820," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, 15, no. 2 (November 1989): 1-43.

[31] Brown mentions Savannah, St. Croix, Philadelphia, and Charleston as documented destinations of Phyfe furniture. See Brown, 26-28 and notes on 64-69.

[32] *Sevannah Museum*, June 12, 1822. Cited in Brown, 28.

[33] Brown, 26. This argument has been refuted in more recent years by the work of Maurie McInnis and Robert Leath on the Charleston market of the early nineteenth century. They located a set of Phyfe's lyre back chairs that descended in the family of Arthur Middleton that represent "the very best of Phyfe's work." See McInnis and Leath, 148.

[34] McInnis and Leath, 154-157.

[35] Kenny et al., 133. On a recent trip to Cuba, Peter Kenny located Lannuier furniture, thereby substantiating the cabinetmaker's export practices. Kenny will be writing an article on his discoveries for a forthcoming volume of the Chipstone Foundation's *American Furniture*. For the Ravenel-Frost Family purchase, see McInnis and Leath, 149.

[36] John Hewitt fell victim to these issues. See Johnson, 190.

[37] For a discussion of the furnishings purchased for the Executive Mansion by early Presidents see Betty C. Monkman, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings & First Families* (Washington, DC: White House Historical Association, 2000).

[38] At the cost of just under $500,000, the neoclassical edifice reflected the mixed heritage of its designers: an ad hoc synthesis of French and English taste. Frances Bretter, "Lannuier's Clients in America: A Taste for French Style," in Kenny et al., 139.

[39] One of the Lannuier chairs is illustrated in Kenny et al., Plate 62, page 138.

[40] Bretter, Kenny et al., 140.

[41] Each chair frame cost the Council $14. Bretter, Kenny et al., 140-141. The upholstery is based on a painting of De Witt Clinton, c. 1816, who stands before the Mayor's chair that is covered in the manner described. See painting in Kenny et al., 141.

[42] Bretter chooses not to speculate on the source of the commission.

[43] Bretter, Kenny et al., 140.

[44] Known to have worked on Wall Street in the early 1810s, Christian had relocated from Philadelphia, where he served as foreman for the Society of Journeyman Cabinet Makers' wareroom.

[45] *Minutes of Common Council*, 1784-1831, Vol. VIII (New York: M. B. Brown, 1917), 84. A desk from this suite made for the mayor's office survives in City Hall and includes a paper label reading "Charles Christian, New York City 1814." See DAPC, Accession # 73.991.

[46] Mabel M. Swan, "Boston's Carvers and Joiners, Part II. Post-Revolutionary," *The Magazine Antiques* 53, no. 4 (April 1953): 281.

[47] William Voss Elder III and Lu Bartlett, *John Shaw: Cabinetmaker of Annapolis* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1983), 122-135.

[48] The House's insistence that the victor would be determined solely by the low bid sent to Washington is substantiated by this disregard for the reputation of both Lannuier and as well as the local craftsmen who in the past had supplied the Capitol and President's House. The author speculates that the $500 excess in Lannuier's bill would have been forgiven had Claxton and Clay been interested in anything but the bottom line. Additionally, though, there would have been a risk of public censure should Lannuier have won the contest. Although the French style was favored by many patrons nationwide, the government may also have been hesitant to contract with a Parisian artisan following the extensive criticism towards Monroe's purchase of French goods for the President's House. An artisan so clearly endeared to his ancestry would have signaled overtly partisan or anti-American sentiments thereby outweighing the widespread acclaim for his work.

[49] September 7, 1812, *Minutes of Common Council*, Vol. 7, 1812-1814, 248; and May 19, 1817, *Minutes of Common Council*, Vol. 9, 1817-1818.

[50] The opening of the Erie Canal ultimately proved a huge success for New York and all but assured the city's continued prominence in the American economy. The celebration was spread over two days in the summer of 1825 and incorporated speeches and a grand parade up Broadway to City Hall. Cabinetmakers, chairmakers, upholsterers, and carvers and gilders figured prominently in the pageantry and performed their craft on moving floats while carrying banners and products of their trade. Members of the Journeyman Chair Makers Society carried a "small rosewood chair, gilt and bronzed." See Colden, 228. Also see Cornelius, 25-28, for a secondary source summary of the events. Presumably, Constantine marched along with the dozens of brethren representing the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen. See Colden, 156.

[51] Cadwallader D. Colden, *Memoir Prepared at the Request of a Committee of the Common Council of the City of New York and Presented to the Mayor of the City, at the Celebration of the Completion of the New York Canals* (New York: Corporation of New York, 1825), 197, 320. The bottles had been procured by "Messr.s George Dummer & Co," who are not listed in Longworth's 1825 directory.

[52] Neither Cornelius nor McClelland nor Brown included an image of the bottle sleeves or a reference to their current whereabouts.

[53] See William L. Stone, *Narrative of the Festivities Observed in Honor of the Completion of the grand Eire Canal, Uniting the Waters of the Great Western Lakes with the Atlantic Ocean* (New York: The Corporation of New York, 1825), 230; and Colden, 196-97. Cited in Brown, page 70, note 1. Neither of these appear to reference Banks work the previous year. According to Cornelius: "The only recorded official notice of Phyfe's position as the leading cabinet-maker of his time is his employment in connection with the Erie Canal Celebration. In two commissions, he was called upon to undertake work which promised to be preserved among the memorials of that historic occasion. He made the handsome casket in which were contained the glass bottles, filled with water form Lake Erie, which were sent to Lafayette as a souvenir of this great event...For the same occasion he made the handsome little cases in which gold and silver medals, were struck in commemoration, were enclosed and sent to the distinguished invited guests of the city and to the President and living ex-Presidents of the United States." See Cornelius, 42

[54] McClelland, 206, plate 190. Although McClelland included a brief discussion of his contribution in *Duncan Phyfe and the English Regency*, she was unable to offer any information on the cost of this table to the Celebration Committee. Elizabeth Bidwell Bates, who is conducting extensive research on the career of John Banks, has not found any period documentation for the

presentation of a work table to Lafayette during his visit to the United States. It is not known where McClelland first learned this information, but the story is now considered to be spurious. The table is more likely a souvenir of his visit or simply a reference to a figure many Americans admired.

[55] McClelland refers to it as "strangely designed." McClelland, 206. Although the lyre support to the table top is similar to other examples from the period, its wide proportions and relationship to the exuberantly carved rear posts separate it from more traditional work tables.

[56] Economic and social histories of early nineteenth-century New York reference Phyfe almost without fail and without regard to their particular interest in the cabinetmaking industry. See Blackmar, 81-82; Wilentz, 36-37, 42, 74, 117, 127; Burrows and Wallace, 344; and Richard B. Stott, *Workers in the Metropolis: Class, Ethnicity, and Youth in Antebellum New York City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 55, 173.

[57] For a discussion of Phyfe's early career see Cornelius, 37-39; McClelland, 92-105, 114-116; and Brown, 2-4. Although Brown's paper provides accurate factual representation, the romantic story offered by McClelland is quite worth the read.

[58] This is illustrated both by Brown's assertion of the middling-quality of Phyfe's export wares but also the comments of Anthony Girard and the Deville and Rezeville Company of Guadeloupe. The merchant Girard wrote to Victor du Pont that Phyfe delayed the construction of a work table because he "wanted it to be made by one of his workmen who best understands this kind of work." This suggests that utilitarian craftsmen may have produced lower quality items. See Letter from Anthony Girard to Victor du Pont, November 12, 1812, MS W3-2790, Hagley Museum and Library, Greenville, Delaware. Cited in Brown, page 6 and note 13 on page 51. Consumers in Pointe à Pitre, Guadeloupe evidently preferred Phyfe's line of unornamented wares, for the mercantile company of Deville and Rezeville ordered twelve beds of his with "above all no inlay, they don't like it here." Letter from Deville and Rezeville to Victor du Pont de Nemours & Co., August 20, 1805, MS, W3-2594, Hagley Museum and Library, Greenville, DE. Cited in Brown, page 27 and note 68 on page 57.

[59] For Astor's purchase see McClelland, 253. For Bayard's purchase see Brown, 31, 34. For Bancker's purchase see Brown, 31 and 37.

[60] See Kenny et al., 36.

[61] Peter Kenny, Ulrich Leben, and Frances Bretter's eloquent and thorough treatment of the ébéniste's career details Lannuier's role in the trade. See Kenny et al., 30-147.

[62] Kenny et al., 3. Like Constantine, Lannuier did not follow his father into the cabinetmaking trade. The elder Lannuier worked as an innkeeper in Chantilly, France.

[63] Kenny et al., 38, 152. Lannuier's labels were mostly written in English and French, thereby stressing his heritage and implying his ability to produce fine furniture in the modern taste. Plate 67 on page 152 depicts Lannuier's No. 2 label that reads: "HONORÉ LANNUIER / *CABINET MAKER*, / (FROM PARIS) / Keeps his Ware-house and Manufactory / AND CABINET WARE OF THE / *NEWEST FASHION*, / AT NO. 60 BROAD- STREET." The label repeats this message in French below.

[64] Kenny et al., 47.

[65] Kenny et al., 49. The author lists four craftsmen who can be conclusively linked to Lannuier's shop: his cousin Jean-Charles Cochois, Francois Chailleau, Pierre-Aurore Frichot, and Jean Gruez. Gruez occupied the stand at 60 Broad Street following Lannuier's death in 1819.

[66] Kenny et al., 209. Reference to the export of Lannuier furniture to the south in the form of a pair of card tables sent to John Wickham of Richmond, Virginia for his elaborately designed neoclassical town house.

[67] New York City Tax Assessment, 3rd Ward, 1822, MANY.

[68] Hewitt recorded notes such as "Phyfe Collum 23 or 28 with leafe hand carv'd 2 7/8 wide...Launuas [Lannuier's] Collum 2 ft 6 to 3 ft wide" and referred to furniture as "French Sideboard like Phyfes." See John Hewitt Account Book, 1800-1803, 1810-1813, M 491, Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, Delaware (original in the collection of the New Jersey Historical Society), 20, 26. Hereinafter JHAB. Cited in Johnson, 196, 199; and Brown, 67.

[69] JHAB, 26. Cited in Johnson, 199.

[70] McClelland, 147. Johnson suggests that many of Hewitt's recordings could reference furniture in the Phyfe style, such as "1 Breakfast Table...to be carved on the legs and reeded." JHAB, 17. Cited in Johnson, 199.

[71] JHAB, 25. Hewitt specifies that the bookcase was to have "door No. 12 (extra charge)" in reference to the various patterns of mullions available in the New York Price Book.

[72] It is intriguing to note that this order was being sent to a Mr. King in Richmond, VA in 1812, three years earlier than the Wickham family ordered furniture from Lannuier. The possibility exists that Lannuier had sent furniture to Richmond prior to 1812, and, having seen the quality of these purchases, King wanted Hewitt to produce some of his furniture "Like L." Unfortunately, there are no extant secretaries with bookcases with a Lannuier label or attribution.

[73] Hewitt remained in steady contact with local sawmills and recorded extensive notations on the various cuts of wood he required. For instance, on November 29, 1811 Hewitt "Sent to Joseph Meeks Mill 17 logs Mahogany...to be saw'd." See JHAB, 29. The author is unsure if this is the same Meeks family that operated the famous New York cabinetmaking firm. On May 7, 1812 Hewitt records: "Sent to Mr. Deans at Springfield thirteen logs Mahogany to be saw'd." See JHAB, 31. The various cuts requested are: crotch, bed posts, veneers, plank, coffin, and cock beads.

[74] *Commercial Advertiser*, New York, March 17, 1813. Hewitt advertised "Mahogany for Sale...Boards, Plank, Joice and Vineers...well seasoned...for immediate use." Reference kindly supplied by Peter Kenny. Johnson also reports that, according to the 1826 directory, Hewitt also briefly operated a mahogany yard on Jay Street. See Johnson, 192.

[75] The Beekman suite was produced in two separate sets in 1818 and 1819. Each set consisted of a sofa and eight armchairs. Some of the suite is illustrated in Esther Singleton, *The Furniture of Our Forefathers* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1913), 282, 289-290. Both sofas and 14 of 16 chairs are currently owned by Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York, NY. Elizabeth Bidwell Bates is currently investigating Bank's career, and I am indebted to her for regular assistance in my research.

[76] A label affixed to a serving table owned by the Huguenot Historical Society also references his "Cabinet Warehouse." See file on John Banks, DAPC.

[77] Banks's last directory listing in for the year 1825-1826 when he was working out of a store at 51 Beekman Street (*Longworth's* 1825, 68).

[78] Margo C. Flannery, "Richard Allison and the New York City Federal Style," *The Magazine Antiques* 103: no. 5 (May 1973): 995-1001.

[79] Flannery, 995.

[80] William M. Hornor, Jr., "Three Generations of Cabinetmakers," *The Magazine Antiques*, 14, no. 5 (Nov. 1928): 417.

[81] Johnson, 200.

[82] His brother and father are perhaps best known for their elaborate neoclassical style sideboards. However, Abraham appears not to have provided similar services for Hewitt, as his account book credits Egerton mainly for inexpensive tables, bedsteads, and bookcases but only one sideboard. JHAB, 44-45. Although Egerton did not provided many expensive wares for Hewitt, he did make more money than Constantine, earning $405.58 ½ in just seven months.

[83] New York City Tax Assessments, 1st Ward, 1818, MANY.

[84] Meeting of February 5, 1823, Minutes of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, 1803-1831, General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen, New York, NY. Hereinafter Minutes of the GSMT. In 1825, Young worked at 69 Broad. See *Longworth's*, 1825, 470.

[85] By legislation passed by the state, the true value of real estate was to be determined in 1813 and then only altered "except where the value of any should be increased by the erection of Houses and other improvements." In 1816, however, the Common Council determined that this policy was unjust in New York where: "from our great public improvements and the natural growth of the City, property in some parts of the City not infrequently doubles in value in less than a year, and from the fluctuating course of business, in other parts, falls from its former estimated worth." Thus, they rejected the state law and required the value of city property to be adjusted each year. Discussed on March 10, 1816, *Minutes of Common Council*, Vol. 8, 1814-1817, 419.

[86] The provision for clothing and bedding appears on August 6, 1810, *Minutes of Common Council*, Vol. 6, 1820-1812, 306.

[87] Kenny et al., 238-239.

[88] McClelland, 132.

[89] See the inventory of Phyfe's estate in McClelland, 332-339.

[90] While Phyfe may not have been inclined to extravagance, his probate inventory belies a man who displayed the finer things including silver to complement the elegant furniture produced in his store. McClelland makes a special note of the two most valuable items in the inventory of his estate: a Garratt Eoff silver pitcher and a set of satin damask curtains for three windows that are both valued at $100. See McClelland, 131.

[91] Granted, until the New York tax rolls are digitized, scholars will have a difficult time creating a definitive image of the wealth of cabinetmakers. Determining just how much property a given individual owned throughout the city is a struggle. Without an exhausting survey of the incomplete and occasionally inaccurately recorded documents, scholars do not know whether a craftsman working in the 1st Ward had invested in property in the 7th and 10th Wards.

[92] New York City Tax Assessment, 3rd Ward, 1820, MANY.

[93] Wilentz, 401, Table 6.

[94] Wilentz, 400, Tables 2 and 3.

[95] Wilentz, 399, Table 1.

[96] Kenny et al., 98.

Part 1, Chapter 2

THOMAS CONSTANTINE: AN ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREER

"...I prided myself upon being able to say that no person who employed me was ever disappointed, for the work was always done at the time promised..."[1]
--Stephen Allen, sailmaker, 1767-1852

Against the backdrop of early nineteenth-century New York set forth in Chapter 1, Thomas Constantine became first an industrious and entrepreneurial cabinetmaker and then an equally active wood merchant. Although his furniture does not survive in great quantities, his name is affixed to some of the most culturally significant work of the period. Furthermore, the lumberyard he began in early nineteenth-century New York continues today, albeit in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. This distinction of commercial longevity cannot be offered to Phyfe, Allison, or any other of Constantine's contemporaries.

As the patriarch of this corporate dynasty, Thomas's upbringing and career path are especially noteworthy. Scholars are fortunate enough to have access to a substantial documentary and object-based record of his commercial concerns.[2] Furniture and primary sources detailing Constantine's career can be found in museums, historical societies, public record repositories, and private collections on the East Coast and in the Midwest. They testify to the far-reaching affect of this cabinetmaker turned lumber merchant.

Constantine's Early Life and Career

Born in 1793 in Derbyshire, England, Constantine was two years old when his family emigrated to New York. This was the same year that the French government, freshly deposed of Louis XVI, declared war on Great Britain and her allies. The United States quickly announced its intentions to remain at peace during the conflict. Jay's Treaty of 1794 offered an official act of neutrality that forbid the participation of American citizens in the war and the use of American territory to launch attacks. With this legislation solidifying the country's relationship with the warring parties, the United States offered immigrant artisans an appealing destination that could provide commercial possibilities. New York sailmaker Stephen Allen recalled how the "belligerent state of all Europe had called into action the whole commercial resources of our country, and every kind of business flourished."[3] While the Constantine family may have been contemplating their departure for some time, renewed hostilities between the British and French could have provided the impetus to leave England.

Thomas's father, John, was listed as a blacksmith in the New York directories from 1795 until 1799.[4] In order to have established himself as a master craftsman with his own business within two years of the family's arrival in the United States suggests that he left England with a sound financial base or that he had relatives in the city to provide assistance. While no tax records exist for these years, the elder Constantine seems to have been succeeded rapidly in his trade. His business was located in the heart of the city's established commercial

district at 10 New Street while he and his family resided at 3 New Street and then 1 Wall Street.

John Constantine's good fortune did not last long, however, and in 1798 he died a young man. The federal census of 1800, John's widow, Margaret, is recorded as living on Wall Street and supporting a household of five children, all below the age of 16.[5] Margaret Constantine and her family disappear from the New York directory after 1801. Three teenage daughters remain anonymous. Thomas reappears in the city directory in 1815.[6] His younger brother John plays a significant role in Constantine's career in the New York furniture trade, having operated an upholstery concern from 1818 until his death in 1845.

While many young men followed in their father's trade through an apprenticeship, Thomas was only seven when John passed away and chose not to enter the blacksmith business.[7] Constantine's whereabouts from 1801 to 1815 are partially resolved through the records of master cabinetmaker John Hewitt. On June 27, 1811, Hewitt placed an advertisement in the *Commercial Advertiser* notifying the public that, "an apprentice to the Cabinet Making business named Thomas Constantine aged about 20 years...good looking," had fled and was "suppose to have gone to Philadelphia."[8] While one hesitates to conclude too much from Hewitt's words, his "reward of 20 dollars" and provision that "all persons are forbidden harbouring [sic] or employing him," suggest either Constantine's significance as a worker or his culpability as a thief. The manner of this advertisement certainly differs from the two runaway notices posted by Phyfe, one for five dollars in 1809 and another for a mere six cents in 1811.[9]

At the time Thomas fled Hewitt's Water Street shop, he presumably had served five years of a typical apprenticeship, which, beginning with his fifteenth birthday, would have started in 1806 and concluded six years later in 1812.[10] Although we are not privy to the circumstances, Thomas ultimately returned to New York and completed his apprenticeship. He is listed as a journeyman in Hewitt's ledger beginning in February 1812 and remains in his employ until April 1814.[11]

The lengthy connection between Constantine and Hewitt is noteworthy. The older cabinetmaker appears to have influenced his younger counterpart's mercantile interests, for Constantine's entrepreneurial career parallels Hewitt's in many ways. Not having followed a father or older sibling into the trade, Thomas lacked the support network of training, tools, capital, and contacts provided for many sons upon entering a trade. To fill this void, he would have depended on the knowledge, experience, and finances he gained under Hewitt's tutelage. Constantine definitely learned the value of a managing a mahogany supply, developing a client base, and expanding his markets.

During the two years Constantine labored as a journeyman for his former master, his various projects and the sums he was paid for his work were dutifully recorded in Hewitt's account book. Despite the War of 1812 raging around them, business continued steadily for the cabinetmaker's firm, and Constantine certainly did not leave his position for military service. Hewitt's entries vary from fifty cents for "repairing Mahogany Chair" on March 11, 1812 to $86.30 for "making a open Sideboard with Pillors [sic]" on April 12, 1814.[12] Constantine filled a

number of expensive commissions during this period, suggesting that both Hewitt and his customers appreciated the quality of the journeyman's work. However, all cabinetmakers carried out the more mundane aspects of cabinetwork, and Thomas can be found fixing furniture, building a porch, and constructing coffins.[13]

The two forms repeated at length and to Constantine's profit, thus suggesting a specialty, are tables and sideboards.[14] Hewitt repeatedly credits Thomas's account for card, dining, breakfast, and side tables. For his tables, Constantine earned between $3.74 for "1 4 feet dining Table" on February 14, 1812 and $38.89 ½ for "2 pair Card Tables solid Tops," five days later.[15] Additionally, Constantine crafted a number of "French" sideboards, as well as one with an "Eliptic [sic] center & Card Draws" and another with "4 legs." In recognition of the skill and time required for these complex manufactures, he received a great deal for his sideboards. He took in, on average, $40.00 for each "French" version of the form.

In addition to stating the dollar value of Constantine's work, the account book indicates the variety of styles and ornamental devices he could fashion. In 1812 furniture fashions were transitioning from the Federal—or early classical period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century—to the Empire—or late classical era of 1810-1830. The former represented by the eliptical-front sideboard and the latter by those in the French style. In order to produce furniture in these veins, Constantine became proficient with inlay, veneer, reeding, fly rails, and pillar and claw supports.

Conspicuously absent from his work orders, especially in light of the public commissions he would later fill, is seating furniture. Constantine is credited for repairing a few chairs, but otherwise is only paid for two "Counting desk Stools" and one "Circular Easey [sic] Chair."[16] Hewitt mentions the sale of chairs throughout the account book and apparently relied on journeyman other than Constantine for them or sub-contracted these orders to independent craftsmen.[17]

On the surface, Hewitt's account book provides the opportunity to firmly establish a web of patronage. He frequently records the customer's name with his particular order. For approximately ten percent of the Constantine's entries, Hewitt notes the recipient of the furniture. For instance, Thomas produced a "coffin for Mr. Lacklam" and "2 Octagan [sic] Tables for Allen."[18] In most cases, these patron references are unfortunately vague and could not be matched to a specific individual in the New York City directories.[19] Occasionally, one can be fairly certain of the connection. For instance, the "1 Small Glass case for Mr. [Charles] Denston," references a merchant at 42 South Street, the "small Frame for Cap.n [Richard] Williams," a shipmaster on Mott Street, and "a job for Mr. [Peter] Hull," a carpenter at 61 Chapel Street."[20] It would have behooved Constantine to maintain these contacts once established as an independent artisan, especially if the customer recognized which employees in Hewitt's shop filled his order. However, the lack of information concerning Constantine's later patronage eliminates the possibility of making these connections.

Hewitt's ledger reflects a great deal about his labor practices, as well.[21] The cabinetmaker mentions approximately sixteen craftsmen in his account book, many of them journeymen in his shop, and some perhaps working independently as subcontractors. For instance, Abraham Egerton, who, while engaged in a partnership with David Loring in 1811, seems to have been working exclusively for Hewitt in 1813 and 1814. Indeed, Egerton's partnership dissolved just before he appears in the Hewitt account book.[22] The number of entries under "work done by Abraham Edgerton [sic]," would not have allowed him the opportunity to be producing or overseeing the production of furniture elsewhere.[23] Egerton also lived at Hewitt's store during the period in which he appears in the ledger and is charged $20 for rent.[24]

By tracing Hewitt's sixteen employees through the New York directories, one has the opportunity to compare the career paths of those intimately connected to Constantine. The professional trajectories of the other cabinetmakers hired by Hewitt are equally intriguing. Nathan Beers appears in the 1811 directory on Harman Street and the following year, as a cabinetmaker, on Mulberry.[25] Although he continues to appear in the profession through 1818, he was not listed in 1819 and is referred to as a carpenter at 130 Division Street in 1820. On a few occasions, Hewitt's employees appear in the directories on only one occasion or not at all; such is the case for Henry Wallis (Wallace), John Donneca (Donnegha), and William Cremment.[26]

Another Master of his Domain

With the prospect of a successful future ahead and his experience at Hewitt's shop in hand, Thomas Constantine opened his first store in 1815 at 60 Vesey Street. While this 3rd Ward neighborhood west of Broadway was not as established as the 1st Ward enclave occupied by cabinetmakers such as Lannuier and Meeks, Constantine did not choose an untapped market. He was surely lured by the commercial wealth seen along this section of Broadway. Chatham Row, City Hall, and the park attracted an affluent sector of New York society. With settlement continuously stretching northward, the 3rd Ward offered an appealing seat for an industrious artisan. Broadway's width provided "enhanced ventilation, light, and real estate values" to those who could afford fronting houses; for local craftsmen, the city's most prominent thoroughfare offered a "convenient location....[that] could absorb heavy traffic [and] provide ready access to downtown."[27]

Constantine acquired 60 Vesey between the fall of 1814 and the spring of 1815 from Alexander Slote, a carver, gilder, and grocer who had occupied the property for a number of years.[28] The source of the capital Constantine used to purchase the house and lot, which was valued at $2400 in the 1815 tax assessment, is uncertain. He certainly had not made that sum during his two years as a journeyman in Hewitt's store.[29] Whether his mother or other unidentified relatives contributed start-up funds is uncertain, but Constantine had quickly assembled the finances or obtained enough credit to cover the overhead of

materials required to purchase the land and open a cabinetmaking establishment. Regardless, at twenty-three years old, he was making a promising start.

Constantine understood the depth of the competition he faced and quickly entered the mahogany trade to diversify his income. The store became Thomas's first distribution point for the valuable imported wood that defined his later career. In the May 9, 1816 issue of the *Mercantile Advertiser*, Constantine announces the sale of "Veniers [sic], Boards, Plank and Joist of 300 logs Mahogany...a great proportion of crotches and motled [sic] wood, well worth the attention of cabinet makers, builders and all dealers in the articles."[30] This notice for the sale of mahogany appears over a year-and-a-half prior to his first advertisement of furniture and firmly establishes Constantine as a supplier for local craftsmen. Perhaps purchased at the wharf from a ship's captain or supercargo as a speculative investment, this amount of wood represented a prodigious outlay of funds for the young Constantine.[31] While the capital required for such ventures likely prevented him from entering into this market on a consistent basis, nevertheless, this decision indicates that his business was on the rise. Although this is his only newspaper advertisement offering wood, later directory listings for his lumber business allow one to conjecture that he continued to import and retail wood throughout his career.[32]

After less than two years on Vesey Street, Thomas placed his property for sale and relocated one block south on Fulton Street. In late June of 1816, Constantine advertises the house and lot in the *Mercantile Advertiser*:

> First Rate Stand for the [cabinetmaking] business, with a good Stock of every article in the line for sale, with an excellent work shop in the rear, to hold ten benches, and sufficient yard, the stock would be sold together or in part, as purchasers may choose.[33]

Without a description of his next location, one wonders if he was to moving to a more spacious or desirable accommodation. Constantine appears to have been making headway in the business as evidenced by the $300 increase in the assessed value of his personal estate between 1815 and 1816.[34] His new wife, Ann Eliza Hall of Providence, Rhode Island, could be found in residence with him by this time, as could his uncle, Charles Constantine, a copperplate printer.[35]

The facilities described in the advertisement appear well fitted for the time period and offer an enticing glimpse at the spatial organization of a cabinetmaking shop. While Constantine may not have employed enough journeymen and apprentices to fill ten benches at this time, the shop provided enough space for a steady output of furniture. As an illustration of the flexibility of early nineteenth-century shop space, however, Harmanus Tallman, a successful hatter, ultimately purchased the house and lot between 1816 and 1817.[36]

Beginning in 1817, and for the next seven years, Constantine operated out of 157 Fulton Street. Following the move, he begins to list his shop as T. Constantine & Co., Cabinetmakers, but there are no records to show that he had filed for an act of incorporation.[37] Only a few doors in from Broadway and situated directly across from St. Paul's, his new store probably provided a significant economic advantage. Constantine was situated at the intersection of two major commercial thoroughfares and in the proximity of a New York's

fashionable shopping district. Valued at $6000, the building on Fulton Street represented a steep increase in property value, too. This area of the city experienced an exponential rise in prominence in the fall of 1816, when the Common Council chose to combine three disjointed east-west streets—Partition, Fair, and Beekman Slip—into a broad cross-island avenue. This route was named in honor of the highly esteemed Robert Fulton who had died the previous year.[38] At the western end of Fulton Street sat the Fulton Street Market, a highly successful vendue for local butchers and grocers.[39] Located at the opposite end was the Brooklyn Ferry terminal where Fulton-designed steamboats plied the East River. Broadway bisected the route, and at their crossing stood City Hall Park, which was surrounded by elegant stores and hotels as "a very acceptable breathing spot in the midst of everlasting bustle."[40]

Although some contemporaries thought the park area had become "too common," this suggests the rapid pace of business being conducted there and the ready access to willing consumers.[41] Such a concentration of retail ventures created a positive financial energy for a number of Constantine's new Fulton Street neighbors. Together, they enjoyed the commercial opportunities available and prospered. William Ross, who maintained a lucrative coachmaking and hardware business just across Broadway from Constantine, owned five properties worth a total of $32, 800, including a home assessed at $12,000. His personal estate alone was thought to represent a $5000 investment. On Vesey Street just north of Fulton, L. Seaman & Co., auctioneers, kept three lots valued at $8500 and offered local manufactories an accessible vendue. Across Vesey, the

aforementioned hatter Harmanus Tallman retained his $9000 shop and yard. A veterinary surgeon, James Clements kept an office worth $3800 near Phyfe's store. Finally, as if there were not enough cabinetmakers in the area already, Robert Kelley, whose personal estate totaled $1000, owned a $7000 house and lot that sat between Constantine and Phyfe.[42]

Constantine's prosperity in this period is suggested by the purchase of a second property in the neighborhood. According to historian Elizabeth Blackmar, "for most members of the city's emergent bourgeois class, the ability and the need to pay a second rent for housing was part of the restructuring of both commercial and domestic relations with other New York households."[43] Thomas did not need to rent, though, and bought an additional house at 14 Dey Street to use as his home and likely as supplementary shop space.

The separation of work and house, of commercial and domestic duties, is often touted as the goal of all successful artisans of this period. By removing the first-floor shop implements of workbenches, tools, and materials to another structure, the family was no longer isolated to the upper levels of the house.[44] This would ideally permit a more gentile organization of parlor space on the ground floor. However, even with a separate home, Constantine had only removed himself to the southern side of the same block on which his Fulton Street store sat.[45] Thus, the distinction between commercial and residential space may have never been complete, as work and storage space became fashioned out of the lot at 14 Dey as necessary. Successful craftsmen like Phyfe and Allison

maintained homes in addition to their stores, albeit directly adjacent or across the street from their places of business.

The New York directory and tax assessments both indicate the residential function of this property. The value of Thomas's personal estate continued to climb, as well, and stood at $1000 in 1817, twice what it was the previous year.[46] It seems likely that the couple's first child, Thomas Whitfield Constantine, was born at this residence in 1818.

Between 1818 and 1819, Constantine sold his property at 14 Dey Street and began renting a house and lot at 538 Greenwich valued at $6000 from John Haggerty, a merchant living on Chamber Street.[47] The money he realized through this sale could have provided the necessary capital to fund the materials and labor that he required for the United States House of Representatives commission, which he received in the summer of 1818.

Thomas would continue to rent from various owners for the next twenty years, but this should not be viewed as a step down for the cabinetmaker and his family. Renting was a common outlet for New Yorkers of all socioeconomic levels during the early nineteenth century, and it provided a great deal of flexibility to relocate within the city as the character of neighborhoods evolved over time.[48] Furthermore, since Constantine continued to own the Fulton Street shop, he was not entirely removed from the landowning class. The location of the house at 538 Greenwich would have been considered a rural retreat in 1800 and remained mostly surrounded by open land owned by John Jacob Astor in 1820.[49]

Although directory listings suggest that this property was solely a home, Constantine and Co. advertisements belie the commercial activity that dominated the land. To supplement the shop space in what came to be the "warehouse" on Fulton Street, Constantine converted 538 Greenwich into a "manufactory."[50] Since his personal property was assessed at this address, the Constantine family would have been residing here, as well.[51] This distinction between warehouse and manufactory is first referenced in the August 18, 1820 issue of the *Mercantile Advertiser*. Here, Constantine announces that while business continues on Fulton Street, "their manufactory in Washington-st. near State Prison," was also selling furniture "where they will be happy to execute orders in their line on as reasonable terms as can be had in the city."[52]

Constantine appears to have owned or leased another manufacturing facility outside of New York, as well. In need of a "good Turner to turn Mahogany work," Thomas placed a want ad in the *Mercantile Advertiser* for May 5, 1821. He states that, "the Laythe [sic] goes by water," and is located, "within 20 miles of this city."[53] His ownership and operation of a water-powered lathe is an intriguing and previously unreferenced aspect of Constantine's cabinetmaking concern. A water-powered lathe served a noteworthy industrial purpose by ensuring continuous rotation at an increased speed while eliminating the manpower required of a wheel, treadle, or pole lathe.[54] As early as 1710, water-powered lathes were used in Europe on an industrial scale to turn iron parts for machinery, and they could facilitate heavier cuts, more complex turnings, and the rendering of more massive elements.[55] With this facility in hand, the

cabinetmaker could have supplied other New York craftsmen with a variety of turned parts.

Whether Constantine was exporting ready-made furniture to the South, the Caribbean, or South America on a speculative basis remains to be discovered. Certainly, an extensive precedent for such ventures exists and the size of Constantine's operation at this time would suggest the capacity to produce a surplus as venture cargo. With a large suburban manufactory and a separate milling and lathe operation outside of the city to complement his wareroom on Fulton Street he had the space, staff, and materials to gain a foothold in the export market.

To complement his commercial success, Constantine took care to establish his name in a civic sphere at an early date, as well. In 1814, Thomas received his first appointment as a fireman, following in the footsteps of his father, who was named to an engine company in 1796.[56] In this period, society considered firefighting an honorable public enterprise and suitable for up-and-coming master craftsmen and merchants.[57] When Duncan Phyfe was appointed to Company No. 16 in 1806, his fellow recruits included an auctioneer, two silversmiths, two grocers, a fellow cabinetmaker, and a merchant.[58] After 1816, firemen received an exemption from jury and militia duty in return for their service.[59] Thomas remained involved in various fire companies for the next thirteen years, but left at a time when the volunteer companies became populated by large bands of young laborers and "intensely macho" fraternal activities.[60]

Constantine's main contributions to the civic sector came as a member of the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen. Established in 1785, the institution held considerable political and economic power in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[61] The organization was charitable in nature and endeavored to raise money for the wives and children of deceased artisans. This may have appealed to Constantine, who lost his father at an early age and likely encountered financial hardship growing up. Additionally, the General Society organized an apprentice's library and offered educational opportunities. According to a discussion held at an 1824 meeting the subjects taught at the Mechanic's school were "reading writing arithmatic Grammar Geography History Astronomy with the use of the Globes & Onory Mensuration Guaging surveying and Book Repairing."[62]

Constantine received his nomination for membership in the General Society on February 7, 1821, as one of twenty-six total candidates and one of five in the cabinetmaking trade.[63] Typically, a personal or business contact within the group's brotherhood was required to join. William Mandeville, the former business partner of John Hewitt, recommended Constantine for admission, as did George Tucker, a Broad Street merchant.[64] He was admitted and initiated the following month.[65]

As cabinetmakers working in the 3rd Ward, Mandeville and Constantine would have maintained at least a passing contact with each other once the latter set up shop on Fulton Street. However, a commercial connection that could foreshadow Mandeville's sponsorship has not yet come to light.[66] Mandeville

held numerous offices within the General Society and served as Treasurer, President, and Vice President.[67] The Society located an equally active member in Constantine, who participated with the School Committee and held positions as an Inspector of Elections, Vice President, and President.[68] During his first ten years in the organization, Thomas only nominated five craftsmen for membership, including two who worked in furniture-related fields.[69]

Constantine's continued involvement in the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen as a cabinetmaker and then a mahogany merchant implies that throughout his career he retained the community status expected of members of this important professional organization. How Constantine benefited professionally from the associations gained through this membership is unclear, for he is not listed as contributing furnishings to the Society's facilities nor is it certain whether any of the brothers patronized his store.

Patronage and Diversification

The commissions Constantine is known to have filled suggest that he catered a certain portion of his business to an elite clientele. Though of a small value, Thomas closed sales on two separate occasions to the family of Robert Troup, the wealthy lawyer, merchant, land agent, and Revolutionary War veteran.[70] The first purchase is undated but references a screen bought from Constantine for $5.[71] Considering the rates quoted in the price books of this period, a $5 screen would represent a somewhat decorative item. The second

reference to Constantine in the Troup Family Papers is an unnamed charge of $13 in 1826, under the general heading of furniture.[72]

The third and most notable sale that can be linked to Constantine is a pair of classical pier tables, dating 1817 to 1820, that were sold to James De Wolf [DeWolf, de Wolfe] (1764-1837) of Bristol, RI.[73] **(Figure 3)** Although a bill of sale does not exist for these items, nineteenth-century photographs suggest that a labeled Constantine pier table in the collection of the Brooklyn Museum of Art was one of a pair originally purchased by De Wolf for The Mount, his Federal style mansion outside of Bristol.[74] Constantine may have been a distant relative of the wealthy Rhode Islander through marriage.[75]

The son of ship captain, De Wolf made his fortune at sea while still young. He continued to augment his vast mercantile holdings through his participation in privateering and the slave trade and served as an elected official in both the state and national congress. Prominent local architect Russell Warren provided the plans for the home, his first major commission, and oversaw its completion in 1808.[76]

James De Wolf's mercantile empire extended throughout the world and included a constant outpost in New York City. His son James De Wolf, Jr. served as his father's agent there and kept an office at 54 South and his home at 19 State.[77] It is likely that James, Sr. asked his son to purchase the pier tables, among other things, from New York craftsmen for shipment to The Mount. Such elaborate furnishings, complete with marble top and columns, brass fittings, and

gilt and *verde antique* carved feet, would have complimented the hand painted walls and elegant décor of his drawing rooms.

The Mount tragically burned in 1902, but the décor of this room is preserved in a series of late nineteenth-century images: three photos and a painting.[78] **(Figures 4-6)** Seen at opposite ends of this space, the pier tables are matched by a pair of Empire looking glasses and sit among a disparate group of Classical and Victorian furniture.[79]

Constantine produced elaborate pier tables such as those purchased by De Wolf exclusively with an elite patron in mind. The marble tops and columns, brass fittings, and elaborately figured veneers would have placed them out of the price range of most working class consumers, and their sophisticated appearance would have appealed to a more refined clientele.

Another Constantine product that would have appealed to an affluent clientele was the extension dining table. A large, two-part, drop leaf example in a private collection is of the type presently referred to as "Cumberland Action" and has the T. Constantine & Co. label affixed to an outer rail.[80] When upright, the broad leaves allow the table to reach a length upwards of ten feet. Not only would such an object provided comfortable seating for sixteen people, it would require a rather spacious room, as well. Although the plain claws and simply turned pillars represent uninspired styling, the long table cloths used in this period and the compact storage provided by the design reduce the necessity of elaborately conceived ornament. This was not even the largest table in the cabinetmaker's line, for Constantine references a grander, twenty-five person

table in an 1819 advertisement.[81] One can easily conjecture the sumptuous settings and refined meals that incorporated these forms.[82]

The vending of imported English piano fortés illustrates another nod toward the upwardly mobile customer. The decision to carry these expensive items implies the wealth of Constantine's clientele. They were brought in on commission to supplement the wares being produced in his Greenwich Street manufactory. Musical abilities, in general, were a domain of the rich and limited to those fortunate enough to have received the education and leisure time required of such a skill. Such levels of comfort are implied by the early nineteenth century interior images that include piano fortés.[83] John Hewitt had sold pianos from his Water Street store, and, even in 1801, these luxury items could fetch between $130 and $140. These prices exceed the cost of "two inlaid sash cornered sideboards" that Hewitt shipped to Savannah that year.[84]

Over two months in the fall of 1817, Thomas advertised the sale of London-made piano fortés in three separate New York papers. "Fine toned and well worth the attention of amateurs...with the extra additional keys," and "offered for sale at low prices, to close a consignment," the pianos came from the Clementi and Company factory.[85] Named for the famous performer and composer Muzio Clementi, "among the makers of instruments imported into [America], Clementi's appear to have been the favorite."[86] Even the famed early nineteenth-century New York piano manufacturer John Geib had a pair of Clementi pianos in his possession.[87]

Constantine's English imports stood in direct competition with other importers as well as an established domestic manufacturing sector for piano fortés. William Dubois operated a "Music Store" at 127 Broadway where he sold for "wholesale and retail, cheap for cash," "a handsome assortment of elegant and plain London made," instruments and a variety of sheet music.[88] His advertisement appeared in the same September 1, 1817 issue of the *New York Evening Post* as Constantine's first announcement. Duncan Phyfe offered pianos from W. Dettmer and Sons of London, metronomes, and sheet music that had been imported by New York merchant George Newberry.[89] Phyfe also sold "grand upright pianos" in 1817, as well, and placed an advertisement, a rarity in his career, for them in the *New-York Evening Post*, December 11, 1817.[90] Continental pedal harps, pianos, organs, horns, and lyres could be purchased at Vallotte and Lete's store at 135 William Street, they being "lately received from their manufactory in France."[91]

A Capable Partnership: John and Thomas Constantine

Constantine found himself at a great advantage with a brother in the upholstery business. The source of John's training is unknown, but there certainly was no shortage of New York craftsmen involved in this trade. By 1800, twenty-four upholsterers were listed in the New York directory.[92] Upholstered furniture required an intimate collaboration between the cabinetmaker creating the frame and his counterpart applying the textiles, and a brother in the business would have certainly facilitated such projects. For a brief period—1818 through 1820—John

is listed in the New York directories at Thomas's Fulton Street shop, suggesting that while operating independently they could offer consumers an effective consolidation of the furniture market through the premise of one-stop shopping.[93] The scope of their respective businesses likely forced the brothers to occupy separate facilities by 1820.

The success of their relationship is manifest in the rapid succession of the public commissions provided to Thomas Constantine. In 1818 and 1819, the cabinetmaker received contracts to furnish the chambers at the United States Capitol for the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively. He earned the House commission as the low bidder in a publicly advertised contest, but the Senate appears to have offered Constantine the contract for their cabinetwork solely upon their appraisal of Constantine's furniture for the House of Representatives. Since the two years of the brother's cohabitation coincides with the two years spent filling these congressional commissions, one must believe that John assisted his brother during this incredibly active time. Upwards of two hundred chairs needed to be upholstered over the rail with black haircloth and brass nails for the House. **(Figure 8)** The Senators' required an additional forty-eight chairs with seats and backs covered in red Morocco leather. **(Figure 9)** Furthermore, an upholsterer with established mercantile connections was essential for the extensive yardages of carpeting and damask requested to finish the floor and walls of the Senate chamber. John Constantine may have been sent to Washington to oversee the installation, as well, for his brother billed the Senate $180 for "Work at putting up ornamental work in Senate Chamber."[94]

An advertisement in the same November issue of the *New-York Daily Advertiser* that ran overwhelming accolades for the Constantine's House furniture reflects the immediate effect of the Senate's order on his company. In a desperate and unprecedented plea, Constantine notified his peers that, "About twenty Sofa Makers will find immediate work either in or out of the shop."[95] Since the Senate wanted their furniture in Washington before the inaugural session in the rebuilt Capitol, Constantine was forced to job out a great deal of the work to masters and journeymen in the area. These men would have likely supplied the frames for the seating furniture that would then be upholstered elsewhere. With Thomas overseeing the finished product, John was in an excellent position to monitor the covering of the mahogany frames as they were being rapidly produced. Without more extant furniture, one cannot say how detrimental this environment was on the consistency and quality of the commission as a whole. However, these conditions are reflected in the variation among the original forty-eight desks that Constantine provided and that remain in use on the Senate floor as well as the surviving chairs.[96]

Nevertheless, the specific request for "Sofa Makers" is rather unusual, and likely reflects a need to produce the Senator's upholstered seats and the handful of sofas mentioned in the contract. Considering that these artisans were solely providing the frames, one supposes that the number of associated upholsterers involved was equally large. These independent sofa makers may have also relied on their own upholsterers to carry out the work according to the specifications of John Constantine. While more frequently encountered in New York interiors than

just twenty years prior, sofas and settees were by no means common and remained the hallmark of a wealthy resident's parlor or drawing room.[97] The Constantine brothers may have been hard pressed to assemble twenty able hands for this project.

Soon after the Senate's order was completed, John moved on to a store at 218 Broadway. Following the commissions for the US Capitol, limited space and the commercial success of Thomas Constantine's business may have required that John seek his own quarters. In 1821, he moved back to Fulton Street but into his own building, number 162.[98] The author assumes that a strong artisanal tie continued to unite the brothers, and a commission for the North Carolina State House in 1823 proves their continued cooperation. The Constantine's attempted to provide the state government with a stylish interior much like that created for the United States Capitol. The contract combined an elaborate chair and canopy produced by Thomas with window treatments and draperies supplied by John. **(Figure 10)** To collectively fill a commission of this magnitude, the brothers could not have suffered a falling out of any note. Additionally, Thomas would have benefited from the association if one considers the quantity of stuffed and covered furniture and mattresses that are referenced in his advertisements.

For the Constantines, the federal government chose a fortuitous time to furnish the Capitol. High prices for American foodstuffs and natural resources during the 1810s led to speculative investments in land and easy credit from state and federal banks. However, in 1819, sensing the growing instability of its standing, the Bank of the United States began to call in loans and foreclosed on

mortgaged land.[99] Its directors collected state bank notes and then demanded cash from these smaller financial institutions. Many had retained too little to meet their outstanding debts and were forced to close their doors. A prolonged economic downturn resulted.

The Panic of 1819 affected all manufacturing sectors. During a six-year depression, the value of American finished goods and agricultural products steadily fell. The intertwined Atlantic world markets ensured that important economic factors were felt everywhere. Craftsmen relied as much on available credit as farmers for the importation of wood and hardware. With middle-class consumers and commodities merchants reeling from the downfall, artisans were hindered both in collecting payments and encouraging the sale of new furniture. In late summer of 1819, Lannuier advertised that, in addition to poor health, "he finds himself under the necessity of declining business altogether," and was selling his "entire STOCK OF CABINET FURNITURE."[100]

This downturn could not have occurred at a more opportune time for Constantine. Over the course of 1819, Thomas likely produced more furniture than any other cabinetmaker in New York and sent crate after crate of it down to Washington, DC. He did not receive any advances from the federal government on his work, however, thus placing him in grave jeopardy of financial failure. The 1818 sale of his home on Dey Street may have kept him afloat over the next year. Otherwise, the government contracts would have required him to obtain materials and supplies with his own funds or on local credit. In order to fill the

Senate's order, Thomas purchased, out-of-pocket, accessories such as carpets, stoves, lamps, and drapery from merchants and artisans throughout the city.

One might question Constantine's business acumen for agreeing to such an arrangement, but the promise of an $21,000 paycheck and the privilege of furnishing the United States' most important public building must have been powerfully persuasive. Between October and December of 1819, the House of Representatives paid the cabinetmaker over $7300. From the Senate, Constantine received an installment of $12,000 before the end of the year. He waited until 1823 for and additional $1250 and ultimately filed a petition for the payment of an outstanding balance of $1500.[101] During the depression years that followed the Panic of 1819, this gross income of $20,000 surely diluted the impact of the Panic on Constantine's financial standing.

Investing Wisely: Constantine Looks to New Products

Profits in hand, in the 1820s Constantine began to add new types of household goods to his cabinetmaking line. By purchasing licensing rights to recently patented furniture and venturing into spring seating and mass produced domestic wares, he appears to have been enticing new patrons into his Fulton Street store and developing new markets. These maneuvers were speculative investments for Constantine and a means by which he hoped to build on the financial success gained from the Capitol commissions.

The American public encountered a growing trend of patent furniture production in the early nineteenth century. While the endless list of

improvements to utilitarian household goods might appear excessive, these manufactures do not necessarily connote gimmickery or an inventor's struggle to make ends meet. Rather, they were craftsmen's conscientious attempts to supply the market with wares that their competition could not, thereby attracting new patrons. Among the many forms "improved" during this period by innovative designs, tables, bedsteads, and seating furniture were the most common. Inventors who brought a desirable new conception to the market could then sell the right to manufacture their product elsewhere. Constantine purchased such authorization on two separate occasions: once for the privilege of making patent bedsteads and a second time for the production rights of new spring seat furniture.

On January 15, 1822, Constantine first announced that he had obtained local rights to produce "Powles' Patent Bedstead," and that his competition, "should not infringe on the patent."[102] The main criticism of bedsteads in the period was two-fold: the accumulation of insects and debris within the frame and the difficulty of assembling the bed. Evidently, the Powles' Patent Bedstead solved both of these shortcomings, and could "be set up in one minute and taken down in the same space of time, without the use of tools, and does not contain any harbor for bugs or dirt."[103] Although curious consumers were "invited to judge for themselves," Constantine promised that, "a further description is unnecessary, as the improvement must stand on its own merits." The cabinetmaker advertised their sale again in the spring of 1824, and had upwards of 100 for sale when he closed the warehouse on Fulton Street later that year.[104] These quantities suggests that they either they met with excited approval or were never considered a

worthwhile investment. With a water-powered lathe to turn bedposts and parts in an cost-effective manner, Constantine's company was ideally suited for this business.

Since the United States Patent Office burned in 1836, the exact nature of Powles's invention cannot be ascertained.[105] However, other merchants and artisans followed Constantine's lead, and by 1823 the Baltimore firm of Hiss and Austen had also purchased the rights for Powles's patent. They advertised in the *Baltimore American* on June 3, 1823 that the beds "can with care be put up in *one minute* and taken down in *less time*."[106] This suggests that Powles may have forgone the right to make the bedsteads in his local market.

Constantine's entrepreneurial instincts were similarly piqued by the introduction of new spring seat technology. Although more commonly associated with later nineteenth-century furniture, chairs and sofas with spring seats were introduced in specialized furniture of the eighteenth century.[107] This option offered an alternative to seats and cushions stuffed with hair, grass, or cotton, though one that was not altogether reliable or more comfortable. Only after 1820 did the technology evolve to allow for a spring seat that was both durable and restful.

Constantine's advertisements mention spring seats on two separate occasions. Through a lengthy disclosure in the *Mercantile Advertiser* on October 2, 1822, he informed the public that:

> The subscribers obtained permission...to make [Elastic Spring Sofas] in the city...and offer them for sale at the Ware Room No. 157 Fulton...these are not the...spring seat sofas made some time

> since in Europe...but...an improvement in the mode of making and applying the spring seats, by which the elasticity is never lost. Springs put to old sofas, carriage seats, &c.[108]

Having purchased local rights to Powles's bedstead less than a year earlier, Constantine obtained a similar arrangement with the unnamed inventor of this upholstery technique. In May 1823, Constantine auctioned off "16 spring seat sofas, 14 d[itt]o stuffed with hair" along with a wide variety of cabinet wares.[109]

The 1822 advertisement addresses the two major shortcomings of spring seat furniture: materials and application. One problem surrounding the use of drawn iron springs was that they "did not always return to their original shape after compression," thereby leaving a "lopsided and lumpy" seat.[110] The second problem resulted from the failure to secure the springs in a manner that would provide comfort and support for the sitter. Originally, the upholsterer stapled the springs to a solid wooden board but did not secure the tops of the springs in an even plane. Thus, these seats lacked both a resilient foundation and an even seating surface.[111] The patent advertised by Constantine may have solved both of these issues with steel springs and a more refined webbing technique.

The production of spring seats suggests a continued arrangement between Thomas and John. In order to offer spring seat furniture of the quantity mentioned in Constantine's ads, the elder Constantine brother must have retained upholsterers at his manufactory or subcontracted this responsibility to a reliable local craftsman such as John, who was conveniently located five doors down Fulton Street. Only an upholsterer intimately familiar with the technique could successfully produce this innovative line of household goods.

While other New York cabinetmakers and upholsters might have provided a similar service, no other contemporary references have been documented. However, spring seat sofas and chairs would appear in other American cities within the next decade. In the 1835 probate inventory of Philadelphia upholsterer John Hancock the appraisers listed a three different lots of "English Wire Springs," six "Stone Iron Wire," two "Blocks for Making Springs," and just one spring mattress.[112] The auctioneers George and Horatio Dawes took out an 1828 advertisement in the *Baltimore American* to announce the sale of patent sprung furniture imported from Boston.[113] By 1831, Baltimore upholsterer Joseph Crook offered "Spring Seat sofas [and] Patent Spring Seat Rocking Chairs."[114] Not until 1844 did New York cabinetmaker Alexander Roux touted his "Cabinet furniture, hair & spring mattresses, &c."[115]

Over the course of his career, Constantine appears to be an active participant in what is referred to as the market revolution.[116] The massive mobilization of his shop for the United States Capitol commissions, the ownership of a separate wareroom and manufactory, the use of a water-powered lathe, and the large-scale production of patent furniture, are all signs that he was able to move steadily away from the role of the craftsman to the more gentile position of merchant and manager.

This transition from the shop bench to the office desk is considered a mark of financial success in a market that, "fostered individualism and competitive pursuit of wealth by open-ended production of commodity values that could be accumulated as money."[117] As such, Constantine served as the quintessential

urban manufacturer who subdivided tasks among a wage-earning labor pool at a supervised workshop.[118] He would become only more closely intertwined to this market exchange after leaving the cabinetmaking trade in 1825.

Reading Constantine's Business through Newspaper Advertisements

As one can see, this commercial instinct defines a great deal of his professional outlook and career decisions. In addition to references to Constantine's pianos and patents, the organization and financial circumstances of Thomas Constantine and Company can be traced through advertisements and the firm's system of labeling. Constantine invested a significant amount of resources in attracting new customers through both avenues of self-promotion.

In his ads, Constantine eschewed the pleasantries found in many advertisements of the day. In much the same way as the simple paper labels he applied to his furniture, Thomas never chose in his newspaper ads to "have the honor to inform the merchants, and the public in general," or promise "to give general satisfaction to all who may please to favor him with their confidence."[119] Despite his public commissions in the South and the sale of his furniture outside of New York, Constantine did not solicit, "orders from any part of the continent," and nor did he feel compelled to announce that commissions would be "executed with neatness and dispatch."[120] Even with the ruinous wear and tear wrought on furniture destined for a different market, he failed to "warrant" his shop work as "of the best workmanship and seasoned materials," too.[121] Such apparent laissez-faire disregard for the promotional mottos of the day may indicate a solid

commercial footing and a steady patronage that did not require such selling points.

Nevertheless, Constantine advertised more frequently than most New York cabinetmakers, and his methods in this regard were not typical of craftsmen in the early nineteenth century. He did not advertise exclusively in one or two particular newspapers. Over eight years, Constantine's seventeen notices appeared in eight different publications, including: the *Commercial Advertiser*, *Mercantile Advertiser*, *The New-York Evening Post*, *New-York Gazette & General Advertiser*, *The New-York Columbian*, *New-York Daily Advertiser*, *The National Advocate for the Country*, and *The New-York American*. On only two occasions did he attempt to increase his publicity by placing an ad in multiple papers. In 1817, he purchased space in both the *Evening Post* and the *Gazette & General Advertiser* to inform the public that a London-made piano forté could be seen at his store.[122] Then, in 1823, to announce the closure of the Fulton Street warehouse and sale of all in stock items, Constantine advertised in the *Evening Post*, *Daily Advertiser*, and *New-York American*.[123]

Another surprising aspect of Constantine's promotional pattern is the absence of references to his public commissions. In addition to the enviable sums of money brought in from these sales, one might expect a craftsman to take extensive pride in the honor of furnishing grand government buildings. The presence of Constantine's label and engraved castors on the Congressional furniture proves that he was aware of the marketing value inherent in these commissions. However, in his published advertisements, he never mentions a

word about these prestigious projects. While other New Yorkers read about the reception of the House furniture in the *Daily Advertiser*, a regular reminder of his notoriety might have encouraged additional business. This failure appears especially remarkable in comparison to Cornelius Tooker, who supplemented the furnishings Thomas and John Constantine supplied for the North Carolina State House. Tooker realized the advantage of this opportunity for self-promotion, and, in an 1824 advertisement, he proudly announced his plan to organize himself as a "Cabinet Maker and Upholsterer," near Capitol Square, "Having contracted to furnish the Capitol of North Carolina."[124]

Only subscribers of the *Mercantile Advertiser* and the *New-York Daily Advertiser* would have been familiar with Constantine's accomplishments in Washington, DC. On May 15, 1818, the former advertised the proposal submitted by Thomas Claxton, Keeper of the Door of the House of Representatives, stipulating the scope of the congressional commission and soliciting bids from interested cabinetmakers. The request appeared concurrently in newspapers in Washington, DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston, arguably the five major centers of furniture production in this period. In its June 23, 1818 issue, the *Mercantile Advertiser* listed those craftsmen that had submitted proposals and notified the public that Constantine, the low bidder, earned the contract. The notice showed that he had beat out four New York cabinetmaking shops: Lannuier, Alexander Haywood, William Mandeville, and Aston & Hyslop.[125]

The *New-York Daily Advertiser*'s readers learned of the great esteem held for Constantine's work in the November 2, 1819 issue. The notice, entitled "Furniture of the Capitol," had been passed on from the *Washington Gazette*, and read:

> We understand from a gentleman who has seen it, that the Furniture of the Chamber of the House of Representatives has arrived and will very soon be arranged in the Hall. We are told it was executed by Mr. Constantine of New York by contract, and is said to be equal to anything of the kind for strength, solidity and excellence of workmanship, manufactured in the United States. Specimens of this furniture, which have been exhibited, have, we learn, received the approbation of all who have seen it, and particularly that of the best judges of Cabinet work.[126]

While it is unknown whether the fashionable sectors of New York society placed much confidence in the estimations of Washingtonians, one would suspect that Constantine could only have benefited from such a stirring accolade.

Although Constantine may not have gained additional business by advertising his success with prominent public commissions, he apparently capitalized on the experience by retailing seating furniture in New York that was designed after his work for the US Capitol and Christ Church. An armchair in the collection of the Winterthur Museum with Constantine's marked castors was originally thought to have been from the suite constructed for Senate in 1819, but it is now thought to represent a later adaptation of the Thomas Hope drawing used for this contract. **(Figure 11)** Two additional armchairs in private collections, one attributed and one labeled, borrow from the same design source as the seats sent to the House of Representatives in 1819. **(Figures 12-13)** A fourth example of this type of adaptation is a low-back armchair in another private collection that

appears to be modeled after the pair of wing-carved seats provided for Christ Church in 1823-1825. **(Figure 14-15)** While Constantine may not have publicly marketed these forms as being in the style of his civic commissions, he could have done so with individual clients, and their existence indicates a conscientious attempt to keep them in his repertoire.

For the entirety of Constantine's cabinetmaking career, advertisements are also an important indicator of his financial standing and the breadth of his cabinetmaking line. Two auctions held at his wareroom on Fulton Street offer compelling illustrations of the household goods available at his shop. Both list in detail the range of forms he could offer clients. A sale in late July 1819 by Franklin & Minturn, featured a "peremptory sale of valuable cabinet furniture, by order of the person for whom they were made, he being obliged to leave the country."[127] The order consisted of:

> 2 very elegant wardrobes, with looking glass fronts, one sideboards, with marble columns and marble fronts, 2 very elegant Grecian sofas, 12 mahogany chairs, to match, 1 pair elegant rose wood pier tables, with marble tops, 4 foot benches, to match, 1 sett extension dining tables, for 25 persons, 2 very elegant dressing tables, with looking glasses, 2 very handsome 4 post mahogany bedsteads, 1 elegant lady's work table, 1 pembroke table.

This is an important document of Constantine's ability to furnish an entire house with fashionable household goods. Because this auction was held at Constantine's store, one can presume that the furniture listed was new and that the reneging customer had yet to take possession of the wares. Furthermore, since the cabinetmaker does not appear to have operated a commission-based warehouse—

outside of the aforementioned piano fortés—it is conjectured that Constantine's employees produced most if not all of the objects referenced here.[128]

From this notice, one knows that Constantine and Co. could outfit parlors, bedrooms, and dining rooms, with chic en suite furnishings that included such desirable materials as mahogany, rosewood, and marble. This list is quite similar to another Franklin and Minturn auction that was held in 1821 to sell the remaining stock of deceased cabinetmaker Honoré Lannuier. The venue included a "fashionable assortment of the best made mahogany furniture, consisting of bed-steads, side-boards, dining, card, pier, breakfast, and tea tables, sofas, bureaus, chairs, ladies dressing and work tables."[129]

In the advertisement for a second auction at Constantine's wareroom, the company's manufacturing capabilities and it's pursuit of the ready-made furniture market are highlighted.[130] At the sale, an interested consumer would have encountered:

> 16 spring seat Sofas, 14 do stuffed with hair, 13 doz. Mahogany Chairs, 12 Wardrobes, 9 Sideboards, about 100 Patent Joint Bedsteads, with or without the best of curled hair Matrasses [sic], together with a variety of articles in the line.

The sheer volume of these objects is astounding, and all are listed as on site at 157 Fulton Street. Although the patent bedsteads may have been stored disassembled, thirty sofas, 156 chairs and assorted case furniture and mattresses would occupy an expansive space! Further emphasizing the breadth of his selection, the firm refers to its ability to "make furniture from the plainest articles in use to the most fashionable kind." Recognizing the low prices that typified furniture auctions,

Constantine closed the advertisement by informing families of the "opportunity, such as seldom occurs, to supply themselves."

With these forms in mind, one can attempt to re-establish the quantity and skill level of the employees retained by the company and the organization of its manufactory. A variety of specialized craftsmen must have been under Constantine's employ. The retention of a turner at the mill outside of the city implies that some of his laborers concentrated on a particular task. Since Constantine most likely did not possess the training or proclivity for chair production, one can assume that he retained journeyman who did. Specialized workers would have been required for the carving, gilding, and *verde antique* treatments found on his furniture, as well. **(Figure 16)** These services could have been subcontracted to independent artisans that retained their own shops or carried out on site. Alexander Slote, the carver and grocer from whom Constantine purchased the house and lot at 60 Vesey Street, was such an individual and would have taken in jobs from nearby cabinetmakers or might have moved from manufactory to manufactory. By synthesizing the work of his labor force at the manufactory and the water-powered lathe with the responsibilities he had outsourced to other local artisans, Constantine was serving more as an entrepreneurial mechanic than as a typical craftsman.[131]

Printed Labels and Marked Castors: Constantine Identifies his Wares

Decorative arts historians are fortunate in the quantity of labeled Constantine furniture that survives in public and private collections. The labels

affixed to Constantine's furniture are indicative of his market-oriented outlook. He used two different labeling devices during his career. First and foremost are his simple engraved plate-printed paper labels that carry a rather unpretentious message.[132] **(Figure 17)** As previously mentioned, Constantine, unlike some of his contemporaries, did not include marketing-oriented text on his labels. This label can be found on a variety of extant Constantine furniture, including the Brooklyn Museum of Art's pier table, the privately owned "Cumberland Action" dining table, and a chair from the 1819 House of Representative's commission in the Smithsonian's collection.[133] Constantine probably ordered these labels just after his move from Vesey Street to Fulton in 1817.[134]

The second type of mark found on Constantine furniture is the one seen on the rear castors of two armchairs from the United States Senate, the Winterthur Museum's armchair and the Christ Church chairs in the Warner Collection of Tuscaloosa, AL. Constantine is the only American cabinetmaker known to have placed his name on castors. Although two other cases of marked castors have been brought to light, on both occasions the lettering serves as a maker's stamp that identifies the brass founder rather than as a label to indicate the cabinetmaker.[135]

Two different sets of castors are found on these chairs. The front pair is inscribed "Birmingham Patent," and the rear "T. Constantine N. York." **(Figures 18-19)** During this period dozens of patents were issued in England for improvements to the design of castors, but this particular style has not yet been linked to a particular craftsman.[136] Thomas conceivably applied similar castors to

all forty-eight chairs his shop sent to Washington. It is reasonable to suspect that the Speaker's chair for the North Carolina State House originally had brass castors to complement the extensive brass ornament that decorated the seat and crest rails and the scrolled arms.

While found occasionally on British furniture of the period, castors marked with a cabinetmaker's name are an intriguing anomaly in the Constantine story. Where paper labels suffer from fragility and are generally placed on an interior framing member or other unseen place, these castors are a conscientious and obvious display of long-term marketing and pride. Furthermore, the personalized rear castors were produced specifically for a chair leg of a particular rake. Constantine could have purchased the castors and then conformed his leg to their shape. Otherwise, he would have commissioned the hardware to the unique design and dimensions of the legs.[137] The lettering appears to be formed through the casting process rather than engraved, and he likely patronized a local brass founder to obtain them. Although one could have sent a detailed drawing abroad to have them fashioned, the brief six-week period in which he had to finish the Senate chairs would not allow the necessary time for this request. Of Constantine's surviving work, these chairs are the first to include the marked castors.

While the majority of the brass hardware found on American furniture likely originated in the major metalwork centers of Europe, such as Birmingham, England and Paris, France, American foundries and artisans were able to

supplement imported goods with domestic manufacture.[138] On December 7, 1819, Jonathan Fay offered:

> for sale at reduced prices, at his Manufactory, 159 Cherry-st. and at his ware room, No. 23 Nassau-st. one door east of Maiden Lane, New-York, a variety of superior manufactured Grates, Fenders, Brass Andirons, Tongs & Shovels, Brass Candlesticks, Copper Bolts, Nails, and a variety of articles in the Brass and Hardware line. All castings made to order.[139]

Evidently, cabinetmakers could obtain high quality hardware and ornaments manufactured by local sources such as Fay's establishment. With imported examples or European designs in hand, they may have been able to approximate the brass wares shipped from abroad.

Among scholars, the prevailing opinion considering labeling links paper markers with furniture sold extralocally. Brown ultimately concluded that Phyfe's reputation served as the tacit label for goods sold in New York and that, "the furniture that Phyfe prepared for export was probably the principal, if not only, instance in which he labeled his furniture."[140] Within the craftsman's hometown, Brown presumes that a label was not necessary as customers were familiar with Phyfe's work.[141] Accordingly, Constantine's paper labels appear mostly on furniture produced for export. Although the dining table and lolling chair are without provenance, one might argue that they were not constructed for the New York market. While Brown believes that Phyfe "probably intended to use his label as an advertisement on pieces of noncommissioned furniture intended for export," Constantine included his label on the commissioned furniture he produced, as well. To encourage further patronage and to ensure that

his work would be remembered despite congressional turnover Thomas affixed his paper label or incised brass castors to each piece sent to Washington.[142]

Constantine Leaves the Trade as Business Declines

Despite Constantine's attempts to draw in new customers through his line of patent furniture, advertisements, and labels, his company struggled against the forces of heady competition, insufficient patronage, and rising operating costs. Intimations of a financially troubled Thomas Constantine appear in a notice that ran in a fall 1822 issue of the *New-York Evening Post*. It stated: "THOMAS CONSTANTINE & CO. Cabinet makers, have closed their Ware-house in Fulton street for the present. It is continued at the munufactory [sic] No. 538 Greenwich street, where their business will go on as usual."[143] This announcement was repeated in a May 1823 sale under the heading "VALUABLE FURNITURE."[144] In the advertisement Constantine announces his plan to continue furniture production at their manufactory and to auction off the stock at hand.

The financial burden of maintaining two New York properties was too much for the cabinetmaker to support. By operating just one facility, the company intended to "reduce their expenses so as to be able in future to dispose of their furniture of the best quality." They would be able to offer their wares "at such rates that it will be in the interest of those wishing to purchase at the lowest manufacturing prices to give them a call." While not exclusively the result of the national financial crisis, the continuing economic struggles caused by the Panic of 1819 and the rising costs associated with their Fulton Street location likely

resulted in Constantine's removal to 538 Greenwich Street and, ultimately, his decision to leave the cabinetmaking trade.

For the 1823 auction, Constantine had packed his wareroom with ready-made furniture including sofas, bedstead, chairs, wardrobes, and sideboards. As with the patent bedsteads, such an extensive amount of overstock could imply that he was locating buyers regularly and needed a constant selection on hand. On the contrary, the mechanic may have been pressed to turn over slow moving inventory by offering slightly out-of-date stock at the reduced prices found at auction sales. Most likely, he had overestimated the demand for his furniture and suffered for his optimism. Auctions such as these were fairly common during the period and are thought to "underscore the risks associated with running a furniture manufactory and wareroom and illustrate the problems associated with balancing inventories and fluctuating demand."[145]

The decision to auction off the contents of his wareroom in 1823 did not necessarily spell ultimate doom for Constantine's cabinetmaking business. While he would not recoup the total retail value of these items at this type of vendue, Constantine could hope to at least cover his expenses. Despite the announcement of the company's removal to the Greenwich street manufactory, he continued to operate and advertise the warehouse on Fulton Street. An upswing in sales must have kept him in business by City Hall for the next few years. A notice on April 20, 1824 in the *Mercantile Advertiser* alerts the public that the aforementioned Powles' Patent Bedsteads "are ready for inspection at the ware-house, No. 157 Fulton street, and at the manufactory, No. 538 Greenwich st." These beds could

have consisted mainly of parts turned rapidly and inexpensively outside of the city at Constantine's water-powered lathe. Perhaps these announcements simply illustrate Thomas's last desperate attempts to encourage his cabinetmaking business.

Such methods appear to have worked, and Constantine presumably remained a craftsman of some note. Between 1823 and 1825, he was awarded contracts to provide a ceremonial chair and canopy for the North Carolina State House and to altar furniture for New York City's Christ Church. **(Figure 14)** However, while these two commissions are significant, Constantine earned no more than $750 for them. Fortunately, they are well documented by extant records and artifacts and will be discussed at greater length in Chapters 2 and 3 of Part 2.

As had been proclaimed in his advertisements of 1822 and 1823, Constantine eventually closed the doors of his Fulton Street wareroom and retreated north to his manufactory on Greenwich Street. The previously referenced April 20, 1824 advertisement for Powles's patent bedsteads implies that the Fulton Street wareroom remained open at least through the traditional May 1 moving day of that year. Thomas Constantine and Co. is listed at 538 Greenwich and a mahogany yard at 126 Liberty Street in the 1824 New York directory.[146] Since the Greenwich Street property is no longer recorded as a separate home address, as it had been in previous directories, Constantine's residence and primary work areas were apparently now one and the same. The directory continued to list the company as furniture related in 1825, but no

advertisements from the June 1824 to June 1826 period exist to substantiate how long this arrangement continued.[147]

These years were a period of great transition for Constantine, his business, and his family. The 1825 city directory lists the company as operating a mahogany yard at the corner of Pearl and Cross Streets in the 6th Ward along with the manufactory on Greenwich.[148] The following year's edition includes only the lumber yard, however. Constantine had severed ties with the cabinetmaking trade seemingly because he saw a more appealing opportunity in investing wholeheartedly in wood sales and the potentially large profits such a venture could bring. Constantine's decision to leave the cabinetmaking trade in pursuit of the timber industry is foreshadowed by his early participation in the business, the ownership of a water-powered mill since at least 1821, and of a lumberyard beginning in 1824. Following from his time at Hewitt's, Constantine came to see the importance and potential of mahogany as a commodity. Hewitt's account book contains numerous references to mills in New Jersey where he was sending mahogany logs to be processed into veneers and planks.[149]

A New Beginning in an Established Business

In many ways, this decision paints Constantine as a sound businessman. By leaving the cabinetmaking trade, he limited his financial investment to a single, manageable and desirable commodity, eliminated the necessity of retaining costly, often unreliable labor, and avoided the direct impact of fickle sales and the responsibility of providing a sophisticated finished product. Despite

the prestige that accompanied them, small and sporadic contracts with governments and local churches could not sustain a business. The successful furniture makers referenced in Chapter 1 survived by steady patronage and the adroit management of costs. By 1826, Constantine believed this could be more successfully accomplished with cabinet grade hard wood than home furnishings.[150]

Beginning around 1816, when he first advertised the sale of mahogany, Constantine seems to have gotten into the continued business of providing his fellow artisans with lumber. In the aforementioned Shaw's *United States Directory for the Use of Travellers and Merchants* of 1822, Thomas Constantine & Co. are listed as "Cabinet Makers and Mahogany Dealers."[151]

Although few documents survive to contextualize this aspect of Constantine's career, advertisements published by his competition reflect on the common modes of business. By selling excess materials to local artisans, cabinetmakers could also diversify and augment their income. Since the cost of labor was largely fixed through the New York journeymen cabinetmaker's price guides of 1802, 1810, and 1817, one way masters could increase profits was by decreasing the value of their overhead. Lannuier had sold wood at his business premises, advertising in 1806 that he had obtained "some beautiful Caraccas Wood."[152]

New York newspapers periodically ran tables stipulating the going rate for the various commodities arriving at the wharves along both sides of the city. These charts allowed merchants and consumers to gauge the market value of

everything from molasses to wheat to cotton. The May 2, 1823 issue of the *New-York American, For the Country* includes a representative example of this practice under the title "Wholesale Prices at New York."[153] Here one could find the going rate for bay and St. Domingo mahogany planks; bay, Campeachy, and St. Domingo logwood; and oak, northeastern red pine, yellow pine, and Albany pine boards. Although one cannot prove how closely lumber merchants adhered to these prices, cabinetmakers were obliged to keep an eye on the fluctuating market.

Artisans obtained their wood through a variety of avenues, including wholesale, retail, and at auctions. Merchants such as Divie, Bethune & Co. imported wood on a speculative basis to fill cargo space on brigs traveling north from Central America and the Caribbean. They would then advertise a lumber sale upon the boats arrival, such as in their April 1806 notice of "NICAURAGUA WOOD—20 tons large, 18 1-2 do. Small...will be landed this day at Crane Wharf from the brig Farmer, from St. Thomas."[154] Companies such as J.G. Collins & Son dispersed of their wood via auction. In 1826, the *Farmer* also brought them a load of "317 [mahogany] logs of a quality superior to any ever imported from Cuba, equal to St. Domingo," to "be sold at auction," at the pier where the ship had docked.[155]

Lumberyards that struggled to move their stock could hold on-site auctions, just as cabinetmakers occasionally did. An unnamed company announced "LUMBER AT AUCTION" on April 19, 1826, in the hope of unloading "Albany Boards, Planks, Beams and Scantling; also, Eastern Boards, Beams, Planks and Scantling. Said Lumber is well seasoned and in fine order."[156]

Such a sale would have been of interest to carpenters for building materials and cabinetmakers seeking to purchase secondary woods.

A trained eye was required to select mahogany logs that could be rendered into elaborately figured boards and veneers. Cabinetmakers sought straight grained mahogany, as well, for the greater ease by which it could be turned and carved and its resistance to shrinkage or warping as a tabletop or as leaves.[157] An artisan would have been able to quickly discern the varying appearance and quality of mahogany logs with the types of cuts required for his shop work in mind. In this regard, cabinetmakers and wood merchants served "as tastemakers in establishing an appreciation for this most characteristic feature of New York classical furniture."[158]

Merchants regularly brought in a diverse cargo of woods and craft-oriented supplies. In addition to Nicaraguan mahogany, J. Balestier & Co. of 81 Pine Street kept at their store 80 [tons] large & solid Lignumvitae, 1 jar Balsam Tolec, 4 bales Ipecacuhana, 4 cases Gum Venzoin, 10 tones Brazalletto Wood," and "6 [barrels] Crude Antimony."[159] These stuffs could be processed for medicines, shipwrighting, carpentry, ornamental painting, and metalwork.

Civil court records from the late 1820s and 1830s reveal the variety of tradesmen and professionals Constantine associated with while a lumber merchant and the presence of a heretofore undiscovered business partner. In every suit filed by Constantine between 1827 and 1837, Thomas Whitfield, listed in New York directories of the time as a stage director, appears as co-plaintiff. In a business that revolved around the transportation of goods and materials across broad

distances, a partner involved in the shipping business makes perfect sense. According to the terminology of nineteenth-century civil law, the two gentlemen "were co-partners together and joint dealers in trade," and operated "under the co-partnership name, style, and firm of Thomas Constantine & Co."[160] Clearly, their relationship extends further back than 1827, for Whitfield is the namesake of the oldest Constantine son, Thomas Whitfield Constantine, who was born in 1818.[161]

Whitfield and Constantine had to file lawsuits against their business associates quite frequently to obtain old debts. The defendants include a broad range of tradesmen including merchants, cabinetmakers, upholsterers, chairmakers, ship carvers, lumber merchants, carpenters, milliners, joiners, and founders. Some of these netted the firm small amounts of money, such as $102.44 recovered from upholsterer Henry Bogart.[162] Occasionally, though, these sums were quite large, including $1462.56 from Watson Dunham.[163] Unfortunately, the court never recorded the exact nature of the moneys due, and included the generic statement that the defendant was indebted for "divers goods, wares, and merchandises provided by the said plaintiffs before that time [and] sold and delivered to said defendant."[164]

Peter Morris, James Cummings, and Paul Sabbaton, joint owners of a foundry at Rivington and Cannon Streets proved to be Constantine and Co.'s most frequent nemesis, as evidence by a dozen law suits filed in the Common Pleas, Chancery, and State Supreme Courts between 1834 and 1837.[165] Whitfield and Constantine ultimately received thousands of dollars in damages over the course

of the four years.[166] One might presume that they had been shipping hardwoods to fuel the foundry fires but had been unable to collect the negligent debts.

Due to the lack of documentation, it is difficult to gauge Constantine & Co.'s financial standing during the years it operated a lumber business. Constantine's directory listing refers to a mahogany yard on Pearl Street as early as 1826, but the tax assessments show that he did not assume ownership of the land until 1830.[167] He evidently rented and then purchased the lot from the estate of the late George January, a brewer. In 1831, the land was assessed at $8000.[168] During the late 1820s, his family was renting a home valued at $8000 on Cross Street near the lumber yard and had a modest personal estate of only $500.[169] Constantine's prospects seem to have improved in the early 1830s as his land and household belongings double in value by 1836.[170] The city directory does not list the location of the family's home in 1837 or 1838, but the absence of an assessment of personal property on the tax rolls indicate that they were not living at the mahogany yard on Pearl Street.[171]

The lack of advertisements in New York newspapers after 1825 suggests a secure and steady customer base that Constantine satisfied with quality wood on demand. In addition to a retail lumberyard, Constantine could have owned and operated processing facilities in New York or New Jersey. In 1838, the year of Constantine's last city directory listing, his twenty-year-old son Thomas Whitfield Constantine appears with him at the mahogany yard on Pearl Street, and the following year in "Sing Sing."[172] Located thirty miles up the Hudson River from New York, Westchester County was an ideal location for a milling facility or

second lumberyard especially with the heavy traffic on the Hudson relating to the Erie Canal.

Westchester court records reveal that Constantine purchased leasing rights to a sawmill at Philipsburg Manor in 1836. This property had been seized by the government from the estate of Loyalist Frederick Philipse following the American Revolution and was parceled off by the Commission of Forfeiture in 1785. Lemuel Wells, a New York merchant, purchased the 320 acres of that contained the Manor house and outbuildings in 1813, and began to rent out the use of the sawmill referenced in a map of the Wells Estate.[173] **(Figure 20)** In addition to this facility, the property contained mills for grinding grain and plaster and for fulling, as well.[174]

Constantine was the sixth leasee of the mill under Wells, and the legal documents describing the property detail the operations of "those two Mahogony [sic] Saw Mills situate on the Saw Mill River in the Town of Yonkers." Constantine gave $1500 to purchase the lease rights and an annual rent of $600.[175] For this money, the lumber merchant obtained the use of one acre of land and the "circular and crank saws as they stand each vertical saw gate having one saw and each circular saw, one set of plates together with all the apparatus and machinery of every description belonging to the said mills."[176] Located on the Sawmill River, the machinery was "to be used for sawing Mahogany (or any description of Veneers)."[177]

With the introduction of European circular and belt saws in the 1810s, wood could be processed into boards and joists more quickly and transported

more efficiently. Circular saws were used regularly after 1830 and manufactured in the United States, as well.[178] The popular Grecian Plain, or Pillar and Scroll, style of the 1830s incorporated an extensive amount of mahogany veneer, thereby ensuring that this would have been a profitable enterprise.

Since its close proximity to the Hudson River made this mill especially desirable, access to wharves and shipping was an important aspect of this lease. Wells granted his tenants "the privilege of loading and unloading any articles on the wharf or landing...at Philipsburg on the North River free of expense, provided he or they do not in any ways lumber up or infringe on the cartway leading to and from said wharf."[179] The mill and the machinery it contained were to be insured by Wells at $4000, and the leasees were forbidden from establishing a powder or cotton mill or "other business or manufacturing," that would "enhance the rate of insurance," or be "a nuisance in any way to the neighborhood."[180]

Constantine retained the lease on this property for only seven months and then sold his rights to James Chesterman, a New York City merchant.[181] He did realize a $500 profit from this transaction but does not explain the brevity of his stay in the indenture. William Norman, from whom Constantine had acquired use of the mill, was embroiled in legal battles with Wells at this point, on the grounds that Wells had violated the covenants of his lease.[182] Perhaps Norman's attempts to secure damages from the landlord caused Constantine's interest in the mill to wane. Thomas Whitfield Constantine's listing at Sing Sing in 1839 does suggest, though, that the family invested in another mill in the area, albeit without filing an indenture with the county clerk.

The Family Business Spreads to the Midwest

During the 1840s, the location and exact scope of the company is difficult to determine. The absence of New York directory listings for Constantine and his son following 1839 suggests that they operated exclusively from of a lumberyard located outside of the city. The references to the ownership of business interests in Westchester County reinforce this suggestion. After 1839, the only family members listed before Thomas Constantine's reappearance in 1844 are the "Misses Constantine," Johanna and Sarah, who operated a boarding house at 10 Broadway. At this time, Constantine's four other sons—Robert, John, Levi, and Andrew—were under the age of twenty. None of them appear in the city directory until the 1850s.

The whereabouts of the Constantine family during this period can be traced through land records in southwestern Michigan that place them there by the early 1840s. In the US Census of 1840, the only Thomas Constantine listed in the United States appears in Bertrand Township, Berrien County, Michigan. The head of the household is recorded as a male between the age of 50 and 60 and living with a young man in his late teens. Thomas had apparently relocated, at least temporarily to Michigan with one of his sons, probably John or Levi.

Thomas's presence in Berrien County is further substantiated by a deed recorded for Bertrand Township on June 3, 1840, in which Austin Stocking of that town sold Constantine a parcel of land for the price of $500.[183] Since the lot

was located in a town, albeit a rural one, Constantine's new property probably would have been for a home or store rather than acreage for lumbering.

In the deed, Thomas is listed as being "of Yonkers in the County of West-Chester, State of New York," close to present-day Tarrytown and the site of Philipsburg Manor saw mill that Constantine owned in 1836. Constantine also appears to have been acting as an agent for other New York firms. He gained power of attorney by Philip S. Crocker of New York "to take possession of a certain mill and premises at Niles, Michigan owned by me, and occupied by Robert B. Attenbury," and to handle "any legal or other proceedings therefore."[184] Philip Crocker was likely associated with one of the New York families of that name listed as merchants and importers.[185]

The settlement and prosperity that resulted from the construction of the Erie Canal foreshadowed this movement to the Midwest. As the formerly wooded regions of the eastern states gave way to more extensive settlements, the ever-increasing demand for building timber and cabinet woods encouraged lumber merchants to push farther west. By shipping resources across the Great Lakes to the western termination of the canal, eastern importers could have ready access to Michigan lumber. A historian of American manufacturing found that, "improved mills and diversified demands invited attention to the hardwood resources of the Central and Western states," and, consequently, "local oak, walnut, chestnut, ash and hickory were utilized in large quantities by manufacturers of furniture, vehicles, farm implements, and machinery."[186] The revival style furniture of the mid-nineteenth century generally incorporated many

of these species. The same circular saws that could be found at the mills near Philipsburgh Manor would have also allowed the more efficient shipment of wood back east.

Furthermore, just as the Panic of 1819 affected the financial standing of Constantine and Co., cabinetmakers, the Panic of 1837 likewise presumably impacted the status of Constantine and Co., wood merchants. This turmoil may have required the family to move outside the city and certainly encouraged their forays out west. Between 1835 and 1837, land speculation had again returned to an unsettling prominence as speculators snatched up 40 million acres in the west. Canal and railroad builders plowed through with great abandon. Credit was quickly extended without regard for the collapse that had occurred less than twenty years earlier. When Andrew Jackson issued his "Specie Circular" in 1836, requiring that debts from the purchase of public land be paid in hard currency, banks began to fail by the dozen. Southern planters and northern merchants and manufacturers suffered alongside the banks and speculators, as the country sunk into another prolonged depression. This may have caused the family to move out of New York and encouraged wider forays into the Midwest.

A Return to New York and the End of an Era

According to histories the family, the company remained highly successful throughout this period. Their mahogany was used "for the finest furniture then being made," including "Duncan Phyfe and his New York contemporaries," as well as "other cabinetmakers and builders who looked to New York for their

supplies of imported lumber."[187] Unfortunately, without more records to document the purchase of wood from the their mahogany yard, such claims are impossible to substantiate. However, the close connection of the Constantine Family to the wood trade that persists to this day testifies to the continued strength of their business throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The extent of Constantine's role in the family business between 1840 and his death in 1849 is unknown. Other than a court case in 1843, he only appears in the public record in the directories of 1844 through 1849. Constantine is then listed as an "inspector," on Trinity Place, Water Street, and then Tompkins Street.[188] The Constantine family has maintained the belief that he had been selected as "an official inspector for the United States Government," to evaluate "the shiploads of mahogany logs which arrived in the Port of New York from Africa and Honduras."[189] A government appointment would have certainly helped Constantine maintain his solvency, especially during the lean years when mahogany sales decreased.

No federal, state, or city records have been located to substantiate the claim that Thomas "measured and inspected" imported woods or that his "official stamp of approval and certification marked much of the mahogany" used in the New York cabinetmaking industry.[190] However, a letter written by Constantine to Messrs. Aymar & Co., commodities merchants and mahogany dealers at 34 South Street, substantiates the claim.[191] Here Constantine references his appointment as an inspector by law and the "ill grounded complaints of Shippers of Mahogany," against the inspectors of New York for their stringent assessments of wood

brought into the city.[192] Since "Purchasers of Mahogany resort to this city for supplies from all parts of the United States and Canada," Constantine told the Aymars that "New-York inspection should be uniform and well-known."[193] Considering that this letter is printed in the form of a circular, he appears to have followed through on this desire.

Almost exactly four years after his brother John passed away, Thomas Constantine died of a "short and severe illness" on October 20, 1849 at the age of fifty-eight.[194] Since he had published the letter on the inspection of mahogany only months prior, one can imagine that he had remained an active presence in the family business until the last. Friends and family were invited to 58 Broadway for the funeral, where Constantine had been living with his daughters, the proprietors of a boarding house. Implying the Constantines' strong connections to relatives outside of New York, his obituary ran in the *Providence Daily Journal*.[195]

NOTES TO PART 1, CHAPTER 2

[1] Stephen Allen, "The Memoirs of Stephen Allen," typescript, NHYS, 49. Cited in Paul A. Gilje and Howard B. Rock, eds., *Keepers of the Revolution: New Yorkers at Work in the Early Republic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 126.

[2] A broad and complimentary collection of artifacts and records is essential to developing an enlightening material culture study. Both bodies offer evidence their counterpart cannot, and both are essential to a holistic study. Ideally, one would hope to include a selection of objects that stands as tall as the documentary record, but the difficulty in connecting a craftsman with his unsigned work often places this goal out of reach. In the case of Thomas Constantine, I have been able identify a large amount of his public commissions solely because of the historical importance that elevated these artifacts to reliquary status at an early date. However, I can only conclusively identify four objects that represent his ten years of private work and can loosely attribute another two. This requires me to lean heavily on the documentary record and extrapolate from it a greater understanding of Constantine's career.

[3] Gilje and Rock, 127.

[4] William Duncan, *New-York Directory & Register for the Year 1795* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1795); David Longworth, *Longworth's American Almanac, New-York Register and City Directory* (New York: T. & J. Swords, 1799). New York Public Library, Humanities and Social Sciences Branch, New York, NY. Family histories insist that John Constantine was a cabinetmaker and that his son was "baptized in sawdust." Albert Constantine & Son, "175th Anniversary of The House of Constantine," (unpublished manuscript, Bronx, NY, 1987), author's collection.

[5] U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1800. Two adults, one male and one female, in the 26-45 year-old bracket are listed at the Constantine residence. The male is possibly a Charles Constantine, perhaps John's brother, who is listed in later directories as a copperplate printer.

[6] *Longworth's* 1801, 144.

[7] This is contrary to the Constantine family's belief in a "baptism in shavings and sawdust." Albert Constantine & Son, "Thomas Constantine (1791-1849)" (unpublished manuscript, Bronx, NY, n.d.), author's collection. Over the past fifty years, Constantine and Company has issued a series of corporate histories that include biographical information on Thomas Constantine and his descendants. Over the course of my research, I have discovered that some of the information shared in these documents is, in fact, unsubstantiated. I will note when my research has produced alternative information but must confess that for data such as the family origins in Derbyshire, I have been unable to support or refute the company's claims.

[8] *Commercial Advertiser*, June 27, 1811. Quoted in Waxman, 213.

[9] Brown, 4-5.

[10] Montgomery states the typical apprenticeship lasted seven years. See Charles Montgomery, *American Furniture of the Federal Period* (Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 2001), 11. Montgomery does mention that Quimby found apprenticeships were decreasing in length in late colonial Philadelphia. Of the five cabinetmaking apprenticeships listed in Kenneth Scott's "Nineteenth Century Apprenticeship Registers, New York City," *The New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* 115:1 (January 1984), 1-12, two began in the fifteenth year, two in the sixteenth year, and one in the thirteenth year. Given the financial burden placed on his mother by John Constantine's untimely death, the author expects that Thomas could have been let out for odd jobs as a means of supplementing the family's income or may have begun his apprenticeship at an earlier date. Nonetheless, with only one year remaining before his separation from Hewitt at age twenty-one, Thomas would have honed his cabinetmaking skills and been working alongside the journeymen under his master's employ. While not necessarily the cause of his departure, this contradiction in responsibility and compensation was likely a bitter pill to swallow.

[11] John Hewitt Account Book, M. 491, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE. Hereinafter referred to as JHAB. Original held at the New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, NJ. Gregory Oliveri has questioned Johnson's granting of authorship to Hewitt. The manuscript was originally labeled as an unidentified "Carpenter's Record Book." He cites the contrasting handwriting styles and spelling idiosyncrasies that appear within the book as indicative of a number of different hands and may not all represent work from the same shop. See Oliveri, Gregory, "Prospectus for the Study of the John Hewitt Business Papers" (Unpublished term paper, University of Delaware, 1998), Col. 354, Joseph Downs Collection, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

[12] JHAB, 48 and 50. Pagination refers to actual number of pages remaining in account book and not to an internal numbering system.

[13] See Appendix A.

[14] These two forms may have been a specialty of Hewitt's shop in general, for in 1813 he advertised, "John Hewitt / Cabinetmaker /.... / Where may be had on liberal terms, Sideboards, Secretary Bureaus, Tables, Portable Desks, and every other articles in his line, at the shortest notice." See Simeon de Witt, *The Elements of Perspective* (Albany, NY: H.C. Southwick, 1813), no number. Cited in Johnson, 194.

[15] JHAB, 50.

[16] JHAB, 48 and 51.

[17] For a list of the types of chairs sold by Hewitt, see Johnson, 195-196.

[18] JHAB, 50 and 51.

[19] The poor spelling displayed by Hewitt exacerbated these difficulties, for certain names do not appear in the directory because they were likely entered phonetically by the shop owner.

[20] JHAB, 50 and 51.

[21] Johnson, 199-201. Although Johnson claims that "two-thirds of these men were full-fledged cabinetmakers, who were apparently doing piecework in their own shops," she relies solely on independent directory listings to make the distinction between journeyman and master. Johnson fails to recognize the extensive fluidity of the cabinetmaking trade that allowed artisans to move between positions as independent craftsmen and hired laborers and, also, the notion that journeyman could be listed in the directory at an address other than their master's without necessarily operating their own shop. While still a journeyman with Hewitt, Constantine maintained an independent address. He receives his first appointment to the fire department in the spring of 1814, while still under the mechanic's employ, and the Minutes of Common Council refers to him as "Cabinetmaker, 239 Pearl Street," only a few blocks from his employer's Water Street store.

[22] Kenny, Peter, "From New Bedford to New York to Rio and Back: The Life and Times of Elisha Blossom, Jr., Artisan of the New Republic," in *American Furniture* 2003, ed. Luke Beckerdite (Milwaukee, WI: Chipstone Foundation, 2003), 243.

[23] JHAB, 44-45. Egerton earned over $400 in under seven months and generally completed ten projects each month, suggesting a full workload. Contrary to Johnson's belief, Hewitt's indication that an apprentice was assisting Egerton does not necessarily require that apprentice to have been working directly for Egerton for he was just a journeyman. Hewitt was likely the boy's master.

[24] JHAB, 45.

[25] Johnson, 200, n. 2.

[26] Johnson, 200, n. 5, 8, and 13.

[27] Blackmar, 81.

[28] Slote is found at the address at least as early as 1812, when his occupation is listed as a carver. While no occupation is mentioned in 1813, by the following year his is referred to as a carver and grocer. After selling the property to Constantine, Slote moves to Arundel near Hester in the 10th Ward and continues as a carver.

[29] New York City Tax Assessment, 3rd Ward 1815, MANY. This is the same value that was assessed to Alexander Slote the previous year. According to the account book, Thomas appears to have earned approximately $1100 over that period. By late April 1813, Constantine had earned $564.37. A year later, he had gained an additional $518.30. See Hewitt, 48, 50, 51, and 59.

[30] *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York, May 9, 1816. Referenced in the Berry Tracy file on New York Craftsmen in the Department of American Decorative Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY. I have been unable to locate an extant copy of this issue. According to the New York directories the house was renumbered as 62 Vesey in 1816.

[31] The other possibility would be that Constantine was selling the mahogany on behalf of a ship's captain or supercargo as a consignment. If this was the scenario, then Constantine would not have needed capital of his own.

[32] Bayard Still, *Mirror for Gotham: New York as Seen by Contemporaries from Dutch Days to the Present* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), 72. These opportunities for investment were difficult to ignore, and entrepreneurial Americans found themselves in an ideal position for mercantile advance. British visitor John Lambert envied, "the advantage of procuring mahogany and other wood much cheaper than," in Europe. Cabinetmakers engaging in the venture cargo trade furthered the distribution of imported lumber. In addition to allowing

a new means of income, the export market also provided the opportunity to purchase supplies abroad at wholesale prices. Rather than paying retail back home, a cabinetmaker could order his agent to spend whatever money came in from furniture sales on lumber or other materials that could be used in his shop or sold to his competitors for a profit. For example, a common participant in venture cargo sales, Elijah Sanderson of Salem, MA, hoped to vend the furniture "to the best advantage" and use the proceeds to procure "Ceeder & Mahogany or such other goods as you may find best to answer this market & the most for our interest." Mabel Munson Swan, *Samuel McIntire, Carver and The Sandersons, Early Salem Cabinet Makers* (Salem, MA: The Essex Institute, 1934), 6. I would like to thank Wendy Cooper for pointing out this reference.

[33] *Mercantile Advertiser*, June 15, 1816. This reference was kindly supplied by Peter Kenny.

[34] New York City Tax Assessment, 3rd Ward, 1815 and 1816, MANY. Constantine's personal estate is worth $200 in 1815 and jumps to $500 in 1816.

[35] The presence of Charles Constantine is established in the Minutes of Common Council. The Albert Constantine and Co. histories suggest that Thomas and Ann were married in 1815 or 1816. Although her Rhode Island origin is confirmed in the New York City census of 1855 (NYPL), no other information has come to light concerning how they met or when specifically they were married. It seems plausible that if Constantine fled northward instead of toward Philadelphia, as suggested by Hewitt in his advertisement, he could have ventured to Providence. His later patronage from the De Wolf family suggests commercial ties to the state, and when Constantine passes away in 1849, his obituary is published in the *Providence Daily Journal*. Ann's family could have been the source of the capital the cabinetmaker displays early in his career. In her research on Rhode Island needle work, Betty Ring discusses a Hall Family of Providence. The needlework of two daughters of Levi Hall (c.1744-1789) and Sally Hunt (c.1752-1816) are illustrated, Anna "Nancy" (1772-1864) and Abija Hall (c. 1771-1811). See *Let Virtue Be a Guide to Thee: Needlework in the Education of Rhode Island Women, 1730-1830* (Providence, RI: Rhode Island Historical Society, 1983), 126 and 138. Many of Thomas Constanine's children were named after relatives and friends, including his sons John, Thomas Whitfield, and Levi H. Constantine. Furthermore, surviving correspondence between John and Andrew Jackson Constantine mentions Rhode Island relatives named Nancy and Anna. See Andrew J. Constantine to John Constantine, May 23, 1854, Robert Delafield Papers, N-YHS. The possibility exists that this branch of the Hall family was related to Constantine's wife. In a letter from Mary A. H. of Providence to John Constantine, Mary refers to the Stone and Holden families of Providence as well as their mutual relatives Marianna, Annie, Margaret, Bridget, and Sarah. See Mary A. H. to John Constantine, July 2, 1855, Robert Delafield Papers, N-YHS.

[36] New York City Tax Assessment, 3rd Ward, 1817, MANY.

[37] The company is not listed in Aaron Clark, *List of All Incorporations in the State of New-York* (Albany: J. Buel, 1819), Microfiche S269.5, no. 48896, Morris Library, University of DE, Newark, DE.

[38] *Minutes of Common Council*, 1784-1831, Volume VIII, 630.

[39] Howard B. Rock, *Artisans of the New Republic: Tradesmen of New York City in the Age of Jefferson* (New York: New York University Press, 1979), 228.

[40] William Chambers, *Things as They Are in America* (London: W. and R. Chambers, 1857). Cited in Still, 146.

[41] Blackmar, 305.

[42] New York City Tax Assessment, 1st, 2nd and 3rd Wards, 1817, MANY.

[43] Blackmar, 82.

[44] Burrows and Wallace, 388.

[45] Depending on how the yard space was divided in this block, Thomas could have accessed the backyard of his home via the rear of the store on Fulton Street. Later street maps suggest that 14 Dey and 157 Fulton shared a mutual rear property line.

[46] New York City Tax Assessment, 3rd Ward, 1817, MANY.

[47] *Longworth's* 1819; and New York City Tax Assessment, 3rd Ward, 1819, MANY. Between 1823 and 1831, Haggerty worked at 167 Pearl Street, *Longworth's*, 1823 and 1831.

[48] Blackmar, 78-79.

[49] Burrows and Wallace, 388-9. Although situated on an established grid of streets by this period, Greenwich remained a country retreat until summer outbreaks of yellow fever drove city dwellers out to Greenwich in retreat from the heavily populated confines of the urban areas. The authors comment that, "the opening of Newgate Prison in 1797 and repeated infusions of fever refugees had transformed the rural hamlet into a booming village in need of their services." Astor's ownership of the property is seen in Tax Assessments for 1818 and 1819, MANY

[50] *The New-York Evening Post*, September 7, 1822.

[51] New York City Tax Assessments, 8th Ward, 1821, MANY.

[52] *Mercantile Advertiser*, August 22, 1820, 4. I believe that Washington Street reference is simply a misnomer and does not refer to a property separate from 538 Greenwich Street. This is the only Washington Street reference that I found.

[53] *Mercantile Advertiser*, May 5, 1821. The advertisement is addressed "TO WOOD TURNERS," and interested parties are asked to inquire "For particulars" at "N. Constantine & Co., 157 Fulton-street." I believe that this is simply a typo and should read T. Constantine & Co. While the author has not been able to establish the exact location of Constantine's mill, a twenty mile radius from southern Manhattan includes: Kings and Queens Counties on western Long Island; Richmond County on Staten Island; southern Westchester County; and Hudson, Union, Essex, Passaic and Bergen Counties in New Jersey. An educated yet speculative guess could place the mill on the Hudson River, the Passaic River near Patterson, NJ or one of the other rivers that flow into Newark Bay. Patterson was settled as one of the first attempts to organize extensive water-power for large scale manufacturing purposes. By the 1820s, the town was "the seat of 12 cotton mills, 3 woolen factories, 3 machine shops, and several foundries and minor industries." John Leander Bishop, *A History of American Manufactures from 1808 to 1860*, Volume II (Philadelphia: E. Young & Co., 1864), 274. In the late 1830s, Constantine's son is listed as residing in Sing Sing, the modern town of Ossining, up the Hudson River in Westchester County. See *Longworth's* 1839, 177. Unfortunately, this location is thirty miles from Manhattan. The two saw mills referenced in Hewitt's account book were situated on the Rahway River near Springfield, NJ and the Passaic River near Bloomfield, NJ. See JHAB, 29, 31.

[54] Robert S. Woodbury, *History of the Lathe to 1850* (Cleveland, OH: Society for the History of Technology, 1961), 61. Woodbury also mentions that the "continuous drive of the lathe also adapts easily to the use of power other than the turner's—a 'dull Irishman,' a horse gin, a waterwheel, a steam engine, or an electric motor." Woodbury, 49.

[55] Woodbury, 82.

[56] November 14, 1796, *Minutes of Common Council*, Vol. 2, 1794-1797, 302.

[57] Burrows and Wallace, 491.

[58] March 10, 1806, *Minutes of Common Council*, Vol. 4, 1805-1808, 153. Phyfe resigned from Company No. 16 on May 20, 1816. See *Minutes of Common Council*, Vol. 8, 1814-1817, 519.

[59] Jackson, 410. The Common Council granted these benefits.

[60] Burrows and Wallace, 491.

[61] Burrows and Wallace, 280, 316-318. The authors specifically cite the General Society's close ties first with conservative politicians associated with Alexander Hamilton's Federalist party and then later the rival Clintonian faction. Well-established master craftsmen, professionals, and shop owners were nominated to join, and Duncan Phyfe was initiated in 1793. While Phyfe is regularly named as a prestigious member of the organization, it is important to recognize that he was not active in the group and did not hold office or participate in committees. Phyfe's son and nephew, James and John, respectively, joined in 1826. Even acclaimed artist Asher B. Durand and architect Ithiel Town received invitations to participate. Meetings of June 5, 1822 and February 7, 1827. Minutes of the GSMT, 1803-1831. Durand was nominated as an engraver by J.R. Mercein and J. How. Town received his invitation as an architect from M.E. Thompson and H. McCormick. With wealthy New Yorkers like Jacob Lorillard and Stephen Allen on board the group took on a decidedly different character than the journeymen societies that began around the same time. Burrows and Wallace, 498. The institution, "bore down especially hard on the customary drinking rights of journeyman and apprentices, blaming them for drunkenness, gambling, swearing, and other antisocial evils." Burrows and Wallace, 405. Such moral stances did not ingratiate the mechanics with their employees, but it is unsure how membership in the Society affected the interaction of master and journeyman within a particular shop, as well.

[62] Meeting on January 7, 1824, Minutes of the GSMT, 1803-1831.

[63] Meeting of February 7, 1821, Minutes of the GSMT, 1803-1831. The other four furniture related craftsmen were: Abraham Warner (Painter), Erelle Gilledo (cabinetmaker), Isaac Cross (cabinetmaker), and Armasa Higgins (cabinetmaker).

[64] The name is only specified as "G. Tucker" in the minutes book. If not George Tucker, the other gentleman may have been Gideon Tucker a builder at 12 White. See *Longworth's* 1825, 423.

[65] Meeting of March 6, 1821, Minutes of the GSMT, 1803-1831. The typical progression lasted three months with an individual proposed as a candidate one month, balloted and admitted the next, and initiated the third.

[66] The author speculates that Mandeville may have been subcontracted by Constantine to assist with the congressional commissions, since the former had submitted a bid for the House contract, as well.

[67] Meetings of June 6, 1821 and January 8, 1822, Minutes of the GSMT, 1803-1831.

[68] Meetings of December 12, 1829; January 3, 1831; 1835; and 1836, Minutes of the GSMT, 1803-1831, 1832-1856.

[69] Constantine nominated carver and gilder John Stein, cabinetmaker Jacob H. Dawson, shipwright Samuel Webb, tallow chandler Moses Bidell, and brewer Henry Bunce. Meetings of December 5, 1821; March 4, 1829; January 6, 1830; and February 3, 1830, Minutes of the GSMT, 1803-1831. Although members tended to nominate other craftsmen from their field, this was not a hard and fast rule. As the seconding member for the recommendation of Webb and Bidell, Constantine may have been providing the primary nominator with a favor.

[70] For information on the life of Robert Troup see Dumas Malone, ed., *Dictionary of American Biography*, Vol. 18 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 651-652.

[71] Undated Document, Box 2, Robert Troup Papers, 1771-1870, Humanities-MSS, Special Collections, Humanities and Social Sciences Branch, New York Public Library, New York, New York. I would like to thank Elizabeth Bidwell Bates for graciously forwarding these references. In the inventory of Troup's estate, a fire screen is listed in the breakfast room, however this may also represent a pole screen such as is mentioned in the New York price books of 1810 and 1817. The base cost for both items in 1810 was £ 1.0.0 and had increased to £ 1.2.6 seven years later. See *New York Revised Prices for Manufacturing and Repairing Cabinet and Chair Work* (New York: Southwick and Pelsue, 1810), 51; and 1817, 89-90. These figures equate to $2.50 and $2.80, respectively. Depending on the size and shape of the frame and rails and the request for beading or other carved ornamentation, the cost could quickly double.

[72] Probate Inventory, dated 1826, Box 2, RTP, NYPL.

[73] For a complete biography on James DeWolf see Winifred H. Munro *The History of Bristol, RI* (Providence, RI: J.A. & R.A. Reid, 1880), 322-325 (Rhode Island Historical Society); Harriet L. Brooks, *The Story of James De Wolf* (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, RI; Mark Anthony De Wolfe Howe, *Bristol, Rhode Island: A Town Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930).

[74] For a photograph of The Mount see Howe, 61.

[75] James De Wolf's daughter Harriette married Jonathan Prescott Hall, a New York lawyer, and the couple lived in New York while Constantine's business was still in operation. J.P. Hall's sister Ann Eliza Hall is not the same Ann Eliza Hall married to Thomas but is possibly a relative.

[76] William H. Jordy and Christopher P. Monkhouse, *Buildings on Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings, 1825-1945* (Providence, RI: Brown University, 1982), 196. Warren would later design buildings for a number of De Wolf's family members including his brother William (Hey Bonnie Hall, 1808), his nephew George (Linden Place, 1810), and his son Mark Anthony (Poppasquash Point, 1840).

[77] *Longworth's*, 1825, 153.

[78] William Whittredge, *A Bit from the de Wolf house, Bristol, Rhode Island*, 1860, Oil on Canvas, 15 ¼" by 12 ¼", private collection; and David Davidson, Photograph of the Drawing Room of the de Wolf house, Bristol, Rhode Island, c. 1860-1870, SPNEA, Boston, MA. I would like to thank Stuart Feld of Hirschl and Adler Galleries for calling my attention to both the photograph in **Figure 5** and the Whittredge painting in **Figure 4**.

[79] The pier tables in question are shown in the expansive double parlor at The Mount that was referred to as the "exquisite drawing rooms" and ran the full length of the house. Brooks, 5. A descendant described the furniture as "charming in shape" but overshadowed by the Carrara marble mantle pieces and the full wall paintings of Paul and Virginia and a coffee plantation, allegedly executed by an Italian artist. Brooks, 5. French author Bernardin Saint Pierre first published the story *Paul et Virginiez* in 1787, and it circulated widely through the end of the Victorian era. The tale describes the fate of Paul and Virginia, star-crossed lovers who meet as children and suffer tragic deaths: Virginia in a shipwreck and Paul of grief shortly thereafter. In 1880, the approximate the date of these images, the house was occupied by Mary Soley De Wolf, the widow of James De Wolf's youngest son William Bradford De Wolf. The suspected provenance of the tables from this date until their purchase by the Brooklyn Museum of Art will be discussed in Appendix B.

[80] It is widely debated whether Constantine's store produced this table or whether he imported it from Boston and attached his label to it before retailing the table in his wareroom. See the Appendix on Constantine's known work for a more thorough discussion of this debate.

[81] *New-York Columbian*, July 24, 1819, 3.

[82] Robert D. Mussey, Jr., *The Furniture Masterworks of John & Thomas Seymour* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2003), 326.

[83] See *The Schuyler Family* (Ambrose Andrews, watercolor, 1824) and *Reverend John Atwood and His Family* (Henry F. Darby, oil on canvas, 1840) in Harold L. Peterson *American Interiors from the Colonial Times to the Late Victorians* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), plates 32, 74.

[84] Johnson, 188.

[85] *New-York Evening Post*, September 1, 1817, 3; and *New-York Gazette and General Advertiser*, September 3, 1817, 3 and October 30, 1817, 2. Named for Muzio Clementi, a highly regarded teacher, talented performer and a skilled composer of "weighty sonatas and symphonies," the Clementi firm never reached the popularity of Broadwood's instruments but was still a highly respected name. The musician provided suggestions to improve the performance of the piano forté. See Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 259; and Alfred Dolge, *Pianos and their Makers: A Comprehensive History of the Development of the Piano* (New York: Dover, 1972), 245.

[86] Loesser, 262, 264. According to Loesser, Clementi and Company piano fortés are in the collection of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the New England Conservatory of Music, and Barnard College.

[87] Esther Singleton, *The Furniture of Our Forefathers* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1913), 527.

[88] *New-York Evening Post*, June 27, 1817, 4; and *New-York Evening Post*, September 1, 1817, 4.

[89] Brown, 22. While Brown does not speculate about the nature of Phyfe's relationship with Newberry, the merchant evidently advertised regularly in the *New-York Evening Post* that his imports could be found on the cabinetmaker's wareroom floor.

[90] Singleton, 526. Brown mentions this quote, which Singleton appears to have found in a newspaper advertisement, as well.

[91] *Mercantile Advertiser*, May 12, 1818, 4. Advertisement includes an image of a pedal harp.

[92] *The New Trade Directory for New York* (New York: n.p., 1800), NYPL.

[93] Consumers in early nineteenth-century New York had the opportunity to purchase a frame from the cabinetmaker and the upholstery in a separate transaction, to buy an upholstered piece from a cabinetmaker, or a finished item from an upholsterer who had obtained the frame from a furniture maker. See David H. Conradsen, "The Stock-in-Trade of John Hancock and Company," in *American Furniture* 1993, ed. Luke Beckerdite (Milwaukee: Chipstone Foundation, 1993), 42-54.

[94] United States Senate, *Our Capitol: Factual Information Pertaining to Our Capitol and Places of Historic Interest in the National Capital*, Senate Document No. 22, 88th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 25.

[95] *New-York Daily Advertiser*, November 2, 1819.

[96] See Appendix B.

[97] Montgomery carried out an informal survey of New York inventories taken in 1810 for his Federal furniture study and found that only half of the well-off subjects owned a sofa. Montgomery, 291.

[98] *Longworth's*, 1820, 130; and *Longworth's* 1821, 129.

[99] Alan Brinkley et al., *American History: A Survey, 8th Edition* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1991), 241.

[100] *New-York Gazette and Daily Advertiser*, September 2, 1819. Quoted in Kenny et al., 98.

[101] This figure included interest on the balance that went unpaid after the original installment in December 1819. See "Petition of Thomas Constantine of New York, December 21, 1826, Record Group 46, SEN 20A-G4, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

[102] *The National Advocate for the Country*, New York, January 15, 1822. I have been unable to locate a copy of this issue and only have a paraphrased reference to it from the Berry Tracy Files, Department of American Decorative Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

[103] *The National Advocate for the Country*, New York, January 15, 1822.

[104] *The New-York Evening* Post, May 3, 1823, 3; and Mercantile *Advertiser*, April 20, 1824, 4.

[105] The patentee, Daniel Powles of Baltimore, was issued his rights for the bedstead on October 31, 1821, less than three months before Constantine's first advertisement. United States Patent Office, *List of Patents for Inventions and Designs, Issued by the United States, from 1790 to 1847* (Washington, DC: J. & G.S. Gideon, 1847), 307. Unfortunately, Powles remains elusive and only appears in Baltimore directories between 1822 and 1827. Gregory R Weidman, *Furniture in Maryland, 1740-1940* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1984), 309. Weidman locates Powles at the corner of Howard and Saratoga Streets in 1822-1824, and then at Pearl Street south of Lexington in 1827. A cabinetmaker by the name of Henry Powles also worked at Howard and Saratoga between 1835 and 1841. He did receive two additional patents on January 26, 1827, one for bedstead sacking bottoms and another for iron stirrups.

[106] *Baltimore American*, June 3, 1823. Cited in Wideman, 87.

[107] Edward S. Cooke, Jr. and Andrew Passeri, "Spring Seats of the 19th and Early-20th Centuries," in *Upholstery in America & Europe from the Seventeenth Century to World War I*, ed. Edward S. Cooke, Jr. (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), 239.

[108] *Mercantile Advertiser*, October 2, 1822. I have been unable to locate this issue of the *Mercantile Advertiser* and only have a paraphrased reference to the advertisement from the Berry Tracy Files, Department of American Decorative Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY.

[109] *New-York Daily Advertiser*, May 5, 1823.

[110] Cooke and Passeri, 239.

[111] Cooke and Passeri, 239.

[112] Conradsen, 42-54.

[113] *Baltimore American*, June 5, 1828. Cited in Wideman, 87.

[114] *Baltimore Biennial Advertiser*, 1831. Cited in Wideman, 87.

[115] *The Gem, A Fashionable Business Directory, for the City of New York* (New York: George Shidell, 1844), 23. Cited in Voorsanger and Howat, 281.

[116] Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-33. I would like to thank Sarah Carter for recommending this source.

[117] Sellers, 5 and 21.

[118] Sellers, 20. Sellers comments that this role generally allows the manufacturer to multiply production in order to meet the demand of rural landowners who are, in turn, "producing agricultural and extractive commodities," for the urban market.

[119] *Mercantile Advertiser*, May 12, 1818, 4. Included in an advertisement for Vallotte and Lete, a musical instrument manufactory and retail store at 135 William Street.

[120] *Mercantile Advertiser*, May 12, 1818, 4. Included in an advertisement for Quirk and Martling, Fancy Chair manufacturers at 13 Bowery. Ad features a klismo chair with a scrolled back, ornamental horizontal slats, cane seat, and Trafalgar legs.

[121] *Mercantile Advertiser*, June 22, 1818, 4. Mentioned in an advertisement for William Brown, Jr., Curled Maple and Fancy Chair manufacturer at 50 Beekman Street.

[122] *The New York Evening Post*, September 1, 1817, 3; and *New-York Gazette & General Advertiser*, September 3, 1817, 3, and October 30, 1817, 2.

[123] *The New-York Evening Post*, May 3, 1823, 3; *New-York Daily Advertiser*, May 5, 1823; and *New-York American*, May 3, 1823.

[124] *Raleigh Register*, July 9, 1824. Cited in John Bivins, *The Furniture of Coastal North Carolina, 1700-1820* (Winston-Salem, NC: The Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, 1988), 507.

[125] *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York, June 23, 1818, 2.

[126] *New-York Daily Advertiser*, November 2, 1819.

[127] *New-York Columbian*, July 24, 1819, 3. The unnamed purchaser may have been leaving the country for financial reasons, as this auction takes during the Panic of 1819.

[128] The piano fortés mentioned earlier are the notable exception to this assumption. Some have suggested that Constantine imported the "Cumberland Action" dining table from Boston and applied his label to it prior to selling it in his wareroom. See Appendix B for a further discussion of this matter.

[129] *Commercial Advertiser*, May 2, 1821. Cited in Kenny et al., 98.

[130] *New-York Evening Post*, May 3, 1823, 3.

[131] The turner at his suburban mahogany lathe could have been responsible for providing chair and table legs; stiles; bed, sideboard, center table, and pier table pillars. This could be done at a high volume to supply either Constantine's Greenwich Street manufactory or a competitor.

[132] Although the engraver and printer who produced the label are unknown, Constantine's uncle, Charles, a copper plate printer, is a likely suspect. Although the author has been unable to link Charles to a particular New York print shop, he is listed in the *Minutes of Common Council* as a member of the profession and lived with Thomas at 62 Vesey Street.

[133] The label was also affixed to the back rail of a lolling chair brought to the Winterthur Museum in 1969 by Frank Getty, an upholsterer in Carroll County, Maryland. See "Chair Maker Identified Through Museum Records," *Winterthur Newsletter*, Vol. XV, No. 10 (December 1969), 1-3. Although none of the surviving House desks retain labels, a Senate desk had one in the twentieth century. See Mary Phelan, "Memorandum to Senate Desks File," April 3, 1974, Object File 66.00029.001, Office of the Senate Curator, United States Senate Commission on Art, Washington, DC.

[134] Partition Street was renamed Fulton Street in 1816. When Constantine opened his store the next year, this change would have been fresh in the minds of New Yorkers and encouraged the clarification seen on Thomas's label.

[135] Karen M. Stearns, "Collector's Notes," *The Magazine Antiques*, 111, no. 4 (April 1977), 698. Refers to pair of castors on the rear feet of a bedroom table made by Duncan Phyfe's workshop for his daughter Eliza Phyfe Vail. They are marked "A. THORP," likely for Andrew Thorp, a hardware dealer in New York after 1822. Also, Donald L. Fennimore, *Metalwork in Early America: Copper and Its Alloys* (Winterthur, DE: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1996), 409. Fennimore illustrates a castor marked by the Toler company. Castors with this touch have been found on two chairs in private collections that are associated with Constantine's store (**Figures 13, 15**) that date to the 1818-1825 period and are thought to have been purchased from Henry Toler a merchant on Pearl Street during that period. However, Fennimore refers to a John Toler who owned a hardware manufactory in Newark, NJ from the 1830s or 1840s until 1905. This would suggest that the chairs have been dated incorrectly or that those castors are later replacements.

[136] Fennimore, 402-408.

[137] Personal Conversation with Donald L. Fennimore, Curator of Metals, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

[138] Fennimore, 37-38. Most artisans looked to local merchants who purchased their wares abroad for hardware and supplies. For instance, the Brothers Melly on Maiden Lane announced in 1826 that they had "received by late arrivals," a variety of items of interest to upholsterers, cabinetmakers, and looking glass makers alike. The Melly store offered "6 [cases] fine and common Linen Tapes, 4 [cases] Cotton Fringes...1 [case] Gimps...6 [cases] Oil Cloth, 1 [case] Floor Cloth...1 [case] Gilt Ornaments, in sets...2 [cases] Looking Glass Plates." *Mercantile Advertiser*, February 20, 1826: 1.

[139] *Mercantile Advertiser*, December 7, 1819, 3.

[140] Brown, 26.

[141] This is another assumption that the information in Hewitt's account book contradicts. If cabinetmakers are conscientiously copying their competition's work, the intent of both the artisan and the consumer purchasing the object is to deceive the greater public.

[142] The author assumes that like Winterthur's Senate chair, all forty-eight sent were fitted with the incised brass castors. The surviving House chair has a paper label. None of the surviving desks, House or Senate, retain a label. However, in 1974, Renzo Vanni, the foreman of the Senate's cabinetmaking shop, recalled that a label bearing the name Constantine had been found in 1965 on the so-called Webster desk when restoring it. See Mary Phelan, "Memorandum to Senate Desks File," April 3, 1974, Object File 66.00029.001, OSC.

[143] *New-York Evening Post*, September 7, 1822, 3.

[144] In an apparent attempt to draw the broadest possible crowd, this advertisement was run in three newspapers: *The New-York Evening Post*, May 3, 1823, 3; *New-York American*, May 3, 1823; and *New-York Daily Advertiser*, May 5, 1823.

[145] Kenny et al., 254.

[146] Directories were published each year in June or July and would be available until that time the following year. Address information was generally collected in May for each new edition after the traditional May 1 moving date. This allowed enough time for Constantine to publish the advertisement in late April and have closed his store by late May.

[147] *Longworth's* 1824, 181; 1825, 129; and 1826, 139.

[148] The reference to the mahogany yard at Pearl and Cross is found in the "Additional Names, Removals and Corrections" section at the end of the directory. *Longworth's* 1825, 129, 471.

[149] The two mills referenced in Hewitt's account book were situated on the Rahway River near Springfield, NJ and the Passaic River near Bloomfield, NJ. See JHAB, 29, 31.

[150] A family history claims Thomas and his brother John "maintained a mahogany yard where they measured and inspected the shiploads of costly mahogany which were being shipped to the port of New York," but the author has found no evidence to link the upholsterer to this operation. See Albert Constantine & Son, "175th Anniversary of The House of Constantine," (Unpublished manuscript, Bronx, NY, 1987), author's collection. John Constantine continued his upholstery business on Fulton Street until his death in 1845 and was succeeded by his wife Eleanor and son John. See Voorsanger and Howat, 200. Perhaps the confusion arises from Thomas's son John who was affiliated with the family's mahogany trade beginning in the 1850s.

[151] Although incorrectly identified as being located at 157 Broadway, the mention of a location "opposite of St. Paul's Church," appeared as it does on the company's labels. This landmark would have steered prospective customers in the right direction and informed visitors, furniture makers, and carpenters of Constantine's mahogany supply. Joshua Shaw, *United Sates Directory for the Use of Travellers and Merchants* (Philadelphia: James Maxwell, 1822), Rare Book Room, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

[152] *The People's Friend and Daily Advertiser*, New York, October 16, 1806. Cited in Kenny et al., 35. When his widow sold the shop at 60 Broad Street, a mahogany merchant, George Deloynes, opened a retail lumberyard on the premises. Kenny et al., 35.

[153] *New-York American, For the Country*, May 2, 1823, 3.

[154] *New-York Daily Advertiser*, April 17, 1806, 4.

[155] *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York, February 20, 1826, 1.

[156] *Mercantile Advertiser*, New York, April 19, 1826, 3.

[157] Cabinetmakers mainly worked with five types of solid mahogany and mahogany veneers: crotch, table, plain, mottled, and shaded. Kenny et al., 156.

[158] Kenny et al., 157.

[159] *Mercantile Advertiser*, February 7, 1826, 2.

[160] Thomas Constantine and Thomas Whitfield v. Tallmadge Fairchild, October 22, 1830, Supreme Court of the State of New York, MANY.

[161] It is entirely possible that Whitfield could have been a relative of Constantine's through marriage, perhaps a sister's husband or a cousin.

[162] Thomas Constantine and Thomas Whitfield v. Henry Bogart, December 25, 1835, Case # 1835 B-100, Supreme Court for the State of New York, MANY. Bogart appears as a upholsterer at 472 Pearl Street (*Longworth's*, 1835, 104).

[163] Thomas Constantine and Thomas Whitfield v. Watson Dunham, January 11, 1833, Case # 1833 D-50, Supreme Court for the State of New York, MANY. Dunham does not appear in New York City directories of the period, but cabinetmaker David Dunham is listed that year at 25 Catherine with a house at 197 Mott (*Longworth's* 1833, 238).

[164] Thomas Constantine and Thomas Whitfield v. Tunis Morrell, May 10, 1833, Case #1833 M-78, Supreme Court for the State of New York, MANY.

[165] See especially, Thomas Constantine and Thomas Whitfield v. Peter Morris, James Cummings, and Paul Sabbaton, May 8, 1834, Case # BM 1473-C, Chancery Court for the City of New York, MANY; and Thomas Constantine and Thomas Whitfield v. Peter Morris, January 10, 1837, Case # 1837 M-209, Supreme Court for the State of New York, MANY. The former is an extensive collections of affidavits and testimonials concerning the extensive debts owed by Morris and his partners to Whitfield and Constantine. The plaintiffs were especially disgruntled with the delays and excuses that kept the court from viewing the defendants' account books. The personal affects of Morris were sold for $7000 to pay for damages and court costs. In the 1837 case, the plaintiffs received an additional $698.39.

[166] A Report from late 1834 mentions ten payments to Constantine and Whitfield over the last year: $518.55, $181.18, $171.92, $195.56, $552.57, $361.20, $561.18, $220.34, $281.05, and $440.22. An affidavit signed by Constantine and Whitfield dated February 1837 acknowledges a payment of an additional $3000.

[167] New York City Tax Assessments, 6th Ward, 1826 and 1830, MANY.

[168] New York City Tax Assessment, 6th Ward, 1831, MANY.

[169] New York City Tax Assessments, 6th Ward, 1831, MANY.

[170] New York City Tax Assessments, 6th Ward, 1836, MANY.

[171] New York City Tax Assessments, 6th Ward, 1837 and 1838, MANY.

[172] *Longworth's* 1838, 171; and *Longworth's* 1839, 177. In both cases the occupation is listed simply as "mahogany."

[173] From the Commissioners of Forfeiture, the land passed to Cornelius P. Low, New York merchant, on September 9, 1785; to William Constable, New York merchant, on May 12, 1786; to Jacob Stout, New York gentleman, on April 29, 1796; to Joseph Howland, Norwich, CT, on April 1, 1802; to Lemuel Wells, New York merchant, on April 20, 1813. See Edward Hagaman Hall, *Philipse Manor Hall at Yonkers, NY: The site, the building, and its occupants* (New York: American Scenic and Historical Preservation Society, 1912). When Wells purchased the property, which was valued at $56,000, it was described as: "All that certain mansion house, mills, stables and farm or parcel of land situate, lying and being in the Manor of Philipsburgh, County of Westchester and State of new York, known and distinguished heretofore as the place of residence of the late Frederick Philipse, Esquire, bounded easterly by Hudsons River, Southerly by lands in the Possession of the Widow Rich easterly by land sold to David Hunt and the run of water called the Sawmill River...containing within the said bounds three hundred and twenty acres." Patrick G. Hildreth to Lemuel Wells, April 20, 1813, Liber Q, Page 115, Land Records Division, County Clerk's Office, White Plains, Westchester County, New York. Hereinafter WCCO.

[174] The lower Hudson River Valley had seen the development of a variety of mills at an early date and the construction of a sawmill by the Van der Donck family by the mid-seventeenth century. See Ernest F. Griffin, *Westchester County & Its People: A Record* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1946), Vol. II, 155.

[175] William Norman to Thomas Constantine, May 7, 1836, Liber 73, Page 54-55, WCCO.

[176] Joseph Delacroix to John A. Miller, March 29, 1828, Liber 34, Page 82-83, WCCO.

[177] Lemuel Wells to Joseph Delacroix, November 13, 1829, Liber 55, Page 494, WCCO.

[178] Bishop, Volume III, 265, 349.

[179] Wells to Delacroix, 494.

[180] Wells to Delacroix, 493.

[181] Thomas Constantine to James Chesterman, January 10, 1837, Liber 73, Page 52, WCCO. Chesterman's occupation is not listed in the 1837 directory, but in previous years he appears as a merchant tailor with Edwin Chesterman, a draper and tailor, and with the firm Chesterman, Son & Paddon, drapers and tailors, at 72 Nassau (*Longworth's* 1831, 184); living at 710 Broadway and involved with Chesterman & Cany, importers, at 25 Exchange Street (*Longworth's* 1834, 188); then, at 710 Broadway without an occupation (*Longworth's* 1835, 155); and, finally, with George Chesterman, neither with an occupation, at 710 Broadway (*Longworth's* 1837, 148). This last arrangement persists through the 1840s.

[182] Norman to Constantine, 53-54.

[183] Austin Stocking to Thomas Constantine, June 3, 1840, Deed Book K, Page 273, Land Records Office, Berrien County Courthouse, St. Joseph, Michigan. Hereinafter BCC.

[184] Philip S. Crocker to Thomas Constantine, June 12, 1840, Deed Book K, Page 292, BCC.

[185] Longworth's 1837 directory (181) refers to a Leonard Crocker at 106 Broad working as an "agent for TROY and MICHIGAN line;" a "Crocker & Bill importers 36 Exchange pl." with a Stephen Crocker at the same address; and David Crocker, merchant, at 94 Pearl with a house at 173 Sullivan. The following year (184), Stephen is at 34 Broadway as "Crocker & Osborn, importers;" also a "Crocker & Morris, com. Merchants 116 Broad." Added in 1839 (191) is "Crocker & Thornton, 146 Front h. 36 Henry."

[186] Victor S. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States*, Volume I: 1607-1860 (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), 216.

[187] Albert Constantine & Son, n.d., 2-3.

[188] Thomas Constantine v. George Pieris [Pierce], November 1, 1843, Record 1843 C-846, Supreme Court of the State of New York, MANY; and Doggett's *New-York City Directory*, 1844-1849.

[189] Albert Constantine & Son, 1989, 1.

[190] Albert Constantine & Son, n.d., 2.

[191] Thomas Constantine to Messrs. [Augustus and Benjamin] Aymar & Co., New York, 1849, Folder "John Constantine, Letters and Misc. Papers," Richard Delafield Papers, 1846-1862, Manuscript Department, New-York Historical Society, New York, NY. The Aymars' firm was located at 34 South Street. John Constantine, Thomas's second son, was Clerk of New York Fortifications at this time, and his personal letters and bills are found among the papers of Major Richard Delafield, a military engineer in the United States Army Engineer Corps.

[192] Constantine references the typically poor condition of mahogany sent to New York and the common occurrence of defects such as wood rot, wormholes, and deficient sapwood. The various origins of the mahogany mentioned by Constantine include St. Domingo, Gonaives, Port au Platte, Mansanilla, Santa Cruz, Cienfuegos, Xibara, and Honduras.

[193] Constantine suggests a series of calculations for determining the amount of usable wood to be expected from logs coming for each port-of-call. For instance a log from Santo Domingo, eight feet long, and twenty-four by eighteen inches, will "inspect" at 244 feet.

[194] *New-York Evening Post*, October 22, 1849.

[195] A reference to the removal of his body from the city appears in Constantine's Death Liber Record, October 22, 1849, MANY. *Providence Daily Journal*, October 24, 1849, 2. His obituary in the *New-York Evening Post* requested that all Providence papers include this notice.

Part 2

THOMAS CONSTANTINE'S PUBLIC COMMISSIONS

Part 2, Chapter 1

THE UNITED STATES CAPITOL COMMISSIONS, 1818-1819

"I shall live in the hope that the day will come when an opportunity will be given you of finishing the middle building in a style worthy of the two wings, and worthy of the first temple dedicated to the sovereignty of the people, embellishing with Athenian taste the course of a nation looking far beyond the range of Athenian destinies."[1]

--Thomas Jefferson to B. Henry Latrobe, 1812

On the evening of August 24, 1814, a British force under the direction of General Robert Ross set fire to the United States Capitol in Washington, DC. Perhaps in retaliation for Henry Dearborn's order the previous year for the burning of the legislative hall and governor's house in York, Ontario, the Canadian capital, Ross's troops carried out their duty with an enthusiastic clamor. They found ready fuel in the furnishings, books, and papers left behind when the city evacuated, to which they added a generous application of gunpowder paste. As one contemporary described, "the fire burnt so fiercely that they were obliged to retreat and leave all the rooms in the West side entirely untouched."[2] Although the exterior walls remained standing, twenty-five years of congressional debate, millions of dollars of American money, and Benjamin Henry Latrobe's magnum opus were reduced that night to a "burning pile."[3]

Picking up the Pieces: Congress Rebuilds the Capitol

In light of the destruction, Congress briefly debated both the relocation of the national capital and the abandonment of the ruins for a new building on a new site. President James Madison silenced these outcries in February 1815 by authorizing a $500,000 loan from local banks to rebuild these structures at their current locations.[4] Although Latrobe had been accused of extravagance, arrogance, mismanagement, and general obnoxiousness, he was called back to Washington to oversee the reconstruction of the Capitol. A commission appointed to supervise the project favored his intimate knowledge of the design over the collegiality of architects Robert Mills and J.J. Ramée.[5] Latrobe took over on April 18, 1815 and, "as if the past had taught him nothing," offered the impossible promise that both wings would be finished by the close of 1817.[6]

Ultimately, Congress would not re-occupy the Capitol until the opening of the first session of the 16th Congress on December 6, 1819, two full years behind schedule. Having irreparably damaged his relationship with Commissioner of Public Buildings Samuel Lane, and embarrassed himself in the presence of President James Monroe, Latrobe had resigned in late 1817.[7] A capable replacement was quickly located in the esteemed New England architect, Charles Bulfinch, whose Massachusetts State House had earned him great acclaim. For those who thought the "superb pile" that was the Capitol deserved "to be finished in a manner to do credit to the country and the age," Bulfinch was an exceptional choice.[8] He made progress at an unprecedented rate and completed both chambers in less than two years.[9]

Sensing Bulfinch's success as early as April 1818, Congress began a discussion of the funding required for equipping the chambers. That month the legislature allocated money in an act "for the public buildings and for furnishing the Capitol and the President's House."[10] The House of Representatives received $30,000, the Senate $20,000, and the President $15,000.

Following in the Footsteps of Precedence: Influences on the Interior Design of the Capitol

With this money in hand, Congress had a few options as they set out to furnish their interiors: the legislators could attempt to reproduce what had been destroyed in 1814; they could reject what Latrobe had previously selected for them and venture off in a new direction; or they could recreate some of what had been done before and improve on the mistakes that had been made in the past. Ultimately, both the House and the Senate chose this third route. A few elaborative comments will illustrate the relationship of the interior ornamentation found in the post-War of 1812 Capitol to the decisions made for the original Washington chambers. These will also reflect how the furnishings compared to the general preferences for interior decoration in that period.

While the specific style of the desks and chairs that were introduced into these spaces before 1819 is unknown, one can track when purchases were made and reach conclusions on the style of decorative goods prior to Constantine's involvement. Latrobe, as an architect who recognized the importance of interior

ornament, presumably attempted to ensure a rational and fashionable coherence among his architectural plans and furniture purchases.

John Rea, a Philadelphia upholsterer who provided draperies and seat coverings for the Capitol rooms before and after the War of 1812, began working closely with Latrobe as early as 1807. A letter from the architect to Rea in the fall of that year discusses the Latrobe's preferences for the "speaker's throne" in the House chamber.[11] Latrobe suggested that crimson velvet would be the ideal fabric but lamented about its inaccessibility. As a substitute, he preferred satin over mantua because it would contrast with the silks used for the curtains. The design Rea received included a sumptuous display of draperies lined with green and accented by gold fringe.[12] The elegantly swagged draperies that hang from the famous Grecian colonnade in the post-reconstruction Representative's chamber can be found in Latrobe's 1815 proposals for altering the room's design.[13] Although this color scheme was a found in other elaborate early nineteenth-century interiors in America and abroad, Latrobe's incorporation of it here is notable.

The ornamentation of state capitols built during the early Federal period informs on style of interior decoration found in Washington, as well. When the Maryland's state government chose to refurnish its State House in 1807, Annapolis cabinetmakers William and Washington Tuck traveled to the District of Columbia to "take a plan of the finishing of the house of representatives."[14] Upon their return home, they produced desks with a straight front and concave back; square, tapered legs; and elaborate neoclassical inlay and veneers.

In 1809, with the Senate meeting in a temporary location, Latrobe had promised Vice President George Clinton (NY) that the members would be situated in their chamber by the next session of Congress. However, to complete this project, he required $10,000 to procure furniture, carpeting, and draperies and requested that new desks for the Senate be constructed that would save space by placing two members at each table instead of one.[15] Furthermore, he insisted on an additional $1600 allocation to furnish the provisional Senate chamber that had been assembled as a self-contained pavilion within the Library of Congress.[16] George Bridgport, the Philadelphia artisan hired to paint the walls of the Senate's interim home, had assisted Latrobe with a suite of furniture produced for the Waln family of Philadelphia the previous year and may have assisted in the acquisition or decoration of the Senate desks and chairs in this instance.[17]

Following the destruction of the Capitol in 1814, Congress moved into the Brick Capitol and, once again, needed to furnish itself. While the government had only rented this facility, the owners appear not to have been responsible for finishing it according to the government's needs.[18] Henry Fearon described the Senators as having sat "on rich scarlet cushions, some at double, and some at single desks."[19] To the contrary, the House's room featured "very common chairs, at unpainted desks, which are placed in rows, the whole resembling a Lancasterian school, though without it s regularity."[20] A notice from December 22, 1819 records the dispersal of "the furniture used by the House in the building where it lately sat, not wanted for the present chamber."[21] The plan to sell the goods left in the Brick Capitol by both houses of Congress was also recorded in

the *National Intelligencer*.[22] The congressmen clearly thought that new seats and tables would enhance the appearance of their new home, but this hierarchy of sophistication that separated the furnishings of the House from the Senate did not change with the move into the Capitol.

Visitors had certainly considered the pre-fire capitol to be a splendid building and it behooved Latrobe to recreate its majestic interiors. The legislative chambers had achieved great affect early on. An early commentator described the Representative's hall as "the largest room in America," and "admirably adapted for the deliberations of a popular assembly."[23] The use of heavy curtains to ornament walls and windows placed the Capitol chambers in line with the grandest English Regency interiors of the day. Within design treatises such as Hope's *Household Furniture* (1807), George Smith's *A Guide to Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1808), and Rudolph Ackermann's *Repository of the Arts* (1809-1825), householders on both sides of the Atlantic were inundated with textile-laden images of drawing rooms, parlors, and the like, many of which highlighted an elaborately developed synthesis of furniture and wall coverings. Most wealthy householders expressed an interest in plain materials, bold in color and accentuated by classical motifs and fringes and tassels in gold and silver.[24]

As Latrobe began to consider these trends for his plans to decorate the Capitol after the war, the printed images of royal British interiors would have affected this design conscious architect. In W.H. Pyne's *History of the Royal Residences* (1817), the Prince Regent's taste in elaborate upholstery came

streaming across the full-color plates. Particularly in the Crimson Satin Drawing Room of Carlton House in Volume III, where one finds a suite of furniture, which is covered with crimson upholstery, complimenting heavy swags and curtains of the same color. Arranged in 1811, the room's contents include extensive red silk and gold fringe ensemble draperies on the walls and Grecian sofas and fauteuil armchairs of an Etruscan style.[25] These same influences even carried through to Englishman William Nichols's plans for the North Carolina State House (1818-1823) and are seen in his orders for elaborate crimson damask window treatments.

While not a direct reference to these sources, the intricate ornamentation of the congressional chambers in Washington heeds to the advice of English designers. Walsh Porter, the decorator who replaced Henry Holland's interiors of Carlton House, achieved the desired effect "by use of complicated drapery, involving great yardages, and ornamental fringes, gimps, tassels, cords and braids, made of coloured silks, wools, and some gold or silver thread."[26] George Smith claimed that "scarlet and crimson will ever hold the preference," and the preponderance of red draperies in fashionable parlors of the early nineteenth century indicate the extent to which this sentiment was taken to heart.[27]

"Without any superfluous ornament": The House of Representatives Commission

The 1818 act that granted funds for the purchase of interior decorations stipulated that Henry Clay would have discretionary power in all matters relating to the Representatives' expenditures. The Speaker of the House deferred most

decisions regarding the furnishings to Thomas Claxton, Doorkeeper for Representatives' Hall. With the House's chamber closer to completion than the Senate's, Claxton could immediately proceed in the search for adequate seating for the Representatives. He contacted Henry V. Hill, a local cabinetmaker who often found himself supplying the Capitol's furniture-related needs, with the hope of developing a prototype for the desks and chairs that Claxton required.[28]

Hill provided models for a chair frame and a table with seating for four at the cost of $20 and $60, respectively. When originally asked what the price of this project would be, Hill had informed Claxton that, "it required experience to determine the value." Thus, by having the Washington craftsmen construct the samples, Claxton learned of the style and specific dimensions that would suit the House as well as the probable cost of such a commission. Then, on May 12, 1818, he placed an advertisement in four major newspapers that requested bids from interested cabinetmakers.[29] Claxton ordered that the proposals were for "supplying the Representative Chamber, one hundred and eighty seven armed Chairs, and fifty-one Tables…to be delivered at the Capitol."[30]

Although Claxton mentions that interested parties could view Hill's examples in Washington, he realized that only local artisans would be able to take advantage of this opportunity. For those working in Baltimore, New York, and Philadelphia—the three other cities Claxton advertised in—the Doorkeeper included highly specific instructions as to the materials, proportions, and design.[31] The notice refers to chairs "made out of the best St. Domingo mahogany, well seasoned, strong neat and plain; without any superfluous ornament," that had

arms of "solid mahogany, with a scroll in front," and seats "stuffed with hair, and covered with the best hair cloth." The multi-person tables were to be made with a slanted top "in the usual form of writing desks," with "a good draw, with the best quality of lock and key to every two feet of table," and feature legs "turned agreeable to the sample, which will be simple in its form.[32] When considering Claxton's statement, an image of unrefined styling comes quickly to mind, and the House's interests were firmly situated within the realm of utility and durability. The Doorkeeper admonished those who "may think fit to offer proposals...that every article is to be of the first quality—and the best workmanship."

Offering assurances that this process would be conducted without favoritism and in a truly public manner, Claxton insisted that the sealed proposals would not be opened until June 8, the final day bids would be received. He also stipulated that the contract was to be awarded to "the person proposing to execute the work upon the terms most favorable for the public." To ensure that congressional funds were properly spent, Claxton announced that payment would only be issued upon receipt of the order in Washington and refused to advance the successful bidder funds to purchase materials and retain craftsmen. Many cabinetmakers would have found this stipulation prohibitive because of the enormous outlay for such an extensive quantity of furniture.

As the June 8 deadline approached, Thomas Claxton decided to alter the scope of his proposal in light of the semicircular shape of the chamber. On June 3, 1818, the Doorkeeper issued a notice that bids should include a price for both

straight and circular tables.[33] Either Claxton, Henry Clay, or another member of the House must have realized that circular desks—meaning curved, not round—would provide a more effective solution for the arrangement of the room. This interest in enhancing the comfort and acoustics of the space caused the due date to be postponed until June 18. The doorkeeper forwarded this announcement on to the other papers that had run the original advertisement.

On June 22, 1818, these same publications printed the results of the competition. It had been prepared by Claxton to notify all concerned that, "Mr. Constantine, of New York" would have the honor of furnishing the House of Representatives. While not a "Who's Who" list of American cabinetmakers, a number of significant artisans had applied. New York was the most represented city with submissions by Constantine, Alexander M. Haywood, the firm of Thomas Asten and Samuel C. Hyslop, "Honory" Lannuier, and William Mandeville.[34] As mentioned previously, the latter two had provided furniture for New York's City Hall in 1814. An additional four from the Washington area responded with bids, including: Henry Hill, who provided the prototypes for the proposal; Gustavus Bealle, a New York furniture maker who had relocated to Georgetown; William Worthington, who had supplied chairs for the President's House under Monroe; and Benjamin M. Belt.[35] Philadelphia upholsterer John Rea applied, as did his townsman Otto James.[36] The lone New Englanders to participate were George Clark of Portland and James Barker of Boston.[37] As Clay and Claxton must have hoped, cabinetmakers from the major production centers applied.[38] One might expect more representation from the coastal cities of

Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine, but the omission of a prominent New England paper—such as Boston's *Columbian Centinel*, *Daily Advertiser*, *Gazette*, or *Intelligencer*—precluded more participation from that region.

As Claxton had promised, Constantine's low bid earned him the contract. Despite the request to submit separate bids for chairs, straight tables, and circular tables, Constantine simplified the proposal by providing a flat rate "per chair and drawer" of $30.[39] To outfit 192 congressmen, he would charge $5760. This fee stood approximately $550 short of the next lowest figure, Lannuier's estimate of $6313.50. Claxton received the highest proposal from Haywood of New York, whose estimate of $11,520 doubled Constantine's. In general, there was very little variation among the bids, with the exception of the high prices Haywood set for both circular ($36) and straight tables ($18) and the exorbitant fee charged by Barker for the chairs ($35).

One can only speculate as to why Constantine chose to offer a single price for the competition. Johnson concluded that he "was eager to be awarded the contract and the bid of a single price" was "a shrewd business maneuver."[40] While this author does not doubt the cabinetmaker's motivation or commercial acumen, other circumstances may have led to this decision.[41] Nevertheless, the House's decision was clearly based on numbers alone and not on the established reputation of the applicants. Congressmen from New York City and those southern ports that imported northern furniture may have known of the high quality of the work produced by Lannuier and Mandeville. Worthington, Belt, Bealle, and Hill were well-known local cabinetmakers, but Claxton and Clay did

not consider this familiarity to be more important than the savings achieved with Constantine's bid.[42]

Although Claxton originally stipulated that the furniture was required in Washington by November 10, 1818, less than five months after Constantine had received the bid, the chairs and desks do not appear to have arrived until the October 1819. Building Commissioner Samuel Lane had promised that the Congress would sit in their new Capitol by November 1818, but labor unrest and construction setbacks undermined Bulfinch's progress.[43] Late in the summer of 1819, Washingtonians witnessed the completion of the House chamber's columns and entablature and the construction and painting of its wooden ceiling. Thus, Bulfinch could not have received the furniture coming from New York until late in 1819, regardless.

Whether Constantine had finished the order according to the original date or had been told to delay its manufacture because of the construction difficulties is not known. However, in October 1819, Claxton accepted the furnishings he had commissioned sixteen months prior. Which were:

1. Seating for 192 representatives @ $30..... $5760
2. Additional strengthening of chairs and tables..... $ 185
3. 382 "sockets for Tables...in consequence of alterations made in the floor of the Hall," .....$ 197
4. Preparing patterns for the sockets..... $ 11
5. Fourteen sofas @ $60..... $ 840
6. Two "pyramid stoves" @ $175..... $ 340

This outlay totaled $7333 and was paid out in installments. On the 28th day of that month, 1819, the Doorkeeper sent Constantine a note of $5000 as the first payment on his bill.[44] This was followed by remuneration of $200 and $100 on

November 30 and December 4, respectively, and then a final payment of $2033 on December 19.[45] Constantine would later petition the House for an additional $250 to cover the expenses of "furnishing with desks...two hundred inks and sands, not in contract," that had been sent to Washington on November 1.[46]

Soon after the arrival of the furniture, a favorable opinion of Constantine's abilities began to circulate. The *Washington Gazette* of October 28, 1819 reported that his work "is said to be equal to anything of the kind for strength, solidity, and excellence of workmanship, manufactured in the United States."[47] Furthermore, the desks and chairs had "received the approbation of all who have seen it, and particularly that of the best judges of Cabinet work."

Despite this acclaim, one cannot say how closely Constantine had approximated Henry Hill's prototypes. Considering the amount of time that passed between the initial contract and the arrival of furniture in Washington, Claxton could have sent the models to Constantine in New York. The editorial makes no reference to the design of the commission nor of its reception as fashionable or desirable according to the House's expectations or to contemporary standards of classical taste.

Even with the description published by Claxton, without having the prototype in hand, one can only speculate how Constantine arrived at the final plan for the armchairs. In many regards, the seats received by the House of Representatives can be considered an early version of astylistic mass-produced office furniture. **(Figure 8)** Many of the specific features found in this design are referred to in the New York price book for 1817 under the heading for a "Square

Back Chair."[48] Referred to as lolling chairs in the period and Martha Washington-style chairs among collectors, the Representatives' seats share with this form the features of a fully upholstered back and seat with open arms. This connection is unusual, however, for lolling chairs are generally thought to have been the exclusive product of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century New England.[49] Although some Boston chairs of this period have turned legs, lolling chairs typically feature square, tapered legs, as found on the rear legs of these seats.

Another logical source for the design would have been the furniture used in Washington prior to the destruction of the Capitol or what was found in the legislative chambers during the government's stay in Philadelphia. Unfortunately, none of the chairs from the pre-War of 1812 chamber survives. Similarly, the furnishings used by the House of Representatives while the Capitol was in Philadelphia are no longer extant. The one connection that can be made, though, is between the House chairs produced by Constantine and the chairs commissioned by the Senate while in Philadelphia from Thomas Affleck, most of which have survived. **(Figure 21)** Other than the tapered and fluted front legs, the general profile of the Affleck chairs is consistent with those by Constantine. Earlier in his career, Affleck had incorporated more robust Marlboro legs in similarly upholstered chairs in the manner of the "French Chairs" seen in Plates XIX-XXIII of Chippendale's *Director*.[50] As a contrast, the Maryland legislators at this time sat on more typical, early classical style armchairs with an open wooden back and an upholstered seat. **(Figure 22)** Only the Maryland's President

of the Senate and Speaker of the House received chairs with a padded back, which in both cases was in the shape of a modified shield back.[51]

Contrary to Claxton's request in the appeal for bids, the arms on Constantine's chairs do not terminate in a scroll. The elbows form a shallow S-curve and are supported by stumps of a similar shape that emerge from the side rails. These elements are referred to as "Chair Elbows" and "Arm Stumps" and are illustrated in Plate 6 of the 1817 New York price book. Claxton may have been expecting elbows 2 or 3, which are more classical in form, instead. At the cost of 10p for the journeyman's labor, the arms chosen by Constantine represent the least expensive combination for chair work.[52] The sweep of the rear legs also represents the basic option for seating furniture.[53] A small "turned button" at the juncture of the elbow and stump represents the only applied ornamentation on these chairs and would have increased the price only an additional shilling.[54]

The turned front legs of the House chairs lack the reeding typical of New York chairs in this period, but represent the only other embellishment included in the frame. The absence of reeding significantly decreased the cost of the chairs. The profile of the leg capitals is an amalgamation of E and F in Plate 3 of the price book, and the feet are marked N. The durable black haircloth preferred by Claxton was a relatively inexpensive fabric and is accented by decorative brass nails in the House chairs.

The desks provided by Constantine for the Representatives present a similar design quandary. In essence, Constantine's shop constructed very simple slant-top boxes supported by long legs turned in a manner similar to the chairs.

This form is referred to in the price books of 1810 and 1817 as a "writing table" and was ideal for commercial spaces as an inexpensive surface on which one could execute correspondence.[55] These utilitarian desks did not require complex construction techniques or specialized ornamentation and were likely within the repertoire of most cabinetmakers of this period.

Constantine may have been familiar with the furniture in use at other contemporary government buildings. William Mandeville's tables in the Council Chamber at New York's City Hall were of a similar appearance as can be seen in an 1831 rendering of their chamber.[56] Charles Christian was commissioned in 1814 to make a "writing table with bookcase," for the Mayor's office.[57] The desks provided for the Maryland legislature in 1797 by Annapolis cabinetmaker John Shaw are also utilitarian and plain with square, unornamented, tapered legs. However the stringing, scalloped gallery, and baize-covered, hinged, slant-top lid give them an ornamental appearance that the House desks lack.[58]

While Constantine's furniture may not have been stylish, it certainly did not detract from the refined elegance of the House chamber. Although Clay and Claxton spent only $25,000 of the $30,000 allocated for furnishing the room, they coordinated a masterful assemblage of decorative arts. The great lasting tribute to their work and the talents of the craftsmen they patronized is Samuel F.B. Morse's monumental painting of 1822-1823. **(Figure 23)** Although underappreciated in its day and largely dismissed for its "physical inaction, psychological ambivalence, dominating architecture," and "denarratized form," Morse provides a detached visual record of the imposing space just following the

furnishing of the Capitol.[59] Latrobe would have been the artist's greatest champion, for the latter's emphasis on the interaction between government, dignity, architecture, and space epitomizes the architect's approach to the classical arts.

Regardless of the contemporary public's apathy for the painting, Morse provided us with a largely truthful reproduction of the interior's various components. The chairs used by the Representatives contrast slightly to Morse's depiction, but the desks are consistent. The gloriously rendered chandelier is of British manufacture but of a design provided by Latrobe.[60] The crimson damask drapery hung around the dais and between the marble was provided by the Philadelphia upholsterer John Rea and is sensuously complimented by the romantic throw of candlelight and the red and green tones of the Brussels carpeting also provided by Rea.[61] To the far right and above the main entrance to the chamber sat Carlo Franzoni's *Car of History*, featuring History standing in a winged chariot and carved in white Italian marble.[62] A clock supplied by the renowned artisan Simon Willard of Roxbury, MA constituted the vessel's wheel.[63]

All "the necessary and proper articles": The Senate Commission

So great was Constantine's success in the House of Representatives that Daniel D. Tompkins, Vice President under James Monroe, offered him the contract for the furnishings the Senate chamber required. In a later petition, Constantine mentions that Tompkins hired him "toward the close of the year A.D.

1819," and stipulates that the order was placed "only six weeks previous to the commencement of the session of Congress in the Winter of 1819."[64] Tompkins retained Constantine to provide "at the expense and cost [of the Senate] the necessary and proper articles of furniture for the chamber and committee rooms of the Senate."[65] By December, he had completed enough of the order to "enable the Honorable Senate to occupy their own apartments at the meeting of Congress." Considering the quantity and quality of furniture sent to Washington, DC, this rapid rate of production marks a major accomplishment by Constantine.[66]

While Clay and Claxton purchased furnishings from a variety of craftsmen, Tompkins used Constantine as an agent in the acquisition of "lamps, carpeting, stoves," and "damask and Moreen," that would compliment his furniture.[67] The cabinetmaker is said to have purchased these items "with cash in the city of New York without his having any gain thereon." The extent of this financial responsibility is astounding. The chairs, desks, tables, and sofas he provided cost $6925, and Constantine sent an additional $7000 worth of merchandise.[68] Much of these materials would have been acquired on credit in his name despite the above claim. Furthermore, an employee, presumably his brother John Constantine, was sent to Washington to oversee the installation of the carpets and drapery.[69]

A letter from William Irving to Henry Clay elaborates on the commitment Constantine had made to furnishing the Capitol. The merchant details a visit from "Mr. Constantine, the person employed here, as upholsterer or cabinet maker for the Senate," who called upon Irving, "as he had done several times before."[70]

Constantine had informed Irving that the Brussels carpeting originally ordered for the House of Representatives was to be forwarded on for use in the Senate, as Claxton "had got out of patience," and "ordered a duplicate quantity from Philadelphia."

The quick turnaround between these two orders in terms of the mobilization of manpower and complete reversal in style is astounding, and to expect the same artisan to capably handle both represents a small leap of faith on the part of the Federal government. In consideration of the vast mobilization of his work force for these Congressional commissions, such day-to-day responsibility likely distracted Constantine from the management of his regular cabinetmaking responsibilities to New York patrons and their families.

What is most remarkable about the Senate contract is the dollar figure allocated for each seat. The $80 price tag for every member's chair ($46) and desk ($34) almost triples the cost of what was provided for the Representatives. Despite the lower quantity of furniture manufactured for the Senate, Tompkins spent only $1200 less on furniture than his counterpart Clay. The luxury reflected in these figures shines through in the quality and design of the extant examples. Comparing the two commissions is akin to juxtaposing apples and oranges. The similarities stop at the use of mahogany and the request for armchairs and desks.

The specific design for the chairs came from Plate 59 of Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807).[71] **(Figure 24)** For this book, Hope, the wealthy son of a successful Dutch banking and mercantile family, assembled line drawings of the furnishings in his fashionable London

townhouse. Completely enamored with ancient cultures and classical purity, he designed the majority of the furnishings seen in these images himself. He wanted to create "objects of lasting perfection and beauty, [that] might have increased in endless progress the opulence of the individual, and the wealth of the community."[72] When designing his interior, Hope evoked the grandeur of the French Empire by consulting the work of prominent Parisian designers such as Charles Percier and Pierre-Francois-Léonard Fontaine, who had received extensive patronage from Napoleon.[73] Despite these Continental connections, Hope also viewed his furniture with a great deal of national pride and argued that by "converting into lucrative articles of home-manufacture...those commodities which had heretofore only appeared in the repulsive and unpatriotic shape of expensive articles of foreign ingenuity," might no longer by required.[74] The Senate could admire their cultured surroundings with the knowledge that their own countrymen were responsible for their production. Many Americans maintained similar sentiments about the importation of European goods, and the Senate clearly hoped to procure well-designed yet domestically manufactured furniture.[75]

The Senate desks are perhaps harder to place into a specific design context than the chairs. Like the House tables, they were fitted with a slanted yet stationary lid and a working drawer below. Although library and sofa tables of this period were constructed with trestle supports like those found on the Senate desks, the former typically included turned and/or carved columns attached to trestle feet rather than the paneled sides found in the latter.

A return to Hope's *Household Furniture* could have provided the general outline for this form. In the illustration of Hope's picture gallery, Plate 2, he includes a single table in the right front foreground, which is detailed in Plate 20. **(Figures 25-26)** The three arguments for this connection are the general shape of the trestle feet and of the support where it meets the table and the central circular reserve with a crossbanded veneer border. Additionally, the applied roundels at the top of the supports appear to be a reflection of the scrolled trestle panels found on a library table in Plate 26, No. 7.[76] **(Figure 26)**

The Man Behind the Design

The reliance on Hope's designs for the Senate seating furniture could have been at the suggestion of either Latrobe, Bulfinch, or Constantine. Latrobe is considered the most likely source by some. As an Englishman who followed the progression of European taste with a mindful eye, he emanated an intimate familiarity with refined classical ornament for in his plans for architectural facades and interior furnishings. The latter is seen in his designs for Waln Family of Philadelphia in 1805-1808 and the President's House in 1809.[77] Latrobe's library is known to have been extensive, and the architect went to great lengths to augment and protect his books throughout his career.[78]

After 1817, Latrobe remained involved in the construction even though Bulfinch had taken over the responsibilities of supervising architect. He certainly did not participate in the design offered by Claxton and Hill for the House furniture, as a man of his worldly tastes would have rather been caught dead than

see such unimpressive chairs and desks grace the opulence of his Capitol. However, Latrobe maintained some role in finishing the interior following his departure, for his role in designing the House's chandelier proves that Clay solicited his opinions. Furthermore, Latrobe may have left plans for furniture behind when he resigned. Bulfinch refers to "a great number of drawings," passed on from Latrobe, that, "exhibited the work already done, and other parts proposed, but not decided on."[79] The architect informed the Senate of Latrobe's exquisite chamber and the intent to "exhibit favorable specimens of correct taste and the progress of the arts" in America.[80]

A precedent for Latrobe-designed Capitol furniture is found in an 1807 letter to Philadelphia upholsterer John Rea.[81] In this correspondence, the architect orders Rea to acquire "blue or crimson good stuff or leather," and seventy or eighty yards of paneled Brussels carpet in crimson for the seats and backs, respectively, of chairs "appropriated to the Senators when visiting the house [sic] of Representatives." Latrobe promised to forward "complete drawings of these seats" in the near future.

Bulfinch is not a likely suspect for the selection of Hope. While he was "an architect of such high political stature, a calm deliberate man with polished manners and an impeccable New England pedigree," Bulfinch was not an innovative designer. He possessed a comprehensive understanding of structural engineering that Latrobe lacked and created sound plans that achieved beauty in their chaste simplicity and coherent organization. These pragmatic qualities

ensured the timely and cost effective completion of the Capitol but also suggests that his role in a plan of the interiors would have been limited.

Furthermore, Bulfinch never fully escaped the influences of the neoclassical styles promoted by Adam and Chambers. He admitted that the drawings and plans left by Latrobe were "in the boldest style," and "calculated for display," and his intention "to follow the plans already prepared for the wings."[82] While Bulfinch did provide the design for the desks and chairs of the Supreme Court's chamber, a room whose architectural plan was entirely his design, this furniture reflects his disinterest in fashionable style.[83] **(Figure 27)**

It is entirely possible that Tompkins left the decision to Constantine. By 1819 copies of Hope's *Household Furniture* could be found advertised in New York newspapers.[84] Whether Constantine owned a copy before the Senate commission came to him is debatable, but his continuous referencing of Hope's designs in later commissions for the North Carolina State House and Christ Church suggests that he maintained easy access to it over the next five years.[85] Thomas and his brother would have gained immensely from a familiarity with the book in the cutthroat competition that surrounded them.

Interpreting the Hierarchy of Style in the Capitol Commissions

Constantine's Senate furnishings are significant for reasons other than their design. More significantly, these desks and chairs provide compelling information about the popular perceptions of the Senate and House, and the distribution of power that came to define their legislative responsibilities. In this

period, Senators were appointed by their respective state governments and were generally considered the most well-educated and well-bred citizens of the country. In contrast, the Representatives received their position from the votes of the common man and were thought of typically as rural upstarts and self-learned men who lacked the pedigree and résumé of their upper house counterparts.

This hierarchy of furnishings seen among the two suites of desks and chairs provided by T. Constantine & Co. thereby defined the relationship of the House and Senate. This differentiation had precedent in the earlier Capitol buildings and had been largely solidified while the federal government stayed in Philadelphia from 1790 to 1800. During this period, not only did the Senate sit physically above the House of Representatives on the second floor, but it received different furniture, as well. Members of that body sat on chairs upholstered in red leather and at single desks where as the Representatives received similar chairs in black leather and were placed at long multi-person writing tables.

This tradition of defining the two bodies by the quality of the furniture and the color of its cushions continued when the government moved to Washington. Latrobe clearly had the intention to differentiate the two groups through their seats when, in 1807, he ordered red leather and Brussels carpeting for the chairs the Senators were to use when visiting the House chamber. While temporarily housed at the Brick Capitol after the War of 1812, Clay refused to allow the Senate to bring their "fine red chairs" into the House's quarters in early 1817 for the inauguration of James Monroe because their "plain democratic ones...were more becoming."[86] The resulting disagreement over furniture was so acrimonious

that the President ultimately took the Oath of Office outside, the first such ceremony since Washington's. According to English visitor Henry Fearon, while in the Brick Capitol, Senators sat on "rich scarlet cushions" that contrasted starkly with the "common chairs" of the Representatives, whose chamber was "marked by an inferiority to the senate, which is rather anti-republican."[87]

When Congress returned to the Capitol in 1819, they also reestablished this separation through their furniture. The receipts for the decorating the Capitol might reflect the financial commitment made by both legislative bodies to producing attractive chambers.[88] Neither legislative body shied away from purchasing elaborate canopies, carpets, and curtains. However, the carved mahogany chairs and elegantly veneered desks in the Senate stood as a far cry from what sat in the House chamber on the other side of the Capitol. Therefore, the desks and chairs are what truly separate these two spaces.

Since a grand scale painting of the room was never executed, contemporary prints help provide a sense of the room's superior décor.[89] **(Figure 28)** In the Senate chamber, one sees an adherence to the contemporary suggestion that the seat upholstery and window dressings were to be of the same color and of the same or at least complimentary materials. The contrast of the staid black horsehair chosen by Claxton to cover his simple furniture against the brilliant red drapery on the walls is yet another reason why the House furniture appears out of date.[90]

In the rehabilitated Capitol public perceptions of the House and Senate continued to reinforce the characteristics of their furniture. In comparison to the

"lack of order and general decorum in the House," visitors found the Senate to be "a dignified and orderly assemblage, its members as a whole high in intellectual ability."[91] Frances Wright's impressions of her trip to the Capitol seem to support the grandeur of the Senate. As with most, she lauded the "elegance of the chamber" and were pleased by the "dignified orderly assemblage" to be found there.[92] Frances Trollope lamented that the "extreme beauty of the [House] chamber...fitted up in so stately and sumptuous manner," be occupied by men "sitting in the most unseemly attitudes, a large majority with their hats on, and nearly all spitting to an excess that decency forbids me to describe."[93]

Hope could not have envisioned this contrast more perfectly. His chair design is a modern rendition of classical elegance and was meant to convey "all that real and all that ideal perfection, all that correctness and all that grace, which so essentially belong to the best antique performances, and to those modern works that profess to retrace their various excellencies."[94] Especially with the robust massing, the Senate chairs appear stately and have all the trappings of Republican power and authority. Rather than durable black haircloth, the Senate required red morocco leather, a covering more fitting to the hierarchical elegance of their chairs. Where the House furniture appears outdated and simple, the Senate's is *en mode* and enviable.

The Senate's chairs and desks are also noteworthy as a declaration of individual space. In the pre-fire chamber and while at the Brick Capitol, most members sat at two-person desks. When they returned to a larger hall in 1819, each Senator was provided his own desk as was the case in Philadelphia. There is

great significance in the fact that members of this body received a personal workspace where as most of the Representatives sat collectively at long tables.[95] One's visual perception when sitting alone greatly exceeds that of another who sits with a group at a long table. Furthermore, a visitor's impression of a legislative body occupying individual desks will be of power, significance, physical presence and independence. This differs from the notions of democracy, equality, and interdependence applied to those sitting at large multi-person tables. Such considerations may have contributed to the spoken differences between the unrefined yet democratic House and the polished yet republican Senate.

Of a Noteworthy Origin: New York Furniture in the Washington Market

The source of the furniture found in the two Capitol chambers is worthy of further elaboration, as well. Even though Constantine may have earned the first contract solely on his low bid, the notion that a New York cabinetmaker would receive both commissions is rather significant. Local craftsmen may have been disgruntled over Tompkins's decision to hand Constantine the Senate commission without first soliciting proposals. Certainly Henry Hill and William Worthington, who had sold furniture to the Capitol and President's House prior to 1819, would have taken issue with this blatant disregard for their skills. Worthington's armchairs for the Monroe bed chambers, dining room, and East Room are quite elegant. He could have produced the Senate suite at the level of design and durability equal to Constantine.[96] William King, another Washington

cabinetmaker of estimable talent, could have capably filled the Senate commission, as well.[97]

Despite the presence of well-trained craftsmen in the capital city, New York appears a logical source for the prominently displayed Capitol furniture. Regardless of Constantine's prior involvement in the House commission, Americans in the early nineteenth century commonly looked to that city for sources of modern taste. It behooved the Senate to procure fashionable wares for the chamber. The gibes of foreigners and countrymen alike against the appearance of Washington, DC were an "ever present reminder to the men in power of the low esteem in which power was held."[98] To mitigate these criticisms, the federal government alike to develop symbols of sophistication in its built environments and interior spaces. Barbara Carson notes that Washingtonians "looked up to the foreign ministers as leaders of fashion," and "admired diplomatic dinner parties, teas, and routs."[99] This argument is furthered by Bernard Herman who mentions how residents developed their surroundings according to urban design traditions that were "cosmopolitan," and "recognized throughout the English-speaking cities of the north Atlantic rim."[100] Although Washingtonians were transient and diverse by nature, they balanced the influences of local Southern cultural practices with an ambition that was national in scope.

New York's effect on decorative arts was certainly national, as well, and its manufactures would have appealed to the Capital's style-conscious government servants. In the Southern context, it began with the migration of New

York craftsmen to port cities in Virginia following the Revolution. Hurst and Prown believe the presence of New York craftsmen "had a profound impact on the appearance and construction of [Norfolk's] furniture as it did in other southern cities."[101] Gustavus Bealle, a Georgetown artisan who began his career in New York city, advertised himself as a "CABINETMAKER, FROM NEW YORK," able to provide "all kinds of Furniture in the neatest and most fashionable stile [sic], having a number of the best hands constantly employed."[102]

In the first decades of the 1800s, products emanating from northern urban centers found ready consumers among the government officials and dignitaries residing in Washington. Utilitarian pieces could be found easily enough, and Charles Bulfinch wrote to his wife to say "furniture of the common kind may be bought [in Washington] as cheap as [what is brought] with you which will prevent the necessity of you buying any [in Boston]."[103] More refined objects were to be imported, though, and Bulfinch family bills reveal that bookcases, desks, chairs, and beds produced elsewhere were sent to the capital.[104]

A number of local residents refer to household goods sent from New York to the capital. After moving to Washington from Richmond in December 1817, US Attorney General William Wirt wrote to his wife Elizabeth on the furnishings that their new home required. He relayed advice offered by Stephen Decatur's wife, who "insists most strenuously that you should depend on the furniture you have for this winter, and get what you want from N. York in the Spring—She has tried it and you must not get your furniture here."[105] Such was the manner in which the fashionable members of Washington society learned of the acceptable

approach for furnishing their quarters.[106] Those who appreciated the opulent furnishings of Washington's renowned interiors would have found Constantine's Senate furniture to be especially desirable.

One should also not diminish the powerful influence of federal officials from New York during this period. As New Englanders and Southerners began to polarize over issues relating to states' rights and slavery in the early nineteenth century, the Mid-Atlantic provided an appealing and significant buffer in Washington.[107] Sitting as Vice President under Monroe and a constant fixture in the Senate was Daniel D. Tompkins of New York, the man who have Constantine the commission, no questions asked. Also, the state claimed twenty-seven delegates in the House of Representatives that year, a total matched only by Pennsylvania.[108] Furthermore, both Senators and two Representatives of the state hailed from New York City.[109] Just as state pride and hometown loyalties figured prominently in the debate to relocate the Capitol in the 1780s, New Yorkers must have felt similar esteem for the elegant furniture that occupied a grand space in the nation's most renowned building.

Ultimately, a New York cabinetmaker's furniture would contribute to the palpable enthusiasm with which the House and Senate chambers were described. Despite the budget cuts and impending deadlines that hindered Bulfinch's execution of the plans, the halls were quite remarkable.[110] The plastered ceilings imitated a coffered masonry dome and featured the elegant ornamental elements of Latrobe's decorative repertoire in the stars, arrows, and honeysuckle that adorned the walls and ceiling.[111] It is the furniture of these two rooms that

illustrated the vastly different meanings that can be associated with the product of a single cabinetmaker's store.

NOTES TO PART 2, CHAPTER 1

[1] Thomas Jefferson to Benjamin Henry Latrobe, July 12, 1812. Cited in *Thomas Jefferson and the National Capitol,* ed. Saul K. Padover (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1946), 471.

[2] Benjamin Henry Latrobe to Thomas Jefferson, July 12, 1815, Latrobe Papers, Library of Congress. Cited in Paul F. Norton, *Latrobe, Jefferson and the National Capitol* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), 232.

[3] The reference to the Capitol as Latrobe's magnum opus is borrowed from William C. Allen, *History of the United States Capitol: A Chronicle of design, construction, and politics* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2001), 98. The reference to the burning pile is from Alexander F. Dallas, *An Exposition of the Causes and Characters of the War*, in the *Annals of Congress*, 13th Congress, 3rd Session, page 1416. Cited in Norton, 232. The incendiaries continued their mission into the night and through the next morning by putting the torch to the President's House and the War and Treasury departments, as well. For secondary source accounts of the burning of Washington, see Allen, 232-235.

[4] "An Act making appropriations for repairing and rebuilding the public buildings within the city of Washington," approved February 13, 1815, *Documentary History of the Construction and Development of the United States Capitol Building and Grounds* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1904), 185.

[5] Allen, 101-102.

[6] Allen, 103.

[7] Allen, 123.

[8] William Lee to Charles Bulfinch, October 1, 1817, in Charles Bulfinch and Ellen S. Bulfinch, *The Life and Letters of Charles Bulfinch, architect* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., 1896). William Lee was a close friend of Bulfinch as well as a confidant of Lane and Monroe. He kept the Boston architect informed of Latrobe's difficulties and encouraged him to apply for the job even before Latrobe had resigned. Not wanting to become personally involved in the struggle,

Bulfinch insisted on waiting until Latrobe was fired or decided to leave on his own volition.

[9] The entire building, including the spectacular central rotunda, was finished in 1826, a full thirty-three years after George Washington had laid the cornerstone.

[10] "Act making appropriations for the public buildings, and for furnishing the Capitol and President's House," April 20, 1818, *Documentary History*, 206.

[11] Benjamin Henry Latrobe to John Rae, September 3, 1807, Latrobe Mss. Letters, pp. 444-446, Library of Congress. Provided by the Office of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, DC.

[12] The reference to a green lining likely refers to the application of green baize to the inside of the show fabric to provide a pleasing contrast as well as protection and additional support for the curtain. In 1825-1826, the North Carolina legislature "ordered green baize curtains hung between [the draperies] and the window glass," in order to protect them from the sun. See Elizabeth Reid Murray, *Wake: Capital County of North Carolina*, Volume I, (Raleigh, NC: Capital County Publishing, 1983). Murray cites a law recorded in *North Carolina Laws, 1825-1826*, Resolutions, 89.

[13] Benjamin Henry Latrobe, "Design proposed for the Hall of Representatives U.S. Section from North to South," in Allen, 104.

[14] Votes and Proceedings of the House of Delegates of the State of Maryland, November Session, 1807, 93, Maryland State Archives, Annapolis, MD. I would like to thank A. Sasha Lourie for this citation. Mr. Lourie's Master's thesis examines the role of the Tuck brothers in the Annapolis furniture market and takes special note of their relationship with John Shaw, the cabinetmaker with whom they apprenticed. See A. Sasha Lourie, "'Have honestly and fairly laboured for money': William and Washington Tuck and Annapolis Cabinetmaking, 1795-1838," (Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Maryland, 2004).

[15] "Report of B. Henry Latrobe on Public Buildings," June 13, 1819, *Documentary History*, 155-156. Latrobe states "of the furniture now on hand, no part is applicable to the new apartments, excepting chairs of various descriptions, and a few tables. The desks of the Senators are inconvenient from their size, and being each of a different length and form cannot be adapted to the regular distribution so necessary to the economy of space."

[16] "An Act making an appropriation to finish and furnish the Senate Chamber, and for other purposes," June 28, 1809, *Documentary History*, 156-157.

[17] Since the furniture Latrobe designed in this period relied heavily on painted ornamentation, I imply that the chairs and desks he ordered for the House and Senate in these years would have been similarly decorated.

[18] Allen, 132.

[19] Henry B. Fearon, *A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles Through the Eastern and Western States of America* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), 309. It is interesting to note that even in the Senate's temporary situation at the Brick Capitol, the Speaker's chair was "central, under a handsome canopy."

[20] Fearon, 311. Fearon's statement implies that the Senate's furniture was painted at this point.

[21] "Act to Dispose of the Furniture of the House of Representatives, *Annals of Congress*, Vol. 35, 16th Congress, 1st Session, 1819-1820, p. 758.

[22] *National Intelligencer*, Washington, DC, December 6, 1819.

[23] *American and Baltimore Daily Advertiser*, December 10, 1801, 2-1. Courtesy of Ann Kenny at the Office of the Architect of the Capitol. At this point, the public gallery was located in front of the Speaker's chair rather than in a second story overlook.

[24] Frances Collard, *Regency Furniture* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors' Club, 1985), 279. This practice contrasts to the use of colorful printed chintzes and painted silks that were popular fabrics for upholstery and drapery during the rococo and neoclassical periods.

[25] The drapery is reminiscent of the idea of a tent room as seen at Napoleon's Mountmaison and in Hope's Duchess Street interiors.

[26] Collard, 281.

[27] George Smith, *Collection of Designs for Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, eds. Charles F. Montgomery and Benno M. Foreman (New York: Praeger, 1970), xii-xiii.

[28] This process is also summarized in Margaret B. Klapthor, "Furniture in the Capitol: Desks and Chairs Used in the Chamber of the House of Representatives, 1819-1857," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1970), 191-211.

[29] The first commissioners of Washington had drafted a similar advertisement in 1792 from L'Enfant's initial designs to solicit architectural plans for the new Capitol. Allen, 13.

[30] *Mercantile Advertiser*, May 15, 1818, 2.

[31] The original ad was placed in Washington's *National Intelligencer* on May 12, 1818 and later in the *Baltimore Patriot*, Philadelphia's *Franklin Gazette*, and New York's *Mercantile Advertiser*.

[32] *Mercantile Advertiser*, May 15, 1818, 2. The advertisement was supposed to run for four weeks consecutively, or until proposals were due on June 8. It last appears in the *Mercantile Advertiser* on June 6, 1818.

[33] Washington, DC, *National Intelligencer*, June 3, 1818, 3. Cited in Johnson, 196. The author was unable to locate this addendum in the *Mercantile Advertiser* between June 3-June 18, 1818.

[34] A brief description of the New York craftsmen applying for the House of Representatives contract:
a. Thomas Constantine: see Part 1, Chapter 2.
b. Charles Honoré-Lannuier: see Part 1, Chapter 1.
c. William Mandeville: see Part 1, Chapter 1.
d. Alexander M. Haywood: An advertisement of May 30, 1818 in the *New-York Evening Post* refers to a large stock of "handsome furniture...that he has on hand...All furniture of the best quality and workmanship, and of the newest European fashions."
e. Asten & Hyslop: Spelled in the ad, "Aston & Hyslop," this arrangement was short lived, and by 1819, Thomas Asten [Aston, Astens] was working independently. A center table with his label is featured in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *19th-Cenutry Furniture and Other Decorative Arts* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1970), Cat. No. 53.

[35] A brief description of the Washington, DC area cabinetmakers:
a. Henry V. Hill: In addition to providing the models for the House commission, Hill was regularly retained by Congress for the repair of old furniture and the construction of new wares, (Klapthor, 204). One time partner of Charles R. Belt, possibly of the same family as Benjamin M. Belt, listed below, (*Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), March 30, 1813, 3-5). Hill sold a pair of French bureaus, wardrobes, and fourteen cherry chairs to the President's House during the occupancy of John Quincy Adams, (Monkman, 74).
b. Gustavus Bealle [Beall]: Listed at 62 Nassau Street in New York in *Longworth's* 1811 and 1812, and had relocated to Georgetown by September 3, 1812 where he advertised himself as "Gustavus Beall, CABINETMAKER,

FROM NEW YORK," (*The Courier* (Georgetown, DC), September 3, 1812, 2-3). Bealle left the cabinetmaking trade in the summer of 1819, and Truman West adverted that he had "purchased the entire stock in trade of Gustavus Beall...and has on hand a quantity of excellent Mahogany Furniture...and every article in the Upholstery line," (*Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), August 17, 1819, 3-3).

c. William Worthington, Jr.: Began his career in Georgetown before relocating to Washington in 1800 where he operated a "CABINET AND CHAIR MANUFACTORY," (*Washington Federalist* (Georgetown, DC), December 19, 1800, 3-4; and *National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), October 9, 1809, 3-5). Worthington supplied the Madison family with bedsteads, settees, and chairs in 1815, (Monkman, 43). The Monroes purchased from him a sideboard, French bedstead, and large dressing tables, (Monkman, 55-56). For John Quincy Adams, he built a small writing desk, a bureau, a mahogany washstand, and a knife box, (Monkman, 74).

d. Benjamin M. Belt: Apprenticed with Worthington in 1802 at the age of 18, (District of Columbia, *Records of Apprentices' Indentures, 1801-1811*, 43). He opened own shop by 1813 when he advertised the sale of piano fortés manufactured in Baltimore, (*Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), July 7, 1813, 3-4). John Quincy Adams purchased two high-post bedsteads from Belt after moving into the President's House in 1825, (Monkman, 74).

[36] A brief description of the Philadelphia cabinetmakers:

a. John Rea: Rea's involvement with the US Capitol extends as far back as 1807 when Latrobe writes to him in regards to upholstery fabrics and furniture required for the House of Representatives. The Philadelphia upholsterer was also responsible for the carpeting and a great deal of the draperies that were hung in the House chamber during the post-War of 1812 reconstruction. Rea was also closely involved in the furnishing of the President's House in 1810 by Latrobe and Dolley Madison, (Monkman, 40).

b. Otto James: Working at 244, 344, and 350 S. Front Street in the first decade of the nineteenth century, James spent 1808-1816 at 342 S. 2nd Street, (Craftsmen Files, DAPC, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE).

[37] A brief description of the New England cabinetmakers:

a. James Barker, Boston, MA: Included in Mabel Swan's list in "Boston's Carvers and Joiners, Part II: Post-Revolutionary," as active in 1814, (*The Magazine Antiques*, April 1948, 284). He worked at 120 Orange Street in 1820, (Craftsmen Files, DAPC). When Thomas Seymour chose to abandon his position as an independent craftsman in 1817, he first went to work for Barker. Barker advertised that he had "engaged Mr. Thomas Seymour, to superintend the Cabinet and chair making, at his establishment at No. 120, Orange-street—having obtained a full supply of the best of woods and other materials and first rate workmen—is enabled to furnish all kinds of furniture, equal in style and

workmanship to any in the United States," (*New England Palladium* (Boston), July 1, 1817). Barker closed his store in 1819, (Robert D. Mussey, Jr., *The Furniture Masterworks of John and Thomas Seymour* (Salem, MA: Peabody Essex Museum, 2003), 73-74).
b. George Clark, Portland, ME: Working at Congress and Pebble Streets in 1823-1831, on Main Street in 1834, and back to Congress Street by 1841, where he "has the right to make and vend in Cumberland County Russel's improved patent screw beds," (Craftsmen Files, DAPC).

[38] However, it is odd that even though the advertisement was run in a Baltimore newspaper, no Maryland cabinetmakers applied. With their experience with the Annapolis State House commissions of 1797 and 1807, the Tuck brothers would have been at an advantage.

[39] Constantine's bid "per chair and drawer" simplified his proposal by giving a flat rate per-person. Thus, a five person desk containing five drawers and including five chairs would cost $150.

[40] Johnson, 200.

[41] Constantine may not have been aware of Claxton's request for an additional estimate for the curved tables or had sent his bid on before the revision was published. Neither of the New England artisans had submitted them, as well. They were handicapped by Claxton's failure to publish the notice in a New England newspaper. Another explanation for his low bid could be the presence of his brother John, an upholsterer. With John working in house, Thomas did not have to increase the chair prices as much as if the upholstering duties had been shopped out.

[42] This is especially true for Lannuier, who had national appeal. Had Claxton proposed to Clay that a higher bid be considered, though, Lannuier's adherence for his French ancestry and prevalence in high-style furniture might have raised criticism from members of the house.

[43] Allen, 130. A stone cutter's strike and the near collapse of the Senate Chamber's vaulted roof were the two main causes of the delay in 1818.

[44] "An Account of Expenditures made by or under the authority of H. Clay for furnishing the Hall of the House of Representatives," HR 16A-D1. 1-A, Record Group 233, Records of the House of Representatives, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. This Report contains all receipts pertaining to the purchases made under Henry Clay's discretion and includes payments for furniture, carpeting, stoves and fire implements, upholstery, chandeliers, etc.

[45] The first three payments are recorded in "The Honorable Henry Clay, Speaker of the House of Representatives, in a/c current with Thomas Claxton For furnishing the House of Representatives, US, and the Committee Rooms attached thereto," no date, HR 16A-D1. 2-A, NARA.

[46] Petition of Thomas Constantine to the House of Representatives, March 31, 1820, *Journal of the Proceedings of the House of Representatives,* Page 333. The resolution was adopted and Constantine presumably received his money.

[47] Reprinted in the *New York Daily Advertiser*, November 2, 1819.

[48] New-York Society of Journeymen Cabinetmakers, *The New-York book for prices for manufacturing cabinet and chair work* (New York: J. Seymour, 1817), 106. Hereinafter NYBP.

[49] Montgomery referred to them as "the most distinctively American of the furniture forms used in the Federal period," and cited no examples produced outside of the North except a Campeachy-style chair from New York. Montgomery, 155-156. While uniquely American, Montgomery recognizes that upholstered open-arm chairs were first produced in France in the early eighteenth-century, and were referred to as "French Elbow Chairs," in English design books.

[50] Thomas Chippendale, *The Gentleman & Cabinet-Maker's Director* (New York: Dover, 1966), XIX-XXIII. The Dover publication is a reprint of the third edition of the *Director* (1762).

[51] See William Voss Elder III and Lu Bartlett, *John Shaw, Cabinetmaker of Annapolis* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1983), Catalogue #s 43-45, 47, Page 125-133, 135-136.

[52] NYBP, 1817, 108.

[53] NYBP, 1817, Plate 6, Chair Legs 1.

[54] NYBP, 1817, 108.

[55] NYBP, 1817, 58-61.

[56] Charles Burton, *Common Council Chamber, City Hall, New York,* c. 1821, Sepia, 2 ¾ x 3 ½ in., Collection of the New-York Historical Society. Bequest of Stephen Whitney Phoenix, 1881. Illustrated in Kenny et al., 140.

[57] NYBP, 1817, 58. For the Christian table with bookcase see DAPC ACC. 1973.991, DAPC.

[58] See Elder and Barlett, catalogue # 48, page 137-138.

[59] Paul Staiti, *Samuel F.B. Morse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989): 72. See also Paul Staiti, "Samuel F.B. Morse and the Search for the Grand Style," in Staiti, Paul and Reynolds, Gary, *Samuel F.B. Morse* (New York: Grey Art Gallery, 1982): 41-42.

[60] Receipt of Payment, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, December 2, 1818, "Expenditures for furnishing the Hall," HR 16A-D1. 1-A, No. 3, NARA. On December 2, 1818, the architect—then living in Baltimore—received $50, "For the design of a Chandelier & Lamps with all the details of construction & directions to the Workmen, for lighting the House of Representatives in the Capitol U. States." Produced in Birmingham under the direction of Henry Van Wart, the chandelier arrived in Washington via the merchant house of Irving, Smith & Hyslop along with a smaller chandelier, fifty bracket lights, and Brussels carpeting, all of which would be installed in the Senate chamber. B.B. French, the author of a narrative describing Washington, DC society mentioned the destruction of a glass chandelier on December 18, 1840. French states that the chandelier had been provided by Hooper & Co. in Boston and had only been hung a year before. He notes that, "this is the second chandelier that has fallen," suggesting that Latrobe's had me a similar fate by 1839. See *Documentary History*, 337-338 and Allen, 179, 472, n. 31, 32.

[61] Receipt of Payment, John Rea, no date, "Expenditure for furnishing the Hall," HR 16A-D1. 1-A, No. 29, NARA. John Rea received a total of $7920.63 for "Carpeting, Curtains, &c. &c." This was the largest single payout listed in the Expenditures.

[62] Allen, 121, 132.

[63] Receipt of Payment, Simon Willard, December 11, 1819, "Expenditure for furnishing the Hall," HR 16A-D1. 1-A, No. 8 a and b, NARA. Willard received $400 for the clock, and Nathan Ruggles, a Representative from Boston, received an additional $20 for "making & executing a contract, in writing, with Mr. Simon Willard, for a Clock for the Representatives Hall in the Capitol at Washington—superintending the work from time to time, as to plan & dimensions, materials & the finish." Ruggles insisted that this money be forwarded on to Willard.

[64] Constantine, Petition of 1826, NARA.

[65] A larger quantity of furniture for the committee room became a necessity when the Senate chose to enact permanent assignments in late 1816. These groups "needed accommodations that were private...where papers could be securely stored and where committee members might work." Latrobe altered the floor plan for the Senate wing to allow for additional rooms, and the new layout provided eleven committee chambers in all.

[66] Certainly, he shopped-out a great portion of the commission, hence the aforementioned plea in early November 1819 for twenty capable sofa-makers.

[67] The lamps requested by the Senate could have been obtained from a merchant such as Samuel Judd who operated a store three blocks east of Constantine at 57 Fulton Street. Judd advertised in the *Mercantile Advertiser* that he had "LAMPS & LAMP GLASSES" in stock including large and small "fancy Church Lamps," "elegant stand Lamps," and brass or Japanned "suspending Lamps." *Mercantile Advertiser*, February 20, 1826.

[68] All the figures relating to Constantine's expenditures for the Senate chamber are described in his petition. Unlike the House purchases, which are documented by an extensive quantity of receipts, invoices, and letters, the Senate retains no other information regarding their purchases save this petition.

[69] Constantine, Petition of 1826, NARA.

[70] William Irving to Henry Clay, December 8, 1819, HR 16A-D1. 1-A, No. 5, NARA.

[71] Although his direct impact on American decorative arts pales in comparison to that of Chippendale, Sheraton, Hepplewhite, and Smith, Hope's treatise provides an noteworthy discussion of the cultural, nationalistic, and artistic significance of decorative arts and is an important source book for classical design. Discussion's of Hope include: Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration: Executed from Designs by Thomas Hope*, ed. Clifford Musgrave (London: Alec Tiranti, 1970); Edward T. Joy, *English Furniture, 1800-1851* (London: Sotheby Parke Bernet, 1977), 46-63; Clifford Musgrave, "In Search of Thomas Hope," *The Antique Collector* (August 1972), 192-204; David Watkin, *Thomas Hope and the Neo-Classical Idea* (London: Murray, 1968); and Sandor Baumgarten, *Le Crépuscule Néo-Classique Thomas Hope* (Paris: Didier, 1958).

[72] Hope, 1970, 3.

[73] Roberta J.M. Olson and Margaret K. Hofer, *Seat of Empire* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 2002), 1. Olson and Hofer provide an excellent

illustration of the grandeur of Napoleonic France as well as the value of such associations for artifacts sold out of their original environment.

[74] Hope, 1970, 6.

[75] A New York journalist, outraged by the Monroe's purchase of French furniture, thought that wares of an equal quality could be procured in his home city, saying: "Now I will venture to assert, with entire confidence, that the best, the very best household furniture, in this city, whether taking into consideration the materials, the workmanship, or the taste and elegance of design, has been made here. And whoever wishes to be satisfied of the degree of perfection to which our mechanics in this particular branch have arrived, may gratify their curiosity by calling, at any time, at Mr. Phyfe's cabinet ware-house in Fulton-street, and looking at his articles of cabinet work." *New-York Evening Post*, November 13, 1817. Cited in Brown, 66. Henry Fearon criticized the United States' dependency on foreign goods, and could not quite understand why Americans did not think more highly of their native resources and manufactures. He lamented: "The Americans...are not content with the production of their own country: they have made large imports from Italy of its most expensive marble; and so anxious is even the President himself for 'foreign ornament,' that he has imported chairs a one hundred dollars each, though the cabinet-makers of Baltimore would have equaled and I believe surpassed them in every particular, at the price of sixty dollars!" Fearon, 284.

[76] The desks did not meet all of the Senate's expectations upon their arrival in Washington. Bookshelves were added to them over the following decades. Though the Senators needed shelving under their desks for book and document storage as they did not recognize this need prior to ordering the furniture from Constantine. Testifying to the skill of Washington, DC craftsmen, this was carried out in an elegant fashion. The shelves have a robust cockbead and are slid halfway into the side supports. Around the remainder of the each platform, ten baluster-shaped spindles connect the shelf to the bottom of the desk. On a separate note, the proportions for the chairs in relation to the desks represent a major design flaw because the desk is two inches too low for the height of the chair arms. Whenever a Senator rolled his seat forward, the front corner of the arms would run into the drawer front. Over the last 185 years, this has resulted in extensive damage to the desks, such as gouges, wood and finishes losses, and missing cockbeading.

[77] Despite the similarity of Hope's designs to the furniture Latrobe planned for the Waln Family of Philadelphia in 1805-1808 and the Madisons at the President's House in 1809-1810 and the insistence of modern scholars linking the two gentlemen, the architect was likely using a source other than Hope for his drawings. They are generic enough to have come from a variety of sources of

classical decoration. Hope's *Household Furniture* was narrowly circulated that and Latrobe would have had little opportunity to acquire it prior to the execution of those commissions. The architect's library may have contained the volume by 1819, though, enabling this reference for the Senate commission. For discussions of the two Latrobe furniture commissions, see Jack L. Lindsey, "An Early Latrobe Furniture Commission," *The Magazine Antiques*, 139, no. 1 (January 1991), 212; and Monkman, 38.

[78] Having declared bankruptcy within two weeks of his resignation as Surveyor of the Capitol in 1817, Latrobe went to great lengths to protect his architectural books from the auction block fate that awaited his family's household goods. He borrowed $198 to save his library, a sum that could have represented hundreds of volumes. Allen, 123.

[79] Charles Bulfinch to Hanna Bulfinch, January 7, 1818, *Life and Letters*.

[80] Charles Bulfinch to Samuel Lane, "A Report and Estimate on the Capitol," February 5, 1818, *Documentary History*, 201.

[81] Benjamin Henry Latrobe to John Rea, September 3, 1807, Latrobe Mss. Letters, pp. 444-446, Library of Congress. Provided by the Office of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, DC.

[82] Charles Bulfinch to Hanna Bulfinch, March 16, 1818, *Life and Letters*, 213.

[83] On March 10, 1819, Tench Ringgold, US Marshal of the District of Columbia, paid Bulfinch $100 for "directing the fitting up & furnishing of the Court room in the Capitol. viz. for drawings & instruction to workmen." See Record Group 217, Account 38,870, #15, NARA, Washington, DC. A year later he received an additional $100 for "his attention and aid in making the contracts for the furniture of the Supreme Court and making the drawings" which "saved the United States more than $500." See Record Group 217, Account 41,094, #15, NARA, Washington, DC. I would like to thank John Driggers for these references. It is important to reinforce the point that Bulfinch was totally responsible for the Supreme Court Chamber from design to construction to furnishing. Even though he altered some of Latrobe's designs for the Senate chamber, Bulfinch did not have the same role in the final appearance of that room.

[84] The first reference to Hope's book is contained in an advertisement in the *New-York Daily Advertiser*, January 1, 1819 by C. Wiley and Co. of 3 Wall Street. Cited in Waxman, 55. While I must suspect that the book had reached American shores well before that date, the timing of this appearance is convenient to the Senate commission.

[85] Waxman discusses a number of circulating libraries that stocked periodicals and books relating to modern fashion and decorative art design such as A.T. Goodrich & Co. at 124 Broadway and Lockwood's Library, Waxman, 52-53.

[86] *National Intelligencer*, March 4, 1817. Cited in Wilhelmus Bogart Bryan, *A History of the National Capital*, Vol. II (New York: Macmillan, 1916), 33.

[87] Fearon, 309, 311.

[88] However, one should recognize that the expense of furnishing these rooms had irked a substantial percentage of both the House and Senate. A number of thrifty Congressmen sided with Senator Eligius Fromentin's (LA) argument that "Our laws to be wholesome need not to be enacted in a palace." Senate proceedings of February 3, 1815, *Documentary History*, 178. Cited in Allen, 100.

[89] Morse abandoned his original plan to execute a rendering of the Senate chamber and Rotunda upon the commercial failure of his painting of the House of Representatives. Staiti, 27.

[90] A dark or strong tone was considered the best covering for furniture made of mahogany. Red leather was not required, though, and black haircloth was considered acceptable. See J.C. Loudon, *The Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm, and Villa Architecture* (London: Longman, Orne, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1835), 1074-1075. The House of Representatives' interest in maintaining the simple black haircloth seat coverings further represents a desire for economy, efficiency, and simple good looks. Heppelwhite had recommended that "Mahogany chairs should have the seats of horse hair," and this policy continued through the Regency period in England and America as a less costly upholstery solution. George Heppelwhite, The Cabinetmaker and Upholsterer's Guide (New York: Dover, 1969), 2.

[91] Robert B. Downs, *Images of America: Travelers from Abroad in the New World* (Urbanna, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 16.

[92] Frances Wright, *Views of Society and Manners in America*, ed. Paul R. Baker. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963), 265; and Max Berger, *The British Traveller in America, 1836-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 95.

[93] Trollope, 190.

[94] Hope, 13. The Senate armchairs represent a wholehearted appreciation for the classical motifs of the robust French Empire style. Under Napoleon, Egyptian, Greek, and Roman motifs were fused together in open arm, straight back chairs

such as these. A product of France's political climate, "the Empire style—spare, noble, massive—has a studied dignity consistent with Napoleonic majesty." Typical of this period, the molding around the seat frame is spare, accentuates the geometry of the front rail with right angles, and does not interrupt the flat surface of the rail. French Empire armchairs of this period were generally upholstered and combine straight front legs with saber rear legs. See Sylvie Chadenet, ed., *French Furniture: From Louis XIII to Art Deco* (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1981), 102. The thick cushioned seat is suggested in the Hope drawing.

[95] Both legislative bodies received more space than the members of England's Parliament. In the House of Lords and the House of Commons, the representatives sat without desks in long, tiered benches that resemble church pews. The arrangement of these rooms also differed. Shaped as long rectangles, the chambers were not organized as semi-circles according to classical precedence as were the chambers at the United States Capitol. See Patrick Cormack, *Westminster Palace & Parliament* (London: Frederick Warne, 1981), 73-74.

[96] Monkman, 54-56.

[97] Ronald L. Hurst and Jonathan Prown, *Southern Furniture, 1680-1830: The Colonial Williamsburg Collection* (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1997), 155-160.

[98] James S. Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 41. I would like to thank Dr. James D. Curtis for recommending this source.

[99] Barbara G. Carson, *Ambitious Appetites: Dining, Behavior, and Patterns of Consumption in Federal Washington* (Washington, DC: American Institutes of Architects Press, 1990), 145.

[100] Bernard L. Herman, "Southern City, National Ambition: Washington's Early Town Houses," in *Southern City, National Ambition: The Growth of Early Washington, D.C., 1800-1860*, ed. Howard Gillette, Jr. (Washington, DC: American Architectural Foundation, 1995), 22.

[101] Hurst and Prown, 132.

[102] *The Courier*, Georgetown, DC, September 3, 1812, page 2, column 3. Courtesy of MESDA.

[103] Charles Bulfinch to Hannah Bulfinch, February 1, 1818, *Life and Letters*, 219.

[104] *Life and Letters*, 226. Hannah Bulfinch commented to a friend that upon her arrival in Washington "some things [were] added which for several years have been wanting—I mean such as good furniture and more help." Hannah Bulfinch to Mrs. E. Coolidge, July 15, 1818, *Life and Letters*, 229.

[105] William Wirt to Elizabeth Wirt, December 3, 1817, William Wirt Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.

[106] The interiors selected by the President and other prominent figures were another important influence on the decoration of public and private spaces in Washington. The regular social events held at the President's House offered the opportunity to appraise these imported styles. Elizabeth Wickham, the wife of John Wickham, a wealthy lawyer and plantation owner from Richmond and patron of Lannuier, requested that her husband pay special attention while visiting the President's House, saying:

> If you see Mrs. Monroe take notice of how she looks whether she wears the token. In short you must look at everything particularly at the furniture which I am told is so splendid. I am ashamed of this postscript but I believe it is allowable in a female curiosity you know is our bane. (Elizabeth Wickham to John Wickham, February 21, N/D, Wickham Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, Virginia.)

Such was the social significance of these civic spaces. Louis McLane, a Representative from Wilmington, DE relayed his impressions of the Monroe home with noteworthy zeal. He told his wife:

> The splendour of this scene could not easily be surpassed, and if fully gratified the curiosity of all. Large and capacious as was the rooms allotted for the company, they were well filled... [I]mmediately back of the [reception] hall were four rooms magnificently furnished...The taste and splendour of Europe have contributed to decorate and enrich these rooms: and have given them a splendour which is really astonishing. It would be difficult to pronounce which part of the furniture was most beautiful, tho' I think the mirrors and the chairs were certainly the most striking. (Louis McLane to Kitty McLane, January 1, 1818, Louis McLane Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscripts Collection, Washington, DC).

Although Catherine Allgor introduces readers to the significance of the domestic sphere in early nineteenth-century government through her book *Parlor Politics*, she does little to inform them of the importance of domestic furnishings outside of those selected by Dolley Madison for the President's House. The role that furniture played in the dinner parties, parlor gatherings, and political gatherings of greater Washington society is not mentioned, nor is the greater abundance of goods brought from Europe or more cosmopolitan cities in the United States, such

as New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 61-62. Allgor also incorrectly refers to Thomas Hope as an "English furniture maker" and fails to understand the extensive French influence found in his designs. Allgor hints at the delicate balance between imported luxury items and domestic decorative goods and suggests that Mrs. Madison capably presented a "public image for all Americans" and combined "Republican simplicity with Federalist high style." Allgor, 63.

[107] Young, 93. Young mentions that sectional affiliation frequently determined the constituency of the various Washington, DC boarding houses patronized by legislators. See Young, 98.

[108] For a list of the members of the 15th Congress, see *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress: 1774-1989* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1989), 89-91.

[109] Boston was the only other city claiming four members of Congress in 1819.

[110] During renovations, some of the grandeur of the original plans may have been lost, but the rooms still clearly reflected the talented hands of the two contributing architects: Latrobe and Bulfinch. Allen questions the forethought ultimately placed into the final product, for "after the room was rushed to completion, crimson drapery, mahogany furniture, and brass lighting fixtures" were hurriedly introduced to "restore the overall impression of luxury and taste." Allen, 132. While the furniture may have been hastily built and the other furnishings quickly assembled, this does not detract from the success of their design not the significance of their presence.

[111] Latrobe used many of these elements throughout his career in both architectural plans and furniture design. For instance, the honeysuckle figures prominently in his 1809 drawings for the seating furniture of the Oval Drawing Room at the President's House. Monkman, 39.

Part 2, Chapter 2

THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE HOUSE COMMISSION, 1822-1823

"While we are furnishing the representatives of the people, suitable to the dignity of their body, it is surely a source of pleasure that we are, at the same time giving encouragment to genius and attainments in one of the fine arts, which have hitherto been so little known, or properly estimated, among us."[1]
--North Carolina Governor Gabriel Holmes to the State Legislature, November 18, 1822

Constantine's work at the United States Capitol proved to be a jumping off point for another significant public commission. In the early 1820s, the North Carolina legislators concluded that their state was deserving of a Capitol building more refined and dignified than their current outmoded facility. The General Assembly had recently contracted Italian artist Antonio Canova to execute a large marble sculpture of George Washington and had earlier commissioned Thomas Sully for two portraits of the late president.[2] **(Figure 29)** The legislators now required a home that would appropriately compliment these works of art, and adopted plans that were "calculated not only to receive the Statue, but to accommodate the members of Assembly more comfortably, to enlarge the Galleries....and greatly improve its external appearance.[3] They envisioned a grand neoclassical edifice that could connect Raleigh to the highly regarded

government buildings of Washington, DC, and would reflect the local comprehension of and appreciation for architecture and the arts.

To execute their plan, the state recruited William Nichols, an English trained master builder turned architect who appeared in Edenton, North Carolina by 1806.[4] Nichols's biographer linked the architect to a family in Bath and believes that he was the son of Samuel Nichols, a master builder, joiner, and surveyor for that city. William was described early on as a "Clerk, Draftsman, Surveyor, Architect, and regular bred Workman, of considerable talents, ingenuity, and merit."[5] While living in Fayetteville, the state's largest city, prior to his arrival in Raleigh, Nichols designed the State Bank Branch, the Cape Fear Bank, the municipal waterworks, and a number of prominent private commissions.[6]

Named as Surveyor of Public Buildings in 1817 and State Architect for North Carolina the following year, Nichols was the obvious choice to redesign Raleigh's modest Georgian capitol building of 1792-1794.[7] With the knowledge of European fashions gained from reading Richardon's *New Vetruvius Britannicus* and Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*, Nichols assumed the role of a conveyor of refined neoclassical taste just as Latrobe had done in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington.[8]

For the state house, he added Palladian pseudo-porticoes to the east and west façades of a plain three-bay Georgian structure. **(Figure 30)** These pedimented fronts sat on top of a rusticated basement story and enframed both the principal and attic levels. (Figure: Marling painting). Nichols dedicated the center

of what had become a Grecian cross floor plan to a domed rotunda where the Canova statue would reside. A central open space to be used as a gathering area and for the display of sculpture and paintings had been previously adopted for the state capitols of Virginia and Pennsylvania.[9] To economically finish the building's appearance, the brick exterior was stuccoed and scored to resemble quarried stone.

The Palladian design of the State House can be linked to Bulfinch's plans for the central portico of the United States Capitol as well as to public architecture in Nichols's native Bath and the river front of Somerset House in London.[10] The architect must have had extensive knowledge of the US Capitol either from a personal tour or through reports from North Carolinians serving or visiting in Washington.

Although the local newspaper believed the new Capitol would be "approved and admired by every tasteful observer, that it will do honor to the State, and reflect the highest credit on the able Architect," Nichols understood that a refined interior was required, as well.[11] The top two floors were to be allocated to the chambers of the Senate, a circular hall, and the House of Commons, a half-ellipse. The two rooms were connected by a gallery passage around the rotunda. In late 1822, the state assembly allocated funds for the purchase of chandeliers, curtains, and seating furniture for the legislative rooms. Unlike the United States Capitol, members of both houses would be provided a personal desk and chair. In their discussion of the appropriate seating arrangement, assembly members described the chairs as "plain neat settees with cushions."[12]

Placed in charge of purchasing the furnishings, Nichols supplemented the contributions of local craftsmen with wares shipped from New York. He imported those items that were not produced locally because of the superior training and materials they required. Although modern scholars have complimented the capabilitites of Raleigh artisans, the consuption patterns of wealthy North Carolinians suggest that *au courant* wares were manufactured in the North. [13] Just as Washingtonians might supplement locally produced furnishings with more refined imported ornaments, Nichols's decision to purchase goods from New York was to be expected. This preference for goods imported from New England and the Mid-Atlantic states, kept North Carolina from developing a furniture industry that could produce urbane furniture.[14]

Since Raleigh was not a major urban center, it lacked the patronage to support the highly skilled cabinetmakers that supplied such wares. In the early 1820s, visitors considered Raleigh an isolated, rural backwater. A Pennsylvania man declared that, "there are but few good buildings in the City excepting the state house, the court house, and the bank, etc."[15] Of course, he could have just as easily been describing Washington City, as well, but Raleigh did lack the population and gross wealth to entice producers and consumers of the more opulent refinements.[16]

Without skilled labor or the appropriate materials on hand, Nichols followed the lead of his statesmen and looked elsewhere for guidance on the appropriate manner to furnish the new Capitol. In the second and third quarters of the eighteenth century, New England ports between Providence and Portsmouth

supplied the majority of the cargo coming south. However, following the revolution and continuing in the early 1800s, New York and Philadelphia "continued to garner an increasing share of the venture furniture trade."[17] As with many Southern communities, New York City influenced the decorative arts of North Carolina through the immigration of craftsmen and the importation of furniture and materials.

Wealthy North Carolinians occasionally ordered directly from New York cabinetmakers through their agents in that city. James Iredell, Jr. of Edenton, NC requested furniture in 1815 through merchant Joseph Kissam. On Iredell's instruction, Kissam obtained specific articles from a variety of local craftsmen, including John Everitt, Michael Allison, William Oldershaw, and Alexander Patterson.[18] In 1817, Samuel Mordecai, a Richmond resident, wrote regarding furniture he was to order for his brother Moses of Raleigh, "My advice would be to obtain them from New York, where they would be obtained better and cheaper, with certainty of conveyance."[19] Even those residents of Charleston with wealth and sophistication were regularly ordering furniture from New York during this period.[20]

In recognition of this competition, craftsmen in North Carolina promoted their ability to offer furniture that resembled the *au courant* goods being shipped down the coast. This was done with the hope of regaining the support of their townspeople who desired modish belongings. Lewis Layssard, a cabinet and chair maker working in Louisburg, NC advertised that he had "engaged hands from Petersburg and New York," and could produce "in the most fashionable

style...as good as any of the Northern Towns."[21] Thomas Reynolds of Warrenton, NC offered furniture "*a la mode* New-York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, &c" having recently hired a journeyman who had spent time in those cities. With the materials he "received from New York," Reynolds thought himself "adequate to finish *any* piece of work" in the cabinetmaking line.[22] Furthermore, William Turner of Fayetteville, proclaimed in 1818 that he had imported "from the city of New-York, a large and Elegant Assortment of CABINET FURNITURE" including "Side-boards, Secretaries, Card Tables, Ladies' work Tables, Backgammon Tables, Bedsteads, Bureaus, Candle Stands, Pembroke Tables, setts of Dining Tables."[23]

Thus, when Nichols contracted John and Thomas Constantine in 1823 to provide the chair for the Speaker of the Senate and the associated canopy and draperies, the state government should not have been surprised. The architect appears to have been familiar with the decorative arts and the furnishing styles of both Washington and New York as well as with English architectural and decorative sources. Nichols likely knew of Thomas and John Constantine by reputation and hoped their furnishings might enhance the interior of his building. From legislative records, historians know that Nichols did travel to New York on the state government's behalf for a buying trip and may have tracked down the Constantines at that point.[24] Thomas's advertisement in Shaw's *United States Directory for Travelers and Merchants* could have facilitated this process.

Regardless of the means of selection, on March 1, 1823, John Constantine arrived in Raleigh to decorate the rooms of the Capitol. He received $1650 for

"furnishing Draperie [sic] of crimson Damask and ornaments complete for 6 windows, and canopy and chair for the Speaker of Senate Chamber in the Capital."[25] Unsure of the ability of local craftsmen to accurately hang the canopy and window treatments, Nichols gave Constantine, an additional $100 for his "expenses coming on from New York to put up d[itt]o." Although Thomas's name is not mentioned in this bill, the design of the chair suggests that his cabinetmaking shop was involved in the commission.[26]

Cornelius J. Tooker, a cabinetmaker who had recently relocated to Raleigh, provided the majority of the furniture for the chambers. Nichols may have become familiar with Tooker's shop while living in Fayetteville and could have enticed the craftsman to move with an order for the State House's desks and chairs. Previously, Tooker had announced his ability to "execute all kinds of Cabinet, Carving, Turning, Engraving, Upholstery and Ornamental Work, In the most Fashionable Style."[27] After beginning his work there, Tooker set up shop near Union Square and began to advertise himself as "having contracted to furnish the Capitol of North Carolina."[28]

Due to a disastrous 1831 fire that consumed the North Carolina Capitol and its contents—save the Sully portrait and the Speaker's chair—none of Tooker's furniture survives. What historians do know about his contribution has been pieced together from surviving documents and commentaries relating to the Capitol. On November 20, 1824, the cabinetmaker received $539.16, the balance of a bill for $1169.70, "on account of his Contract for furnishing the State House."[29] In another bill, Tooker simply lists "To amount of Contract for

furniture furnished for State House....$1040.00."[30] From the value stated in Tooker's bill, one can assume that he provided the settees, desks, and tables for both chambers. Other than the assembly's request for individual desks, this furniture is known only through two contemporary descriptions of the rooms. One mentions that the "desks are covered with broadcloth the seats marine" and another stated that the chairs were painted a bright blue.[31] In recognition of the appearance of his extant work, those were likely of sturdy quality yet middling design.[32]

Nichols skillfully incorporated Tooker's furniture and Constantine's drapery and ornaments into a sophisticated interior plan. One traveler thought the Assembly's home to be "elegantly furnished, the Senate room, particularly."[33] Another visitor announced that the State House was "by far the most splendidly furnished of any public building I ever met with in the United States."[34] From descriptions of the chambers, historians know that Constantine's damasks were accented "with gold fringe and tassels" and hung "round the windows and chairs of both Houses, in thick folds from the ceiling to the floor."[35] A visitor from New York thought the curtains "cost 100 dollars a piece," and described the ornaments referred to in Constantine's bill as a "large gilt eagle holding the looped curtain in his beak."[36] A plate in Thomas Sheraton's *Designs for Household Furniture* of 1812 and another in Rudolph Ackerman's *Repository* of July 1820 suggest what these accouterments may have looked like.[37] **(Figure 31)** In 1826, Thomas Wilson recounted the "misty purple color" of the window treatments that had been "trimmed off in styles," the "elegantly cushioned seats," the "large spread

eagle made of brass" that sat above each window, the "Turkey carpet" on the floors, and a "bust of Dr. Franklin" that sat over the chamber's entrance.[38]

A grand crystal and brass chandelier complimented the sumptuously rich fabrics and glittering window ornaments. Anne Royall thought it "the largest and most splendid...I ever saw, excepting those in Congress Hall."[39] The lighting helped convince her of "the skill of the architect." The range and type of décor found in the room—from the crimson window hangings to the gilt ornaments to the mahogany furniture to the rich carpeting to the fine chandelier—supports the notion that Nichols had gained an intimate familiarity with the chambers at the United States Capitol. Outside of the North Carolina assembly's blue painted furniture, the consistency of the two sites is strikingly similar.

Contemporary visitors' accounts also describe the impact of the Constantine drapery and chair on the room's appearance and the reverence with which citizens regarded the interior. When Wilson encountered "the chair of the speaker of the Senate," which he argues "is a superb one," his guide told him that the seat "cost...five hundred dollars."[40] While this was a gross exaggeration of its cost, this statement certainly reflects the significant cultural value that the city's residents associated with the artifact.

Constantine's chair is certainly a unique and intriguing object, and the most widely published of Constantine's oeuvre.[41] **(Figure 10)** The most obvious inspiration for the design of the Speaker's throne-like seat is the Thomas Hope design that Constantine adapted for the United States Senate. The parts borrowed from Plate 59 of *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* are the rear legs,

seat rail, and back support. These elements adhere as closely to the source drawing as the Senate chairs do, as the tapered reeding on the back legs and the accentuation of the sunburst are both found in Hope's design.

The Speaker's chair may incorporates motifs found in European and American furniture, but in the sum total of its parts, it stands as a creative interpretation of features found on other classical-style New York wares.[42] Some of the elements relate to contemporary New York furniture. The carving running up the front face of the upper stiles connects the Speaker's chair to the so-called acanthus leaf motifs seen on the seating furniture of Duncan Phyfe.[43] Even though spiral turning was not altogether unknown in New York furniture of the period, there are no other cases in which it appears on seating furniture in such a robust form. The lack of a reference to the technique in the New York price book of 1817 substantiates its rarity. Furthermore, the elaborately carved profusion of acanthus leaves emerging from the crest rail is unheard of in New York seating furniture from this period, as well. The turnings on the front legs are a series of bold rings bracketing a compressed urn shape and quite different from the sedate execution of the Senate chair legs.

The most spectacular feature of the Speaker's chair would have been the extensive use of brass mounts on the seat rail, arms, and crest. In the use of stark mahogany surfaces and gilt brass mounts Constantine paid tribute to more modish French fashions. Unfortunately, all eighteen were removed from the chair at some point since 1823 and are only implied by filled holes where the ornaments were hammered into the mahogany frame. **(Figure 32)** Decorations and castors

of brass would have provided an enticing visual complement to the eagles perched above the windows and the chandelier hanging over the room.[44]

As in French precedents, these brass ornaments were "placed symmetrically on flat surfaces, whose dark masses they enliven, drawing attention to a piece's mass as opposed to its profile."[45] While not exceptional in New York furniture of this period, they rarely appeared in this quantity. Lannuier's chairs for New York's Common Council had just four inset stars to accentuate joints at the seat and crest, and he used stamped discs and a floral crest rail ornament in the chairs sent to Bosley in Baltimore.[46] Banks's suite for the Beekman family has similar discs made of stamped brass at the knee and the termination of the scrolled arm and crest rail.[47] The placement of these decorations provides precedent for Constantine's approach in 1823. With access to English, French, and American brass manufactories, the range of styles available to him would have been extensive.[48]

Testifying both to its significance to the State House and to its solid mahogany construction, the Speaker's chair was one of the few pieces of furniture saved from the June 21, 1831 fire. Accounts of the blaze refer to the demise of the "noble edifice, with its splendid decorations, nothing now remains but the blackened walls and smouldering ruins." Although the legislative archives were saved and the fire contained within Capitol Square, the contents of the building were largely consumed, including the "Statue of Washington, that proud monument of national gratitude, which was our pride and glory...[and] this chef d'ouvre of Conova [sic]." Only Sully's Lansdowne portrait of Washington, and

"some articles of furniture of the Legislative Chambers," which had been hurled from the second story windows, survived.[49]

The chairs broken legs were repaired and it was used in the Capitol through the end of the nineteenth century. By 1919, the "Speaker's throne" had gained enough patina to be classified as a noteworthy emblem of North Carolina history. A joint resolution for the "Preservation of a Historical Relic" that year transferred the chair to a position of display first in the State Hall of History—now known as the North Carolina Museum of History—and then the Governor's Mansion.[50] The Speaker's chair is now exhibited off the Capitol's rotunda near a 1970 copy of Canova's statue of Washington.[51]

NOTES FOR PART 2, CHAPTER 2

[1] Governor Gabriel Holmes to [NC] Legislature, November 18, 1822, published in the *Raleigh Register*, November 22, 1822. Cited in Murray, 211.

[2] One of the Sully paintings was to be a copy of the Lansdowne portrait of Washington, which survived the 1831 fire. The other was to be a history painting involving Washington, but the monumental image of the General crossing the Delaware sent by Sully was rejected. It was ultimately obtained by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Much like with the Horatio Greenough statue of Washington commissioned by the federal government in the 1830s, some disagreed with the artist's decision to render him in classical dress. On Pennsylvania man thought it "rather an obscene thing, and in my opinion, a disparagement of the person, and fine feelings of the immortal Washington." Diary of Thomas Wilson (1797-1876), Southern Historical Society Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. Hereinafter Wilson Diary, HSC. I would like to thank Raymond Beck for kindly passing on this reference. According to the great-grandson of Thomas Wilson, Peter Pickard Wilson, the diarist visited Raleigh while on a trip south from Pennsylvania. A Deacon in the Presbyterian Church, Thomas married Elizabeth McMurray of Person County while on the trip and returned to Pennsylvania. The couple later returned to North Carolina with their son, Thomas James Wilson, and settled near Hillsborough.

[3] *Raleigh Register*, December 28, 1821. Cited in Murray, 205. The tradition of placing a statue in a central open space at State Houses and Capitols was first established with Jefferson's design for the Virginia Capitol in Richmond. When the building was completed in 1798, Jean Antoine Houdon's statue of George Washington was placed in the Capitol's central saloon. See Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy: The State Capitols of the USA* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovick, 1976), 33-34.

[4] Whether William formally trained as an architect in England or simply assumed that role upon his arrival in North Carolina is unknown. C. Ford Peatross and Robert O. Mellown, *William Nichols, Architect* (Tuskaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Art Gallery, 1979), 6.

[5] Peatross and Mellown, 6. The authors took this quote from a letter sent by William Tatham to Albert Gallatin, June, 1806 but do not provide a citation for it. Tatham was heading up a coastal survey for North Carolina sponsored by the

federal government and wished to hire Nichols. Gallatin was his contact in Washington.

[6] Peatross and Mellown, 11.

[7] Murray, 209.

[8] From his earlier work, there is evidence to illustrate that Nichols owned or at least incorporated designs from both of these sources. See Peatross and Mellown, 11.

[9] Hitchcock and Seale, 33, 35.

[10] Peatross and Mellown, 11.

[11] *Raleigh Register*, December 31, 1819. Cited in Murray, 209.

[12] *North Carolina Senate and House Journals*, December 30, 1822, 130, 156, 195, 215. Cited in Murray, 210. On the matter of individual settees, the members described chairs "to be constructed in the settee form, with the circle of the desks; one seat for each desk." Apparently, their understanding of a settee differs considerable from our modern concept of the form. The settees possibly resembled Windsor chairs in form. In May 1823, Tooker once took on an apprentice to learn the "Windsor chairmaker's trade." Cited in James H. Craig, *The Arts and Crafts in North Carolina, 1699-1840* (Winston-Salem, NC: Old Salem, 1966), Reference 1215, Page 206. The other possibility is that the assembly was using the term settee interchangeably with settle, which is typically a long bench with a high back and arms at each end that resembles a moveable church pew. See John Gloag, *A Short Dictionary of Furniture* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1952), 597-601. New Englanders in particular used these terms as synonyms in the nineteenth century. See Elizabeth D. Garrett, *At Home: The American Family, 1750-1870* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1990), 96.

[13] Bivins, 410. Bivins argues that, by the early nineteenth century, "Raleigh had become a vibrant center of fashion in the eastern piedmont," and a town of stiff competition where "sophisticated urban work was available." He makes this assertion in regards to a highly skilled Rhode Island cabinetmaker who, rather than face the competition in Raleigh, chose to move to Smithfield, Johnston County where "it is doubtful that other...artisans possessed the training necessary to make furniture in the class of Davis's work." However, his study of coastal North Carolina furniture cites only five Raleigh craftsmen as active in that period. To date, scholars have not located any pieces from the capital city. The five cabinetmakers he mentions are Cipriane Parlasca (491), F.W. Parrot (491), David Royster (473), David Ruth (498), and Cornelius Tooker (507-508). In Craig's

The Arts and Crafts of North Carolina, the author references five additional furniture makers including Zenos Bronson (1061), Henry Hardie (1051), George Levy (1270), Alexander Ross (1102), and William Thompson (1147). Bivins does not illustrate nor refer to any surviving Raleigh-made furniture in his book. He illustrates a pembroke table by Cornelius Tooker, the Fayetteville craftsman who relocated to Raleigh in 1824, and attributes two others two him from his time in Fayetteville. None of these could be considered stylish compared to New York Standards. See Bivins, Fig.s 7.70, 7.71, 7.72; pages 442-446.

[14] Even larger coastal towns such as New Bern and Edenton never supported more than a dozen resident cabinetmakers. Bivins, 58.

[15] Wilson Diary, SHC. In 1816, an Englishman described Raleigh as a "clean, little country town," where the "houses are small, and built of scantling." See Murray, 205. The quote is from Francis Hall's *Travels in Canada and the United States in 1816 and 1817.*

[16] The population of Raleigh was 2674 in 1820 and declined to just 1700 a decade later as southern and western migration continued to draw residents away from the piedmont. Additionally, one must remember that of these meager numbers, upwards of fifty-five percent of the population consisted of enslaved African-Americans. Murray, 208.

[17] Bivins, 98.

[18] Bivins, 106. Everitt provided a dining table and sideboard, Allison a tea table, Patterson a dozen fancy chairs, and Oldershaw a high post mahogany bedstead. Bivins cites the Papers of James Iredell, Jr., Charles E. Johnson Collection, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina.

[19] Samuel Mordecai to Ellen Mordecai, October 18, 1817, Mordecai Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. Cited in Kenneth Joel Zogry, " 'Plain and Handsome:' Documented Furnishings at Mordecai House, 1780-1830," *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts*, 15, no. 2 (November 1989), 96.

[20] McInnis and Leath, 137.

[21] *Raleigh Star*, December 26, 1817. Cited in Bivins: 480.

[22] *Raleigh Register*, April 12, 1813. Cited in Bivins: 496.

[23] Fayetteville *Carolina Observer*, April 30, 1818. Cited in Bivins: 104-5

[24] William Nichols to the General Assembly of the State of North Carolina, Legislative Papers, Session 1831-1832, Box 4, Folder: Governor's Messages Concerning State House Furnishings, 1824, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, North Carolina. In this document, Nichols refers to hardware and upholstery fabrics he purchased while in New York and credited against Tooker's bill.

[25] As a result of the four-and-a-half month delay in payment for the drapery and chair, Constantine was paid an extra $41 in interest for a total of $1791. See Receipt of Payment, John Constantine, July 14, 1823, Treasurer and Comptroller's Papers, Capitol Buildings, Box 2, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC. I would like to thank Raymond Beck for providing this reference. As a result of the four-and-a-half month delay in payment for the drapery and chair, Constantine was paid an extra $41 in interest for a total of $1791.

[26] Considering that Thomas charged the United States Senate $46 for each chair, the seat referenced here may have accounted for $60 to $80 of that fee.

[27] *Fayetteville Gazette*, November 22, 1820. Artisan file, Cornelius Tooker, Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts, Winston-Salem, NC. Advertisement includes a woodcut of an Empire sofa and is reproduced in Bivins, 69.

[28] *Raleigh Register*, July 9, 1824. Included in the MESDA file on Tooker.

[29] Payment to Cornelius J. Tooker, November 20, 1824, Treasurers and Comptroller's Papers, Capitol Buildings, Box 3, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC. I would like to thank Raymond Beck for providing this reference. Nichols had deducted $630.54 from the original bill for previous payments and for "articles purchased from New York by W. Nichols." These included crimson and blue moreens and brass tacks as well as a warrant for $400 in cash and $100 of whiskey.

[30] The remaining $129.70 constituted "Extras" not included in the furniture contract, such as: extra fabric for finishing desks and tables; painting doors, chimney pieces and hearths; varnishing writing tables; and hanging lamps and draperies.

[31] Helen H. Salls, "Pamela Savage of Champlain, healthseeker in Oxford [North Carolina]," *North Carolina Historical Review* 29, no. 4 (October 1952), 558-560; and Anne N. Royall, *Mrs. Royall's Southern Tour; or Second Series of the Black Book*, Volume 1 (Washington: 1830-1831), 137-138. Cited in Murray 210.

[32] The only surviving furniture that can be linked to Tooker's Shop are three Pembroke tables of an unexceptional aesthetic but servicable and well made. Illustrated in Bivins, 443-445.

[33] Salls, 558-560.

[34] Royall, 137-138.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Salls, 558-560.

[37] Rudolph Ackermann, *Ackerman's Repository* 11, no. 10 (July 1820), Plate 3, Page 58; and Thomas Sheraton, *Designs for Household Furniture* (London: J. Taylor, 1812), Plate 3. I would like to thank Raymond Beck for pointing out the second reference.

[38] Why Wilson would describe crimson draperies as "misty purple" in color is the reader's guess. Perhaps the time of day or the room's lighting made the fabric appear to be of a different hue. Diary of Thomas Wilson, SHC, UNC.

[39] Royall, 137-138. Cited in Murray, 210.

[40] Wilson Diary, SHC.

[41] Cooper, 230; Voorsanger and Howat, 282-283; and Beck, 25-30.

[42] While a general embodiment of the French Empire taste, precedent for the Speaker's chair extends further back in time to the Etruscan phase of the Louis XVI style as realized for the Prince Regent's chairs at Southill. Though the seat lacks the paint and gilt decoration of that furniture, the sweeping lines of the rear legs, the scroll of its arms and the scroll, or "crozier," of the rear stiles represent an earlier influence. See Musgrave, 34. See the Southill chairs in Figures 3 and 5. The Etruscan style was taken largely from vases of the late Greek period, especially the red and black figured pottery of the fifth century B.C. See n. 6, page 146.

[43] Such ornament is also closely related to Egyptian waterleaf carving. Hope includes examples of Egyptian capitals in his *Costumes of the Ancients* (1812) that feature the same prominent center rib with thin, outward reaching leaves. See Thomas Hope, *Costumes of the Greeks and Romans* (New York: Dover, 1962), plate 7. This work was originally titled *Costumes of the Ancients*. Hope took his drawing of the Egyptian capital from the colonnade of Denon. Hope's two volume treatise includes illustrations of headress, clothing, shoes, accessories,

furniture, sarcophogi, and armor that were taken from Greek, Roman, and Egyptian buildings and vases.

[44] When this chair was rescued from the 1831 fire, the rear legs were broken at the bottom and presumably the castors, as well. Later, the front legs were shortened to accommodate this change in height. Part of a restoration process carried out in the 1992-1993 included the extension of all four legs to their original length. See Beck, 27. I presume that this chair likely featured the same castors as the Senate chairs. Although the legs treated differently, they are quite consistent in dimension and rake and could have accepted the same castors.

[45] Chadenet, 102.

[46] Kenny et al., 134 and 138.

[47] Singleton, 282 and 289-290; Elizabeth Bidwell Bates, "Study Project Reveals 19th-Century Chairmaking Techniques," *Maine Antiques Digest*, February 2001; and "Levy Donates Beekman Chair," *MAD*, May 2001.

[48] Thomas likely selected from the variety of brass ornaments in geometric, floral, or patriotic styles that one finds in design books and on furniture of the period.

[49] *Raleigh Register*, June 23, 1831.

[50] "Preservation of a Historical Relic," in *Public Laws and Resolutions of the State of North Carolina*, Session of 1819, Joint Resolution #39, p. 579. Cited in Beck, 27-28.

[51] Raymond Beck, Historian of the North Carolina State Capitol, recently discovered another chair dating to the second quarter of the nineteenth century that he believes may be related to the Constantine workshop. He surmises that this example could have been a senator's desk chair and that it constitutes one of the other "articles of furniture" saved from the 1831 fire. Mr. Beck gathers that this chair was also given to the North Carolina Hall of History in 1919 but was accidentally sent to the State surplus facility by the following year. The chair was subsequently "lost" until Mr. Beck discovered it at a Raleigh church in 2000.

Part 2, Chapter 3

THE CHRIST CHURCH COMMISSION, 1824-1825

"Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how *I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself."*[1]
--Exodus, 19:3-4

Less than two years after he helped his brother fill the North Carolina State House commission, Thomas Constantine had the opportunity to furnish a third public building. Once again his work would be incorporated into a newly constructed edifice and yet again he would turn to Thomas Hope for inspiration. This seating furniture would not be sent southward for government use, rather to a New York City church that was undergoing its own renovation project.

In 1821 the Episcopalian congregation of Christ Church decided to abandon their home on Ann Street, east of Broadway, in order to relocate further north, to Anthony Street, west of Broadway.[2] They had occupied the same building since 1793, and the church's membership had increased steadily over the first decades of the century.[3] It had "been generally prosperous, and....favored with some seasons of special religious interest," and sought a more spacious and dignified home.[4] In response, the vestry purchased the Anthony Street Theater in January 1822 and demolished the structure to make way for its new facility.[5] The

cornerstone of Christ Church was laid on March 30, 1822 and the finished building was consecrated almost exactly a year later, on March 29, 1823.[6]

The congregation hired a variety of local craftsmen to carry out the construction. James O'Donnell, an Irish emigrant architect supplied plans for the project.[7] Since his arrival in New York in 1812, O'Donnell had developed a rather successful practice. During his twelve-year stay, he designed a row of fashionable town houses on State Street opposite the Battery (1816); an extension of Columbia College (1817-1820); Bloomingdale Asylum (1818-1821); his own house on Oliver Street (1821); and the Fulton Street Market (1821-1822).[8] By retaining a highly regarded architect, the vestry could obtain a stylish edifice.[9] The *New-York Evening Post* referred to O'Donnell's Christ Church as a "beautiful Gothic structure," that "does great credit to the taste and talents of the architect."[10] After finishing the plans for Christ Church, O'Donnell served as architect for the First Presbyterian Church of Rochester in 1823 and Montreal's monumental Notre Dame Basilica in 1824.[11]

Historians of ecclesiastical architecture are fortunate enough to have two published renderings of O'Donnell's design. The first appeared in an 1830 edition of *The New-York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette* as part of a regular series on the public buildings of the city of New York.[12] The second illustration of Christ Church appeared in 1844, just three years before it would be destroyed by fire. **(Figure 33)** Henry Onderdonk included this lithograph in his history of New York's Episcopal churches.[13] The consistency found between the two illustrations suggest the accuracy of their respective artists. Both feature what is

essentially a Greek temple form with a centrally located tower bisecting the pediment. As described in the *The New-York Mirror*:

> The sides and rear are constructed of neat gray stone; but the whole front, together with the quadrangular tower, is faced with brown hewn stone. The doors are niched and arched in the true pointed gothic style. The tower, before mentioned, projects three feet from the face of the front wall and is ninety feet in height, surmounted by an open battlement and quadrangular pyramids.[14]

The engaged pilasters found on the main façade were segmented in an unusual manner and featured Doric capitals below an unornamented frieze and simple cornice. The tower was a rather unimaginative solution and conceived by stacking two of the giant orders from the structure's brownstone front. The Onderdonk rendering also illustrates five tracery windows on the side wall that extend from ground level to the roof line.

From these images one can see that all of the Gothic features were in the detailing.[15] To a classical foundation, O'Donnell added pointed arch bays, the crenelated battlement, and the spire-like accents at the corners of the tower and pedimented roof.[16] Although O'Donnell may have been familiar with the Gothic Revival movement found underway in Great Britain, this style had not yet come into mainstream fashion in America. Bishop John Henry Hopkins's *Essay on Gothic Architecture* would not appear until 1836 and Richard Upjohn's Trinity Church in the full-blown Gothic style would not be completed until 1846.[17] Even in 1830, though, *The New-York Mirror* argued that: "In point of style...the gothic order seems to be the fittest for religious edifices [and] has a powerful tendency to augment the solemnity of divine worship."[18]

Although no images of the chancel and nave survive, the *The New-York Mirror* included the following description:

> The interior of the main building is finished in a plain gothic style...There is a gradual declivity to the chancel, in front of the pulpit, and a neat railing excluding the reading desk. The pulpit, canopy, and altar are finished in a style bordering on the florid gothic, of the most exquisite workmanship, and very appropriate taste.[19]

Since all of the reviews published in this journal are generally favorable, it is clear that Christ Church's membership enjoyed a skillfully appointed home.[20] To further enhance the interior, the vestry purchased an expensive organ from an unnamed supplier in Boston, outfitted the windows with Venetian blinds, and purchased a bell for the tower from Phelps and Peck, a New York mercantile concern.[21] Additionally, Alexander Sitcher painted the church but in an unknown manner.

The source of the "florid gothic" cabinetwork referenced by *The New-York Mirror* is not entirely clear. The vestry's account book includes a number of different references to furnishings purchased on behalf of Christ Church. On January 18, 1825, Joseph Trulock, an upholsterer at 58 Maiden Lane, signed for a payment of $425.75, "in full for his bill of furniture." Constantine's name appears on three separate occasions, and the cabinetmaker appears to have been paid a total of $519.75. Constantine and Trulock may have shared jurisdiction over the pulpit, canopy and altar, but it is unlikely that either of these gentlemen provided the 190 church pews. These were probably the responsibility of the carpenters, Burrows and Dutch.

Constantine's participation in the rebuilding of Christ Church could have stemmed from a variety of events. Although he does not to have been a member of the congregation, his son, Thomas Whitfield Constantine, was married at Christ Church in 1849.[22] Constantine would have been intimately familiar with the congregation's home on Ann Street, for it sat less than three blocks from his Fulton Street store. Furthermore, O'Donnell, Trulock, or Thomas Lyell, the church's rector, may have heard of Constantine's commissions for the United States Capitol or the North Carolina State House. Constantine would have likely know of O'Donnell through the architect's work on the Fulton Street Market.

To develop a design for the Christ Church chairs, Constantine revisited Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture* for inspiration. Citing a design book that conveyed the decorative motifs of ancient pagan societies to render plans appropriate for an Episcopal church might seem incongruous. However, with a nuanced understanding of the intersections between Christian symbology and Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythology, Hope's treatise is rife with possibilities. Constantine seized upon the recurrence of winged creatures—swans, griffins, sphinxes, and angels—and transposed a more appropriate image: the eagle.

Constantine's decision to include the wings of an eagle in his chairs for Christ Church is appropriate for their setting. **(Figure 14)** A fixture of decorative arts in America since the inception of nationhood, the eagle's significance as an ornament extends back thousands of years.[23] Considered "the King of the Birds as the lion is King of the Beasts," it is often associated with individuals or governments thought to embody similar characteristics.[24] For the Greeks, the bird

was considered sacred to Zeus, the lord of the heavens, and denoted victory and power. In Roman society, the eagle served as an imperial emblem for the republic and the badge of the legions. For Christians, an eagle battling a serpent is an ancient symbol of the victory of spiritual purity over sin and also signifies St. John the Evangelist and the Ascension of Christ.[25]

As a result of the weighty messages associated with the eagle, the bird has appeared on cultural artifacts for an equal length of time. Classical ornamentation often includes Zeus, disguised as an eagle, absconding with the mortal Ganymede, and the birds have been found on coins, seals, and flags since the Greco-Roman era. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, eagles could be found supporting console tables and perched atop mirrors. This use in the decorative arts was perpetuated by the adoption of the eagle by the United States and Napoleonic France. As an important badge of the Empire style, cabinetmakers could directly transfer European designs featuring the eagle into the American context.

In the Christian milieu, the eagle was used as the support for lecterns throughout the Middle Ages and into the early Renaissance. These are thought to represent St. John, the apostle who allegedly wrote the Revelations in the company of an eagle. John is illustrated with an eagle by his side in paintings such as Titian's *St. John the Evangelist on Patmos* (1544) and Herri Met de Bles's *St. John on Patmos* (1535-1550).[26] This connection to John's powerful writing is reiterated occasionally with a pen or inkhorn clasped in the bird's beak. Furthermore, the eagle is referenced in a famous passage in the Old Testament's Book of Isaiah: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they

shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."[27] As the sign of St. John and of the word of God, an eagle provided the perfect support for the bible from which preaching would be conducted. Most frequently, the bible sat on a board attached to the back of the eagle's outstretched wings.[28]

An example of the eagle's incorporation into an American religious context is the giant gilt eagle commissioned by Saint John's Evangelical Lutheran Church between 1809 and 1811 for its newly constructed home. Carved by the renowned Philadelphia craftsman William Rush, the bird is perched on a globe and, from a red-painted iron tongue in its open beak, supported the sounding board.[29] Although this Evangelical Lutheran setting might appear a far cry from the Christ Church, the continuum of this emblematic animal over space, time, and denomination is noteworthy.[30]

The cabinetmaker seems to have arrived at his chair design by synthesizing two plates in Hope's *Household Furniture*. He already had a regal seat frame in his repertoire from his work for Washington and Raleigh. In spite of any connotations the chair in Plate 59 might have with ancient political authority, Constantine thought it suitable for a seat of ecclesiastical power, as well. Considering the common significance of the eagle to both ancient and modern societies, this carry-over is quite fitting.

Thomas took the carved ends of a bench seat featured in Plate 5, Hope's "Third room containing Greek vases" to constitute arms of the chairs.[31] **(Figure 34)** The long settle wraps around three sides of the room and terminates at both

ends with a matched pair of winged griffin legs. This design appears as a detail in Plate 29, Number 5, as well, and may have been borrowed from Tatham's *Etchings of Ancient Ornamental Architecture* (1799).[32] **(Figure 34a)** Constantine simply reattached the winged arms of Hope's bench to the architectural plinth provided by the seat frame. While not necessarily his intention, these chairs provide a fitting compliment to the mixture of classical architecture and gothic ornament found on the church's front façade. Both the building and its contents feature a foundation steeped in early nineteenth-century classicism and an overlay of religious detailing.

The upholstered arms, combined with a fully covered back and seat, resemble the French *bergère* style of armchair. The upholstered back is slid into place on grooves cut into the back and then the robust crest rail is attached on top as a cap.[33] Rather than including a fitted seat, the cushion in this example is tacked directly to the top edge of the seat rail. Although this upholstery technique may be a modern affectation, it does coordinate well with the covering of the interior of the arms.

Even though a great deal of New York furniture from the early nineteenth century includes carved wings, the author has been unable to match the rendering on Constantine's chairs to other objects. As is typical among these artifacts, the Christ Church chairs include three rows of articulated feathers and then a generalized swell that terminates in a scroll. **(Figure 35)** However, in comparison to the fluid and naturalistic manner in which Rush executed the eagle's feathers for St. John's in Philadelphia, the carver hired by Constantine adhered to a flat,

rigid style of carving. This artisan isolated the feathers in a rather two-dimensional manner with stiff barbs divided be a prominent shaft, rounded ends, and sharp corners. The author has only been able to locate one other piece of contemporary furniture with similarly carved wings, a mahogany sofa with paw feet and winged knee returns that sold at Christie's in 1997.[34]

Another distinguishing feature of the Christ Church chairs is the low height of the back. These proportions can be linked to the medieval tradition of providing a wooden or stone seat for the bishop.[35] Although some of these are rather grand constructions and massive in scale, a large percentage, including the Firth Stool at Hexam and a thirteenth-century chair at Little Dunmow, lack a full backrest.[36] This practice continued on into the early nineteenth-century, and William Camp, a prominent Baltimore cabinetmaker, built an elaborately carved, low-back armchair for the First Unitarian Church of that city from a design by architect Maximilian Godefroy.[37] Clearly, these examples were not meant for comfortable reclining but rather to encourage an upright, formal seating position. The robust and forward reaching crest rail on Constantine's chairs assisted this type of countenance.[38]

In the early nineteenth-century, Episcopalian congregations would typically include a diminutive seat on the altar for the rector and perhaps his assistant, and then a larger and more elaborate throne for the Bishop to use when in attendance. Had Constantine provided one of these dominant pieces of furniture, one might begin to explain some of the unaccounted for moneys

credited to him. Some of this could have been allocated toward drapery over the bishop's chair or elsewhere in the sanctuary, as well.

Like the Speaker's chair in North Carolina, the Christ Church seats are remarkable survivals. Cabinetmakers likely did not produce ecclesiastical furniture with any frequency, and including the chair by Camp, few examples survive. In 1847, the congregation's home on Anthony Street was largely destroyed by fire.[39] How much of Constantine and Trulock's work escaped is unknown. The vestry chose to rebuild on the same site, and the chairs reappeared when the church opened the following year.[40] They followed Christ Church through moves in 1854, 1858, and 1890 and then a merger with St. Stephen's Church in 1975, when they were finally retired to storage.

NOTES FOR PART 2, CHAPTER 3

[1] Exodus, 19:3-4, *The Holy Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1909), 93.

[2] William G. Davies, "Historical Sketch of Christ Church, New York City," *Magazine of American History*, 19 (January-June 1888): 61; and Jonathan Greenleaf, *A History of the Churches of all Denominations in the City of New York* (New York: E. French, 1846), 67. Christ Church dates back to 1793 and was the first parish to separate from Trinity Church and the fourth Episcopalian organization in New York overall. Until the decision to relocate in 1822, the congregation had been housed at the church on Ann Street.

[3] By 1805, the parish totaled 300, and despite losing 200 members when the Church relocated to Anthony Street, it had 400 "members in communion" by 1830. Greenleaf, 66-67.

[4] Greenleaf, 66. The author incorrectly asserts that Christ Church was located on Nassau Street until 1805.

[5] Davies, 60. The theater had been "fitted up as a circus by the proprietors of the old Park Street Theatre during the summer of 1817 for ballets and similar performances during the regular recess of the theatre."

[6] For cornerstone, see *New-York Evening Post*, March 29, 1822. For consecration, see *New York Evening-Post*, March 26, April, 2 and 11, 1823.

[7] In Christ Church's ledger book, O'Donnell appears on four occasions for earnings totaling $595. His role was strictly limited to the plans and some supervision of their execution, for the daily construction responsibilities had been placed in the hands of mason James Depew and the carpentry firm of Burrows and Dutch. Their significance is reflected in the large sums transferred to them over the course of 1822 and 1823. Payments to James O'Donnell, April 16, May 7, and August 20, 1822; and May 5 and August 10, 1823; Payments to Burrows and Dutch, April 6 and May 9, 1822; Payments to Joseph Depew, May 9 and August 15, 1822, Christ Church Account Book, Christ and St. Stephen's Church, New York, NY. Hereinafter CCAB. The payments to O'Donnell were for $500, unspecified, $30, $15, and $50, respectively. The author would like to thank Reverend Paul Olsson, Assistant Rector of Christ and St. Stephen's Church, for providing me access to the account books.

[8] Franklin Tooker, *The Church of Notre-Dame in Montreal: An Architectural History* (Montreal, Quebec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1970), 25. The Fulton Street Market and Bloomingdale Asylum were both large and expensive buildings, thereby suggesting O'Donnell's prominent role as an architect. According to Toker, although O'Donnell worked largely in the Classical Revival style while in New York, he "dreamed of even larger buildings in the Gothic style." O'Donnell exhibited drawings of buildings in the Gothic style in 1816, 1817, and 1818 at the American Academy of the Fine Arts in New York. See also Frederick Tooker, "James O'Donnell: An Irish Georgian in America," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 29, no. 2 (May 1970), 132-143.

[9] O'Donnell allegedly apprenticed as an architect in Dublin under Francis Johnston whose Gothic Revival Chapel Royal resembles O'Donnell's work in America and Canada. See Toker, *Church*, 24-25.

[10] *New-York Evening Post*, April 11, 1823, 2-3. The commentary on Christ Church found in *The New-York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, is almost directly copied from this report. Regarding a series of drawings executed by O'Donnell for additions to Columbia College (now Columbia University), architectural historian Talbot Hamlin remarked, "[they] are meticulous and far in advance of those for the original King's College fifty years earlier, or even of the existing drawings of Asher Benjamin...it is to men such as these that we evidently woe the polish and urbanity of earlier New York house work." See Talbot Hamlin, *Greek Revival Architecture in America* (New York: Dover, 1964), 134.

[11] While in New York, O'Donnell appeared at 2 Oliver. See *Longworth's*. His work in Montreal, which also included the British and Canadian School (1827) and the American Presbyterian Church (1826), is referenced in Toker, *Church*, 29-42; Alan Gowans, "Notre-Dame de Montreal," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. XI, No. 1 (March 1952), 21-22; and Harold Kalman, *Pioneer Churches* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976, 140-141. Considered one of Canada's supreme examples of Gothic Revival architecture, Notre-Dame was the largest in North America at the time of its completion in 1828. After completing the plans for it in 1824, the New York newspaper *The Albion* described O'Donnell's design as "a magnificent edifice that is about to be erected at Montreal, surpassing in magnitude and splendour any upon the continent of North America." April 3, 1824. Cited in Tooker, *Church*, 31. Apparently, O'Donnell, a Protestant, converted to Catholicism so that he could be buried beneath the church he designed.

[12] Famed architect Andrew Jackson Davis was responsible for many of the drawings that appeared in this periodical, including the one of Christ Church. *The Mirror* covered civic, commercial, and religious structures, including: the Merchant's Exchange and United States Branch Bank for New York on Wall Street, the Masonic Hall on Broadway, the Rotunda on Chambers, and the Jewish Synagogue on Elm Street. *The New-York Mirror and Ladies' Literary Gazette*, 7, no. 12 (September 26, 1829), 90; and 7, no. 45 (May 15, 1830), 354. Hereinafter *The Mirror*. The first set of six images listed in 7, no. 12 includes: the Rotunda, Merchant's Exchange, US Branch Bank, 2nd Unitarian Church, the Jewish Synagogue, and Masonic Hall. The next set listed includes: Christ Church, St. Mark's Church, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Grace Church, St. George's Church, and Presbyterian Church. Accompanying these images is a brief description of the architectural merits of the structure and its interior. Such an impressive selection of civic buildings came at a time when those not taking pleasure in the public architecture of the New York were criticizing the design of city hall as well as local churches. Philip Hone thought the former lacking "simplicity and grandeur," and the latter possessing, "an air of paltriness and insecurity for [visitors] from the *old country*." Philip Hone, *The Diary of Philip Hone*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1927), 394-395. Cited in Still, 80.
[13] J.B. Forrest provided the drawing. Onderdonk solicited images of all the major Episcopalian congregations in town for the book, including the redesigned Trinity Church and St. Paul's Chapel. See Henry Onderdonk, *A History of the Protestant Episcopal Churches of the City of New York* (New York: H. Onderdonk, 1844). In the collection of the New York Public Library, Humanities and Social Sciences Branch, New York, NY.

[14] *The Mirror*, 2, no. 45 (May 15, 1830), 354.

[15] The exterior of the Trinity church, built in 1788-1790 and razed in 1838, also included superficial Gothic ornament. See Dena Merriam, *Trinity: A church, a parish, a people* (New York: Cross River Press, 1996).

[16] Another religious structure illustrating these corner accents was the Jewish synagogue found in *The Mirror*, 7, no. 12 (September 26, 1829), 90.

[17] John Henry Hopkins, *Essay on Gothic Architecture, with Various Plans and Drawings for Churches: Designed Chiefly for the Use of the Clergy* (Bulington, Vermont: Smith and Harrington, 1836). Hopkins, a Bishop of Vermont, designed churches and then published this treatise in response to frequent requests for assistance. See James F. White, *Protestant Worship and Church Architecture: Theological and Historical Considerations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 130-131. Upjohn's design for Trinity Church illustrates the development of ideas introduced in part by Hopkins. See White, 136-137.

[18] *The Mirror*, 7, no. 45 (May 15, 1830), 354.

[19] *The Mirror*, 7, no. 45 (May 15, 1830), 354.

[20] Presumably, some of the plans supplied by O'Donnell would have included drawings for these spaces, and the carpenters Burrows and Dutch would have largely executed them.

[21] Payments for the organ: $500 on February 9, 1822; $47.68 for freight on February 11, 1822; and $300 on October 11, 1823. For Venetian Blinds: $375 on September 3, 1823. For the bell: $395.34 on May 26, 1825.

[22] *New-York Herald*, December 1, 1849. Courtesy of the Department of American Decorative Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. The *Herald* had also posted a death notice for Thomas Constantine on October 22, 1849. Two of his other sons, Andrew Jackson Constantine and Robert Constantine, married at Trinity Church.

[23] Philippa Lewis and Gillian Darley, *Dictionary of Ornament* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 113-114; and Dora Ware and Maureen Stafford, *An Illustrated Dictionary of Ornament* (London: George Allen, 1974), 77.

[24] Lewis and Darley, 113.

[25] There are a number of biblical references to the eagle, including: Exodus 19:4, Revelation 4:7, Daniel 7:4, Ezekiel 1:10 and 17:3, and Isaiah 40:31.

[26] Titian, *St. John the Evangelist on Patmos*, 1544, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; and Herri Met de Bles, *St. John on Patmos*, c. 1535-1550, oil on panel, Royal Museum of Fine Art, Antwerp, Belgium. Other explanations for this connection exist such as to symbolize the heights to which St. John rises in the first chapter of his gospel, the elevated contemplation of his writing and ministry, and his presence at the Passions and the discovery of Christ's ascension.

[27] Book of Isaiah, 40:31, *The Holy Bible*, 748.

[28] The bird is generally perched on a pillar or column and looks out over the congregation. A representative example, in carved oak and dating to the fifteenth century, is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. J. Charles Cox, *Pulpits, Lecterns, & Organs in English Churches* (London: Oxford University Press, 1915), 182-185, 195. Cox states that approximately twenty wooden lecterns with eagles survive as compared to fifty made of brass. While "the emblem of the eagle in wood, in use for lecterns, was probably commoner in

England's mediaeval days than those in brass," more examples of the former did not survive. See, as well, Gerald Rendall, *Church Furnishing & Decoration in England and Wales* (London: BT Batsford, 1980), 80, 84-85.

[29] Metropolitan Museum of Art, "Recent Acquisitions, A Selection: 2001-2002," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 60, no. 2 (Fall 2002), 36. One of the two eagles that can be confidently attributed to the artisan, the "monumental" eagle is "carved in Rush's distinctive style" and has a "fluid and energetic outline."

[30] Although both denominations baptize its members, Lutherans support the role of individual faith over the mitigating responsibilities of a priest.

[31] This rendering illustrates the display of the collector's vast collection of vases.

[32] Charles H. Tatham, *Etchings representing the best examples of ancient ornamental architecture* (London: Thomas Gardner, 1799), Plates 82 and 85.

[33] Courtesy of Stuart Feld, Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., New York, NY.

[34] Christie's, New York, *Important American Furniture*, January 18, 1997, Sale 8578, Lot # 288, page 188.

[35] These sat on the southern portion of the quire and east of the stalls. J. Charles Cox and Alfred Harvey, *English Church Furniture* (London: Methuen & Co., 1908), 248.

[36] Compare the Patriarchal Chair at Cantebury in Cox and Harvey, 249 to the Firth Stool on 252 and the Little Dunmow chair on 253. For a carved wooden throne-like example, see Rendall, 113, 115.

[37] Godefroy designed the church, as well. Gregory Weidman and Jennifer F. Goldsborough, *Classical Maryland: 1815-1845* (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1993), 110.

[38] According to scholars of early church furniture, the practice of placing one or more chairs in the sanctuary began during the post-Reformation period. The Camp and Constantine seats are examples of this movement away from enclosed stalls and toward individual chairs. Cox and Harvey, 254-255; and Rendall, 113.

[39] *New-York Evening Post*, July 30, 1847.

[40] *New-York Evening Post*, June 30, 1848.

Conclusion

"Everywhere, you must have been struck with the great changes physical and moral, which have occurred since you left us. Even this city, bearing a venerated name, alike endeared to you and us, has since emerged from the forest which then covered its site."

--Henry Clay to the Marquis de Lafayette, December 11, 1824[1]

When Lafayette visited the United States Capitol in December of 1824, he was greeted with a grand reception. The celebration would be one of the countless ceremonies that were performed in his honor during the thirteen months he spent touring of the nation. While sitting in an honored seat before a joint session of Congress, Lafayette heard Henry Clay remark on America's progress: "the forest felled, the cities built, the mountains leveled, the canals cut, the highways constructed, the progress of the arts, the advancement of learning, and the increase in population."[2] In Lafayette's reply, he recognized how, in just twenty-five years, from a sleepy town had developed "the immense improvements, the admirable communications, the prodigious creations," of Washington, DC.[3] Like the phoenix rising among the flames, the burgeoning city was illuminated by "the light of a far superior political civilization."[4]

The connection between an enlightened society, an informed government, and the grandeur of the built environment was defined a prosperous and stable nation. Much of Lafayette's journey through the United States focused on the

display of such achievements. Townspeople rushed to show him the grand buildings they had constructed and the refined wares they used to decorate these spaces. Welcoming committees were almost desperate to show him how sophisticated America had become. They used architectural façades and domestic goods to illustrate the fruits of their nation's democratic government.

Constantine's contributions to the United States Capitol, the North Carolina State House, and Christ Church embody the powerful meanings associated with public interiors of this period. His furniture complimented the sophisticated designs of these public structures. While Constantine's wares may never be considered as significant as the buildings, one cannot deny the powerful resonance of the furniture he placed there. The chairs and desks that occupied these structures adopted a metonymic function whereby the particular seat given to a representative, state senator, or rector came to define the strength and significance of their position. Thus, even as these artifacts have been removed from their original architectural context, thay have ardently retained an association with the political or religious group for which they were made.

Perhaps what is most significant about Thomas Constantine, then, is the speed with which he abandoned the cabinetmaking profession. In 1820, with the large profits earned from the US Capitol commissions in hand, Constantine began to diversify the output of his store by investing in patent bedsteads and spring seats that could be efficiently produced at his water powered lathe outside of the city and his Greenwich Street manufactory. No longer a cabinetmaker per se, the entrepreneurial Constantine had become a merchant attempting to tap new

markets with high volume production. These mass-produced goods could then be sold along with a broad range of household furniture at the company's Fulton Street wareroom.

By 1825, only ten years after opening his first workshop, Constantine had left the cabinetmaking business altogether in favor of the more stable and, presumably, profitable wood trade. As a commodity that was constantly in need, he could invest in stock with the confidence that he was vending a resource with a ready market. Although this second career has proved more difficult to document, records show that Constantine was well suited for his new line of work. He learned the value of mahogany sales as an apprentice and was retailing this import by 1816. While operating lumberyards in New York between 1824 and 1838, he and his new partner Thomas Whitfield supplied a variety of cabinetmakers, upholsterers, and carpenters with the raw materials required by those professions. In 1836, Constantine purchased a sawmill near the Hudson River that was equipped with circular saws to cut mahogany logs into veneer.

Toward the close of the decade, his sights began to shift once again. On this occasion, Constantine moved from New York to southwestern Michigan in order to exploit the burgeoning market on the East Coast for Midwestern hardwoods such as hickory, oak, and maple. Thomas and his sons John and Levi appear in land records in the early 1840s that suggest they were purchasing and milling wood to be sent to New York via the Great Lakes and the Erie Canal.

While Levi would stay on in Michigan, his father and brother returned to New York by 1844. Thomas served as a government appointed inspector of

mahogany at a lumber yard on the East River where his sons Thomas Whitfield Constantine, Andrew Jackson Constantine, and Robert Constantine would continue the operation following his death in 1849. This incarnation of Constantine & Co. began the proud family connection with the wood business that has carried through to the twenty-first century.

NOTES FOR CONCLUSION

[1] Henry Clay's Address to the Joint Session of Congress in Honor of the Visit of the Marquis de Lafayette, December 11, 1824. Cited in Marian Klamkin, *The Return of Lafayette: 1824-1825* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), 107. See also J. Bennett Nolan, *Lafayette in America: Day by Day* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1934); and Stanley J. Idzerda, et al., *Lafayette, Hero of Two Worlds: The Art and Pageantry of his Farewell Tour of America, 1824-1825* (Hanover, NH: Queens Museum, 1989).

[2] Clay's Address, December 11, 1824. Cited in Idzerda, et al., 89.

[3] Marquis de Lafayette's Address to the Joint Session of Congress, December 11, 1824. Cited in Klamkin, 108.

[4] Klampkin, 108-109.

FIGURES

Figure 1: Worktable, John Banks, New York, 1820-1824, Labeled. Courtesy of the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum. Acc. # 1957.0764.

Figure 2: Stenciled Label, John Banks, New York. Courtesy of the Decorative Arts Photographic Collection, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE. Acc. # 71.694.

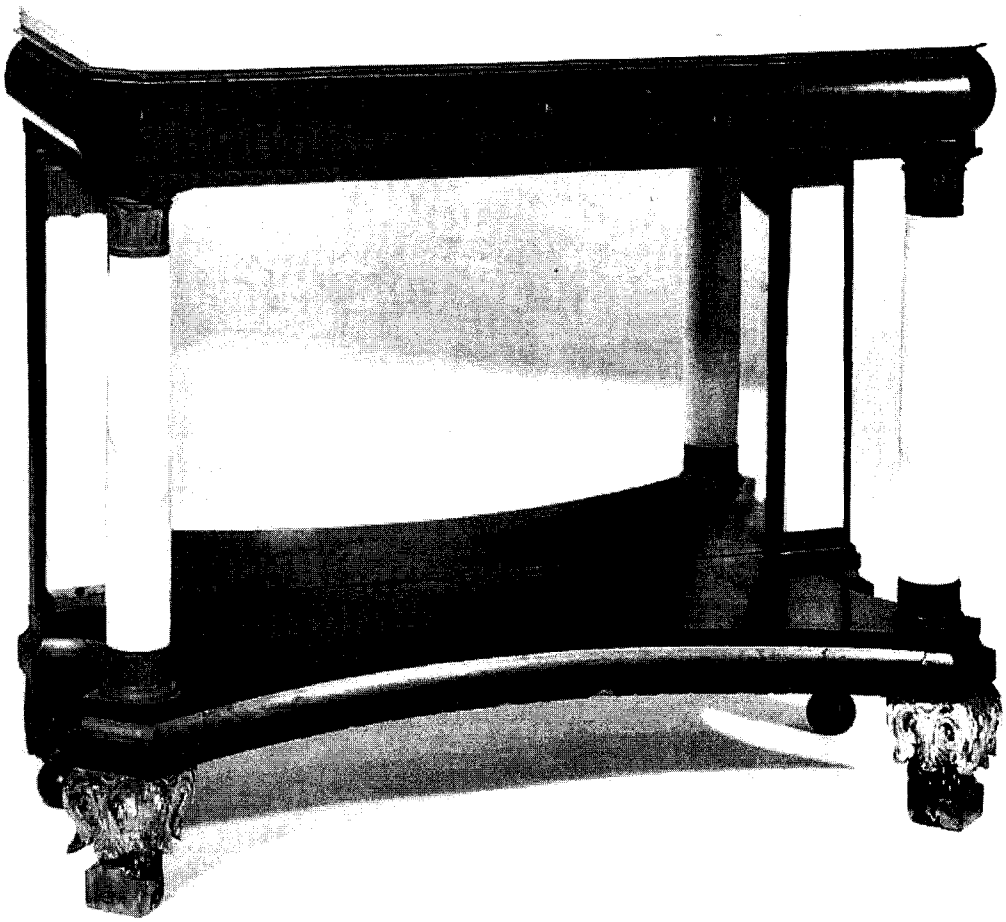

Figure 3: Pier Table, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1817-1820, Labeled. Courtesy of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY. Acc. # 41.1179.

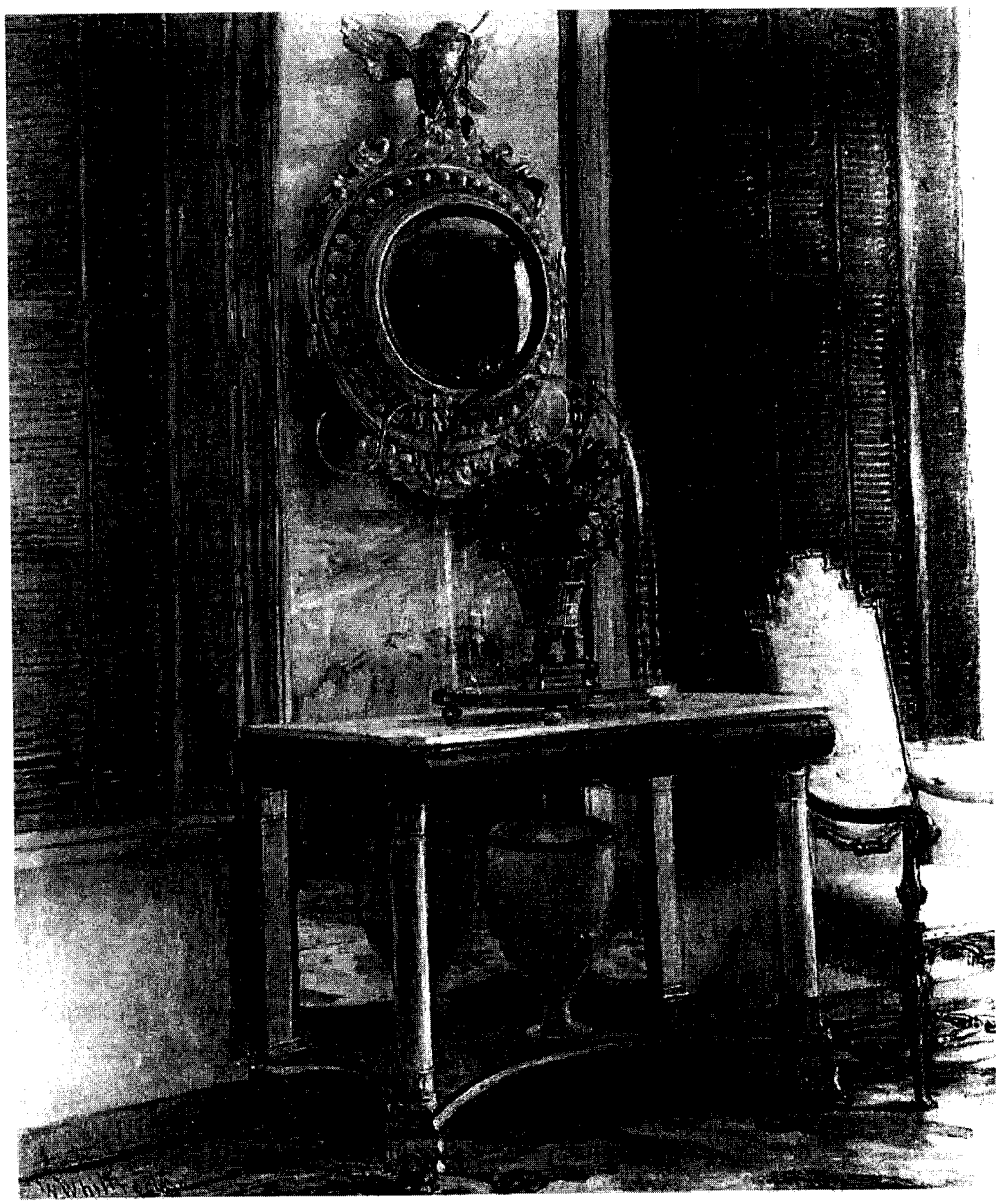

Figure 4: Painting, *A bit from the de Wolf House/ Bristol R.I.*, William Whittredge, Oil on Canvas, c. 1660. Private Collection.

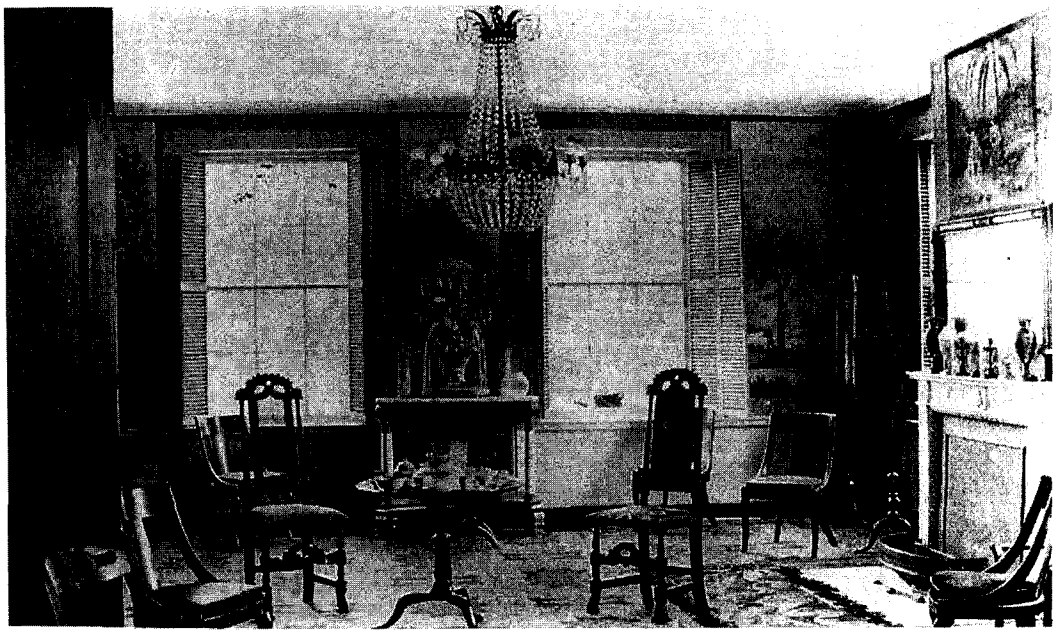

Figure 5: Photograph, Unknown, Drawing Room, The Mount, Bristol, RI, c. 1870. Private Collection.

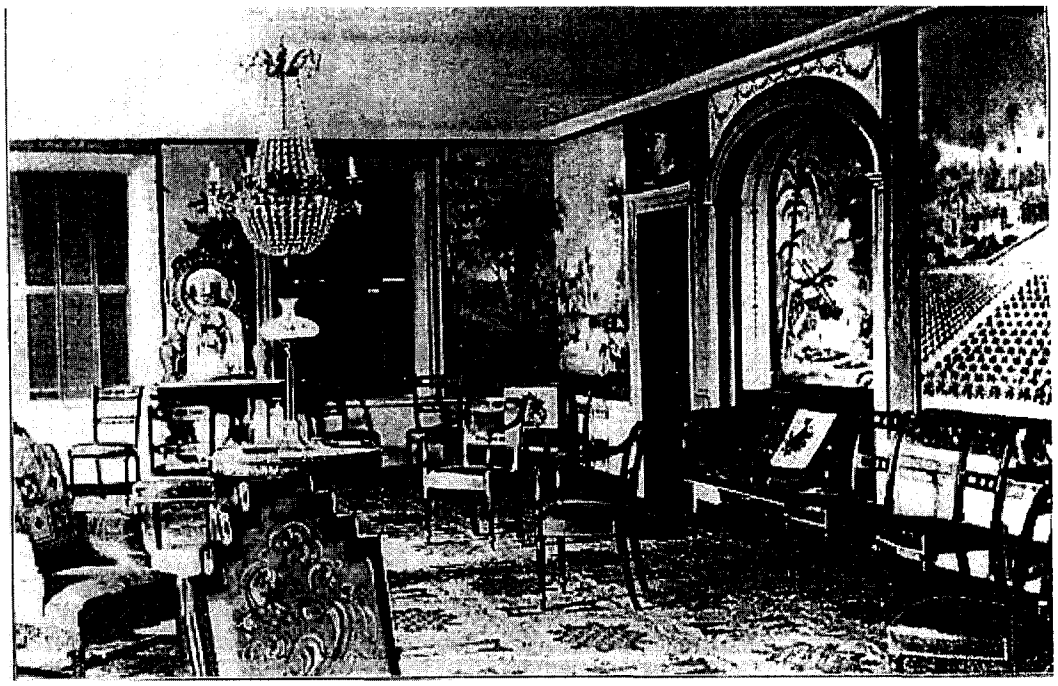

Figure 6: Photograph, David Davidson, Drawing Room, The Mount, Bristol, RI, c. 1870. Courtesy of the Society for the Protection of New England Antiquities, Boston, MA.

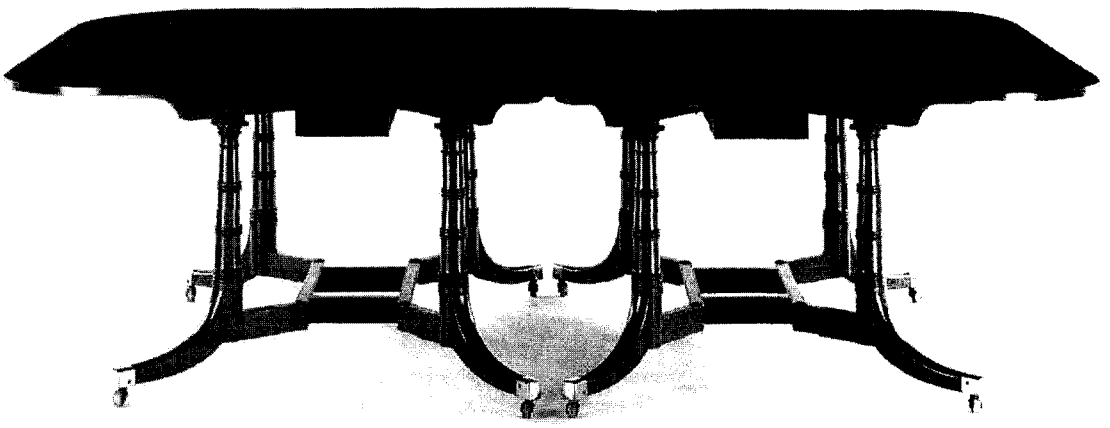

Figure 7: Dining Table, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1817-1820, Labeled. Courtesy of Hirschl & Adler, Inc., New York, NY.

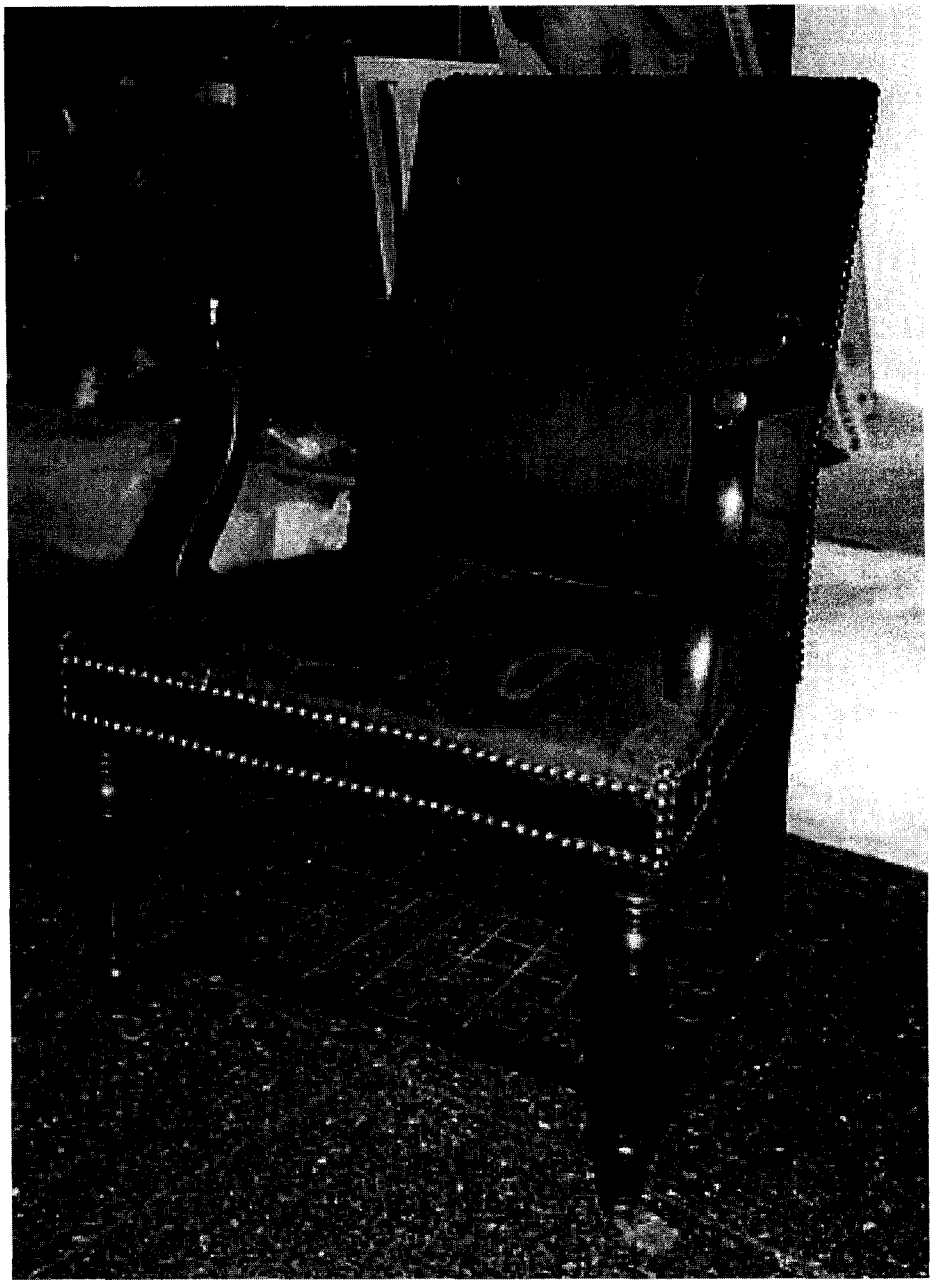

Figure 8: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1818-1819, Labeled. National Museum of American History, Washington, DC. Acc. # 259603. Photograph by the Author.

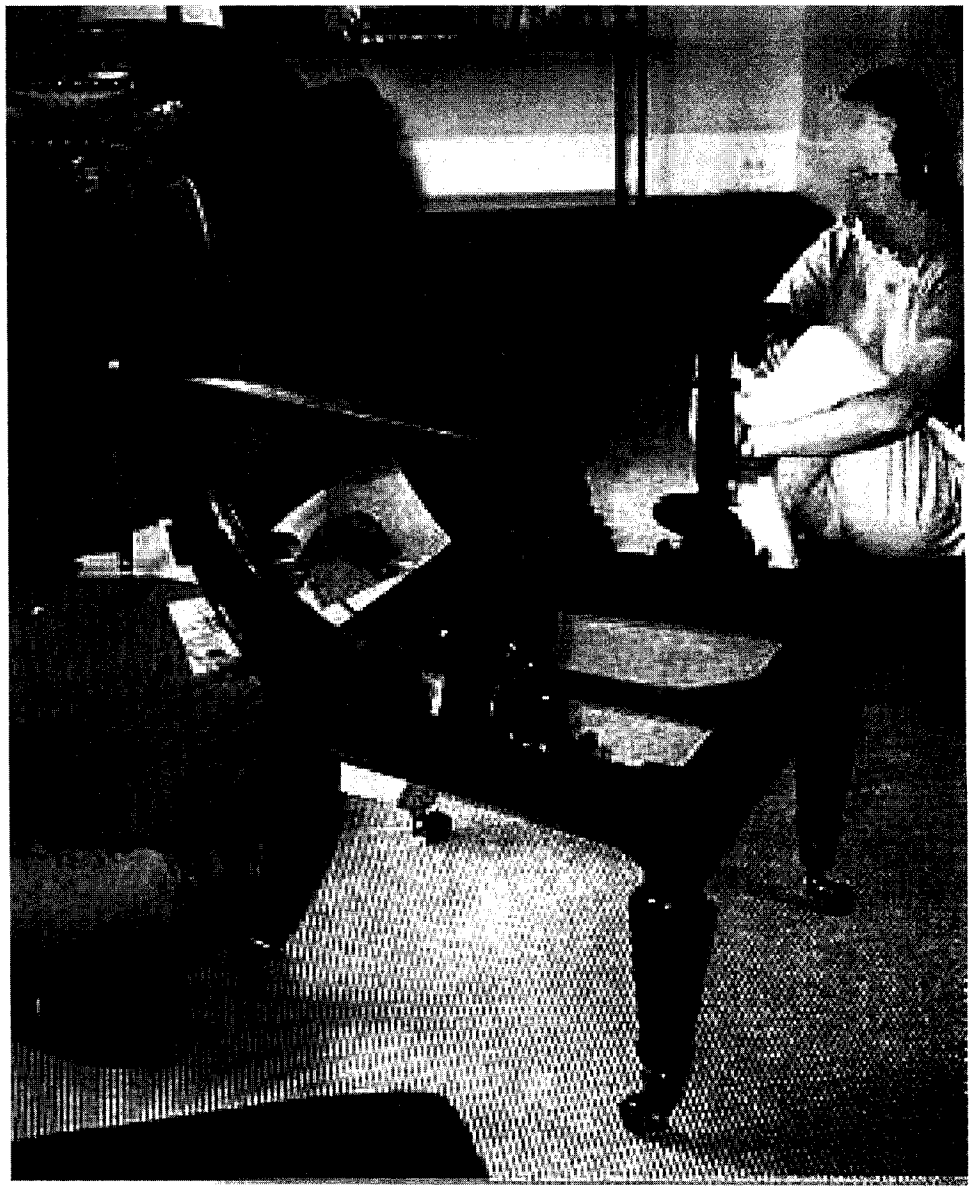

Figure 9: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1819, Marked Castors. Private Collection. Photo by Wendy Cooper.

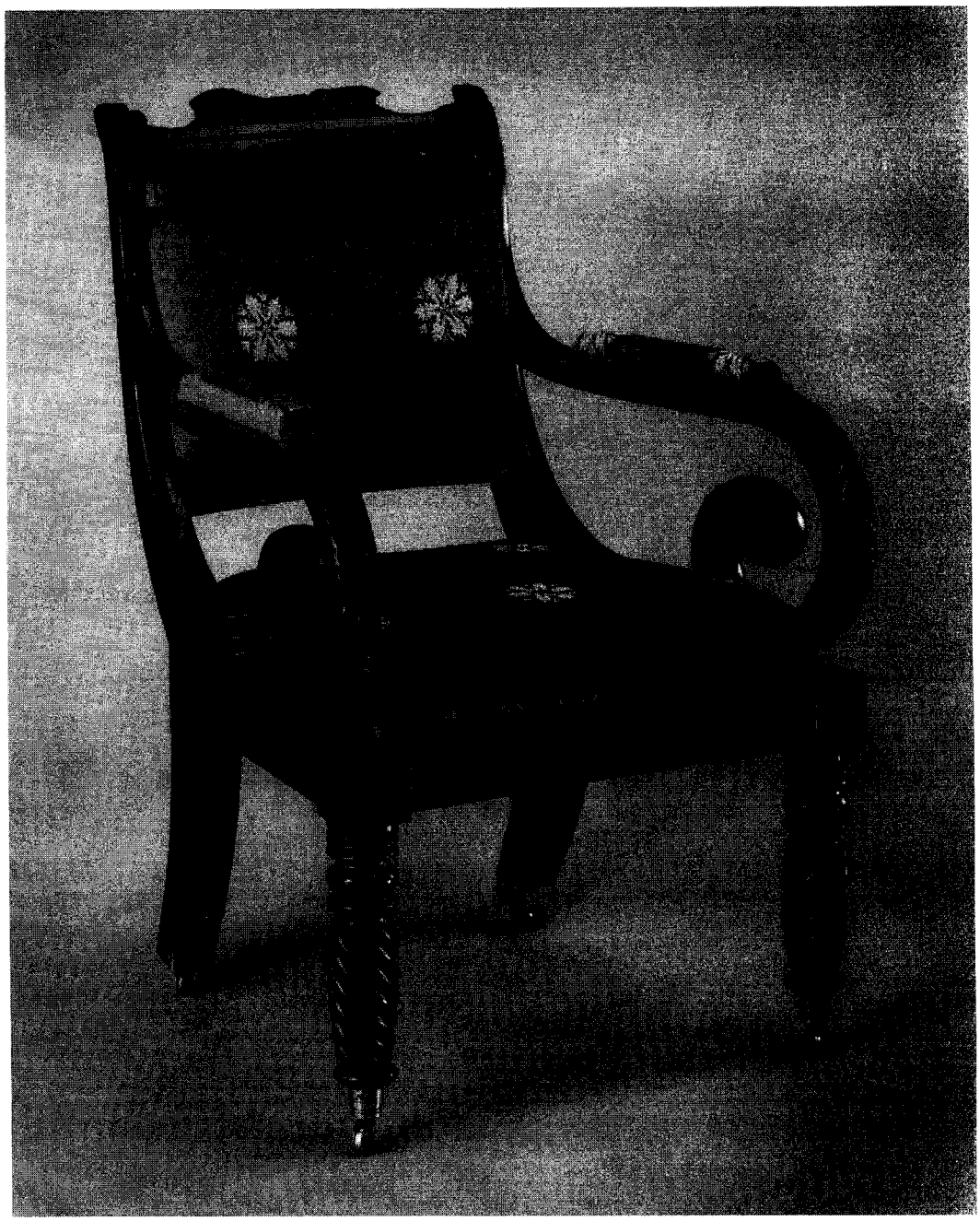

Figure 10: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1822-1823, Attributed. Courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History. Acc. # 1991.171.1

Figure 11: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1819-1825, Marked Castors. Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE. Acc. # 1998.0009.

Figure 12: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1818-1825, Labeled. Courtesy of the Decorative Arts Photographic Collection, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE. Acc. # 69.2238.

Figure 13: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1818-1825, Attributed. Courtesy of Hirschl & Adler, Inc., New York, NY.

Figure 14: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1824-1825, Marked Castors. Courtesy of the Westervelt-Warner Museum, Tuscaloosa, AL.

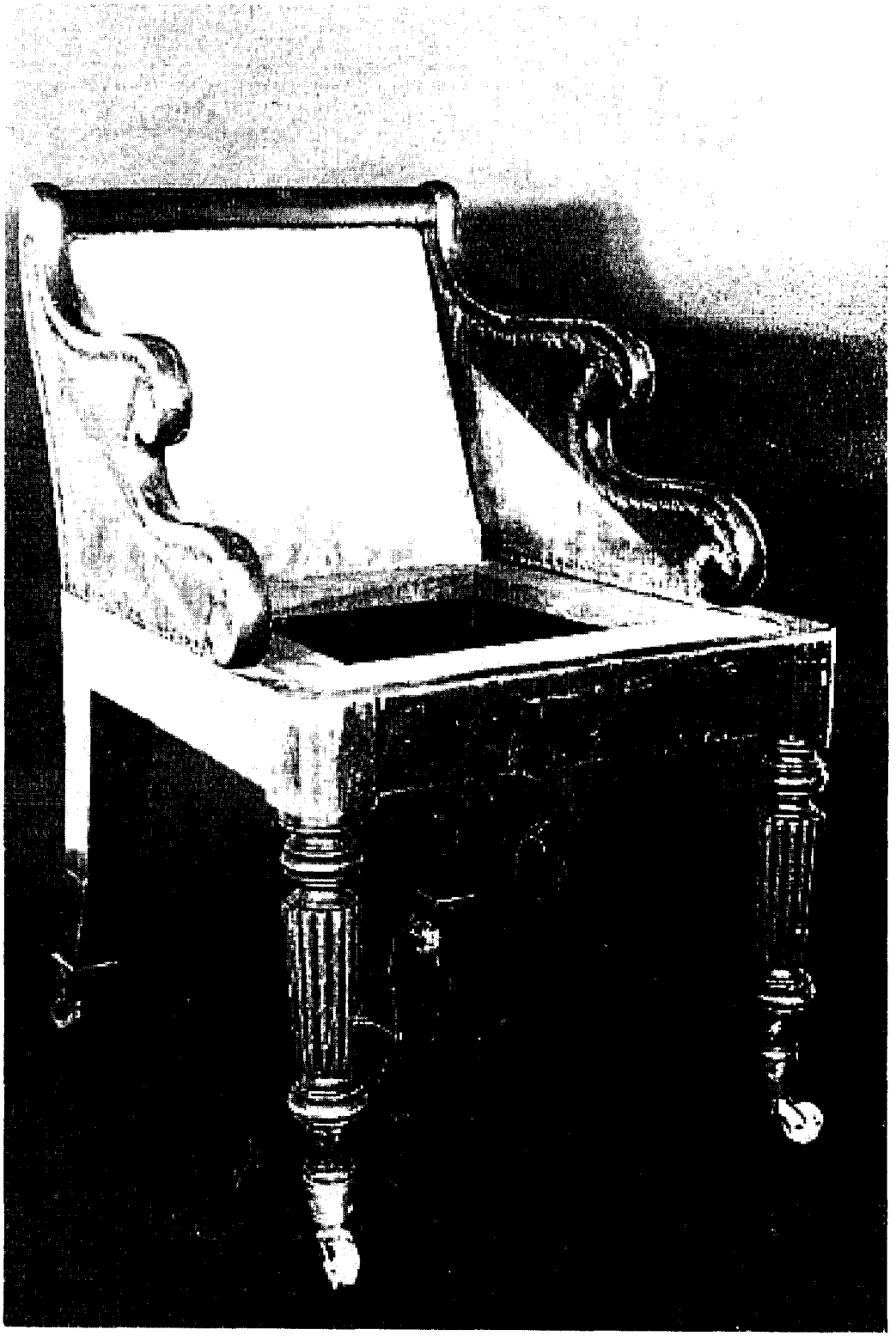

Figure 15: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1824-1825, Attributed. Private Collection.

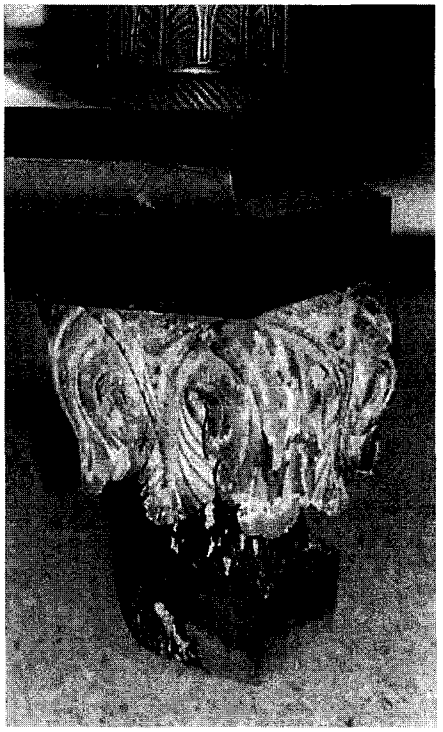

Figure 16: Detail, Proper Left Front Foot, Pier Table, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1817-1820. Brooklyn Museum of Art. Acc. # 41.1179. Photograph by the Author.

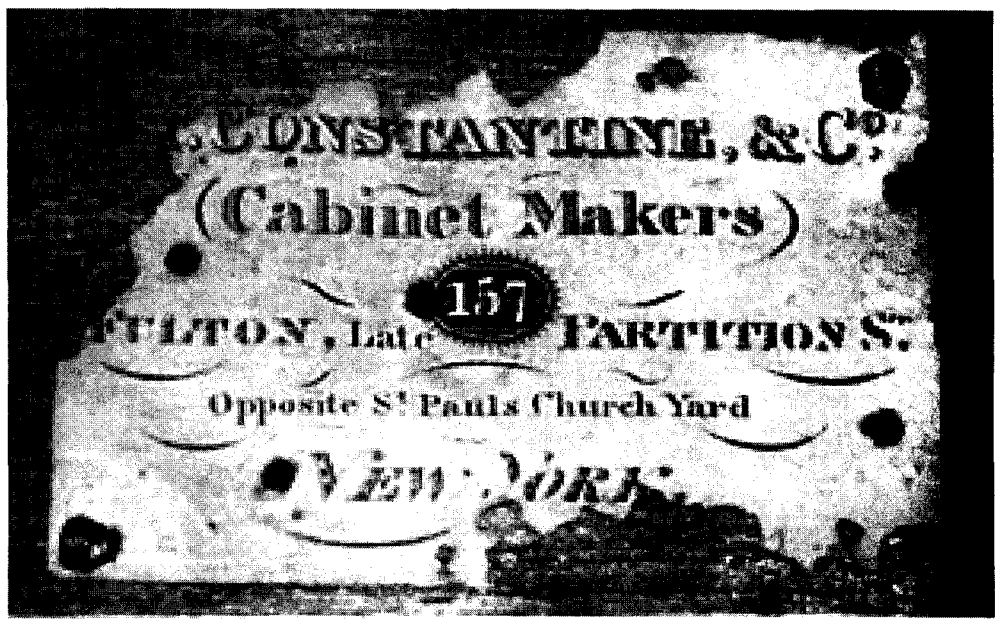

Figure 17: Label, T. Constantine, & Co., New York, 1817-1820. Label from interior of rear rail of the Brooklyn Museum of Art's Pier Table. Photograph by the Author.

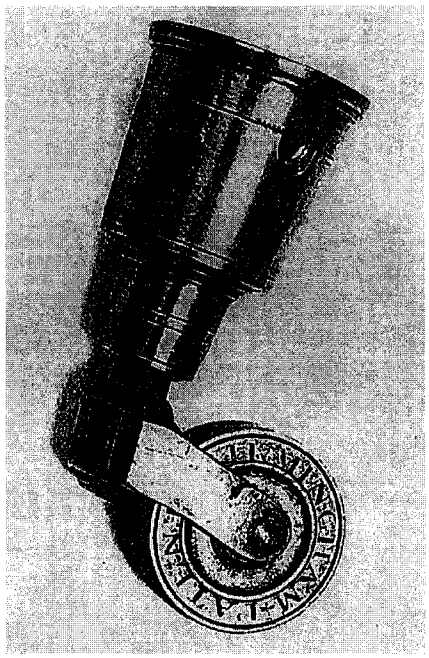

Figure 18: Castor, Brass, Birmingham, 1819-1825, Marked "BIRMINGHAM.PATENET." From Armchair in Figure . Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

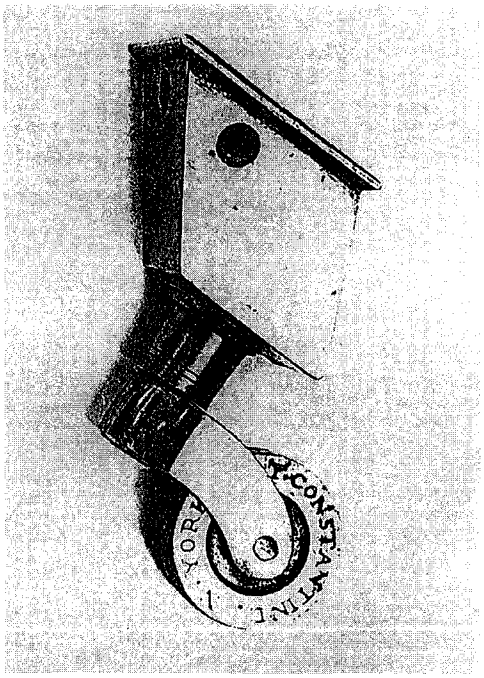

Figure 19: Castor, Brass, New York or Birmingham, 1819-1825, Marked "T. CONSTANTINE. N. YORK." From Armchair in Figure . Courtesy of the Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

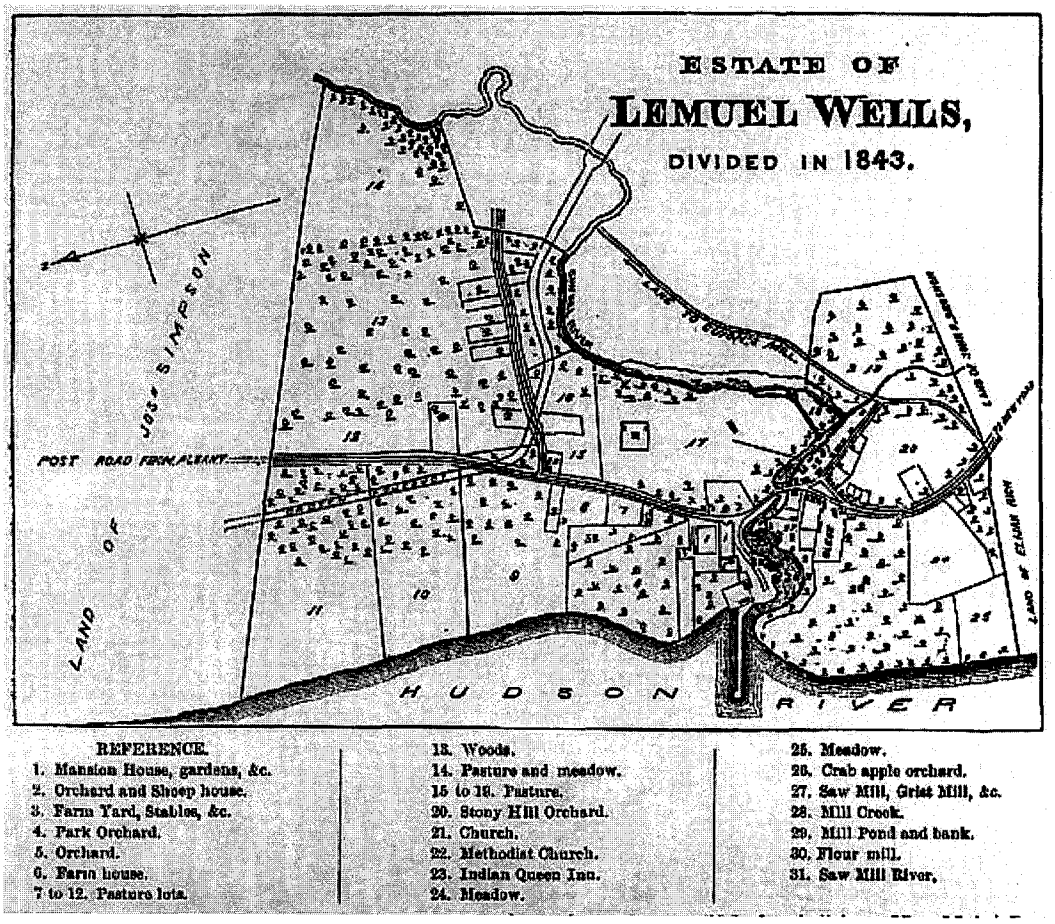

Figure 20: Map, "Estate of Lemuel Wells, Divided in 1843," In J. Thomas Scharf, *History of West Chester County, NY*, 1886.

Figure 21: Armchair, Thomas Affleck, Philadelphia, 1790-1793, Attributed. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Independence National Historic Site, Philadelphia, PA.

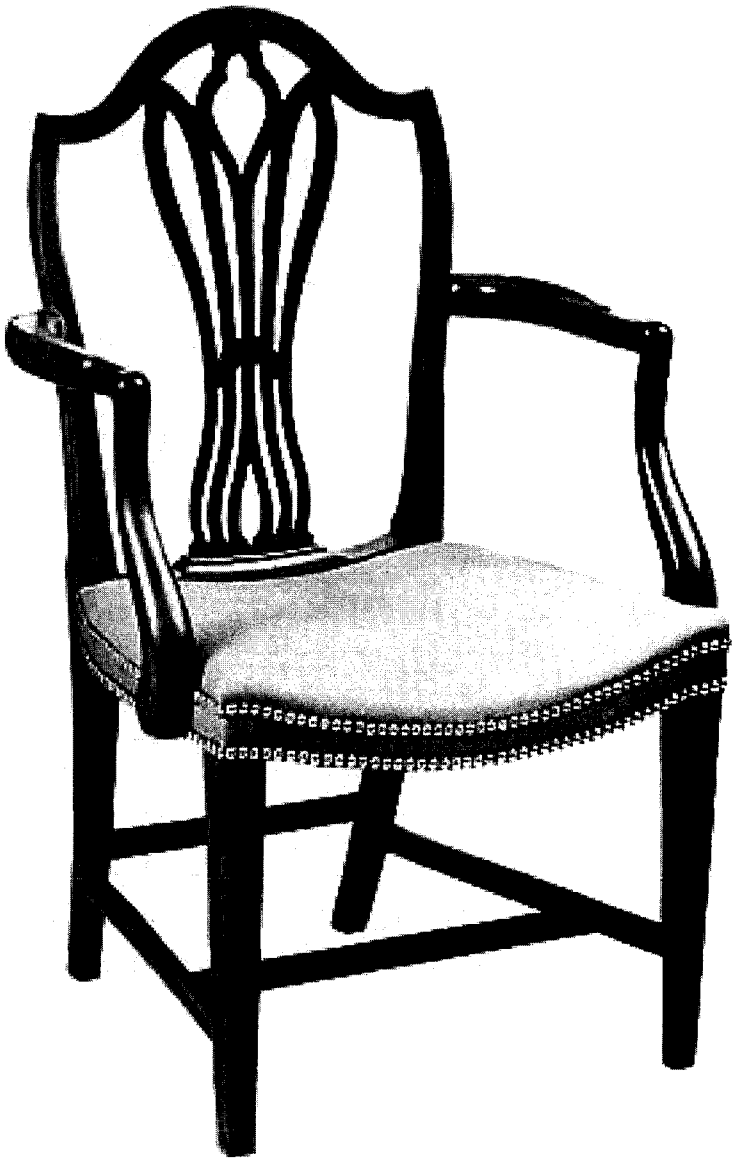

Figure 22: Armchair, John Shaw, Annapolis, 1797, Attributed. Courtesy of the Maryland Commission on Artistic Property, Annapolis, MD.

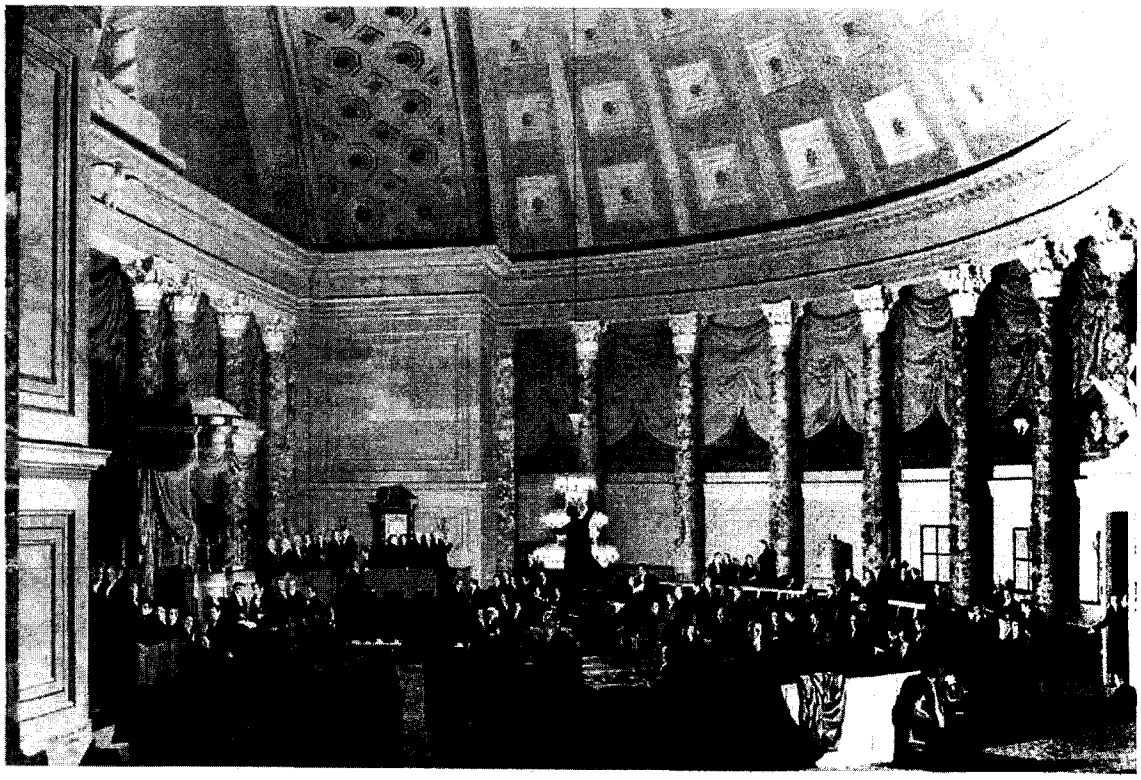

Figure 23: Painting, *House of Representatives*, Samuel F.B. Morse, 1822-1823, Oil on Canvas. Courtesy of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

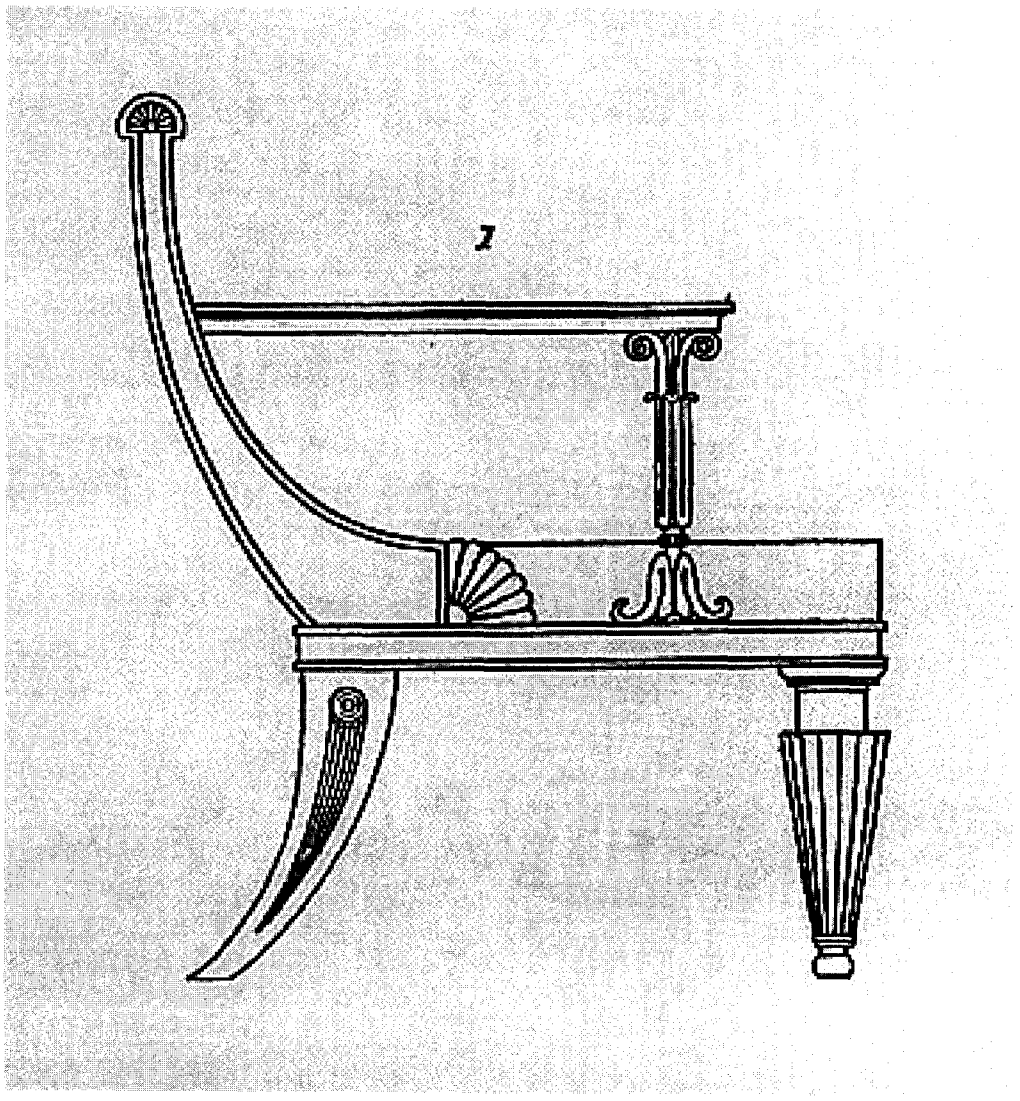

Figure 24: Print, Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, 1807, Pl. 59, no. 1. Courtesy of Printed Books and Periodicals Division, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

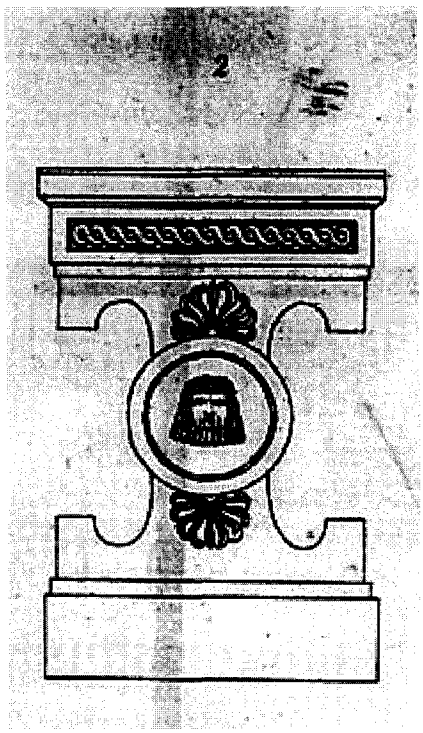

Figure 25: Print, Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, 1807, Pl. 20, n. 2. Courtesy of Printed Books and Periodicals Division, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

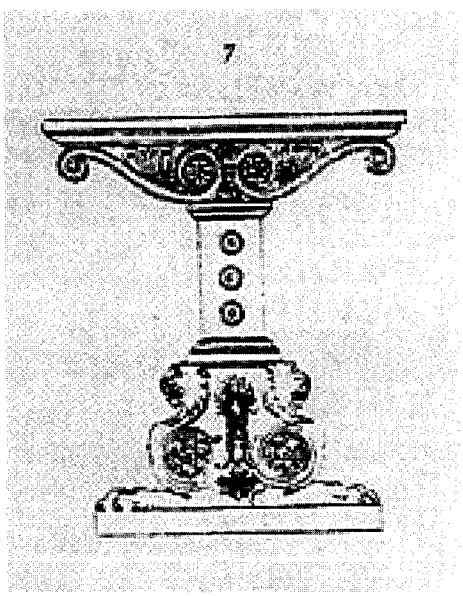

Figure 26: Print, Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, 1807, Pl. 26, n. 7. Courtesy of Printed Books and Periodicals Division, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

Figure 27: Desk, James Greene, Alexandria, VA, 1837. Courtesy of the Office of the Senate Curator, Senate Commission on Art, Washington, DC. Acc. # 65.00001.000.

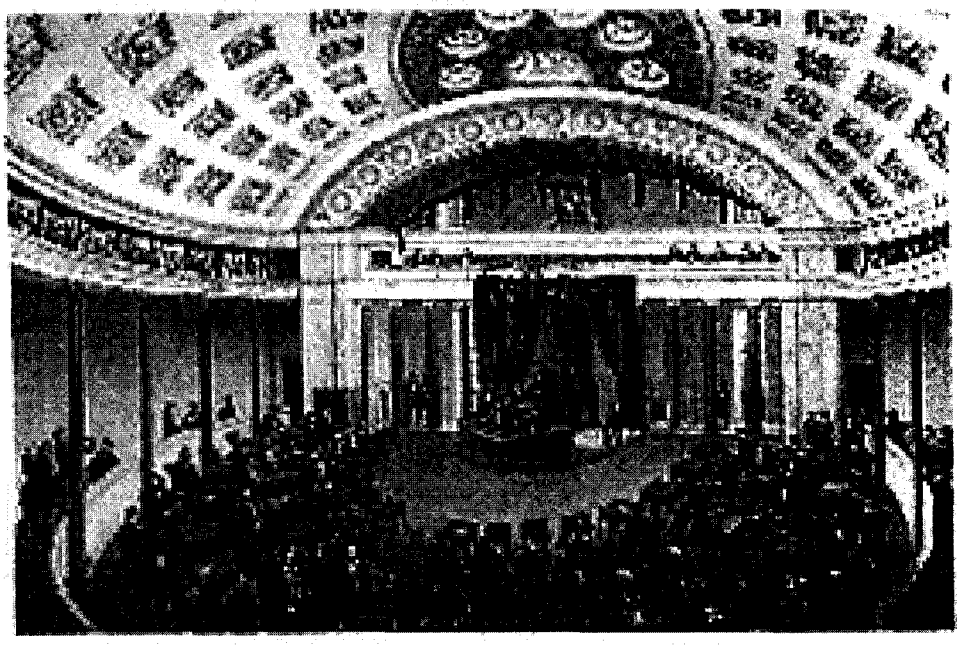

Figure 28: Engraving, *US Senate AD 1850*, Peter F. Rothermel, 1855. Courtesy of the Office of the Senate Curator, Senate Commission on Art. Acc. # 38.00029.000.

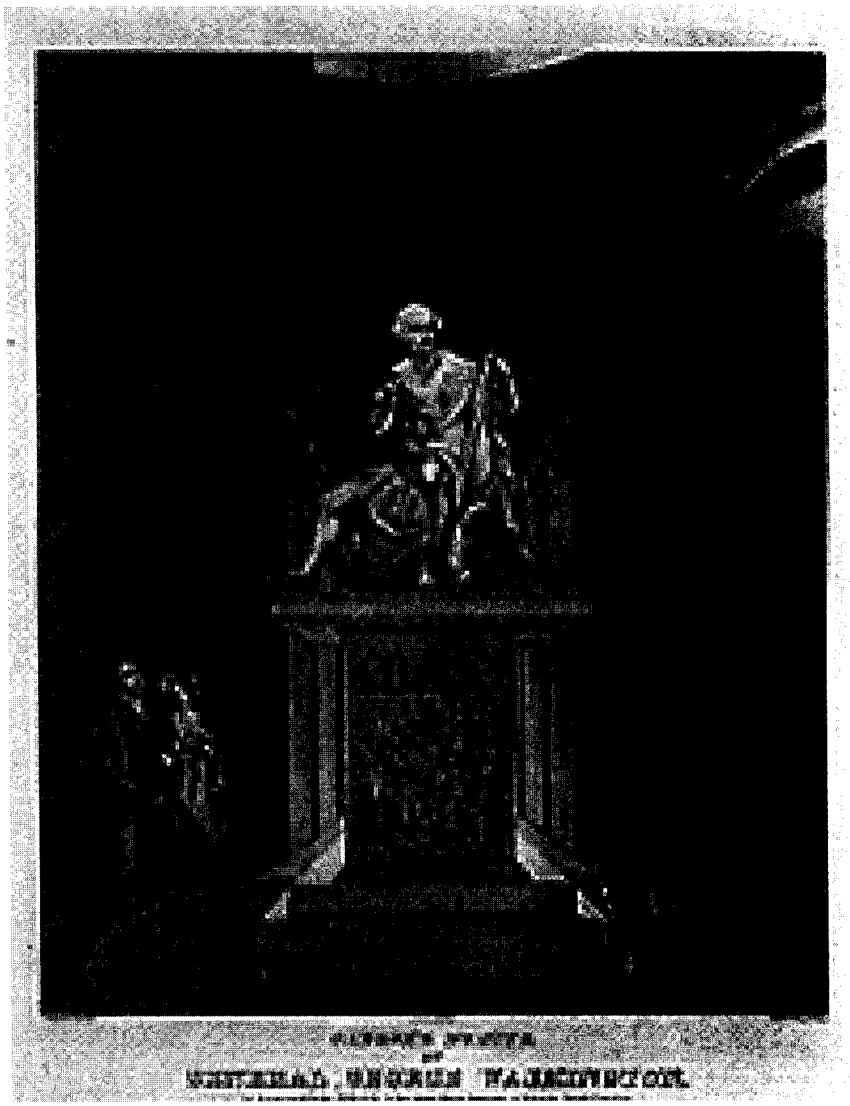

Figure 29: Print, *Canova's Statue of General George Washington*, Albert Newsam after Joseph Weisman and Emanuel Gotlieb Leutze, 1831-1841. Courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History, Ralegih, NC. Acc. # 1948.65.1.

Figure 30: Detail, Painting, *Old State House, Raleigh, NC*, Jacob Marling, Oil on Canvas, c. 1830. Courtesy of the North Carolina Museum of History. Acc. # 1940.16.1.

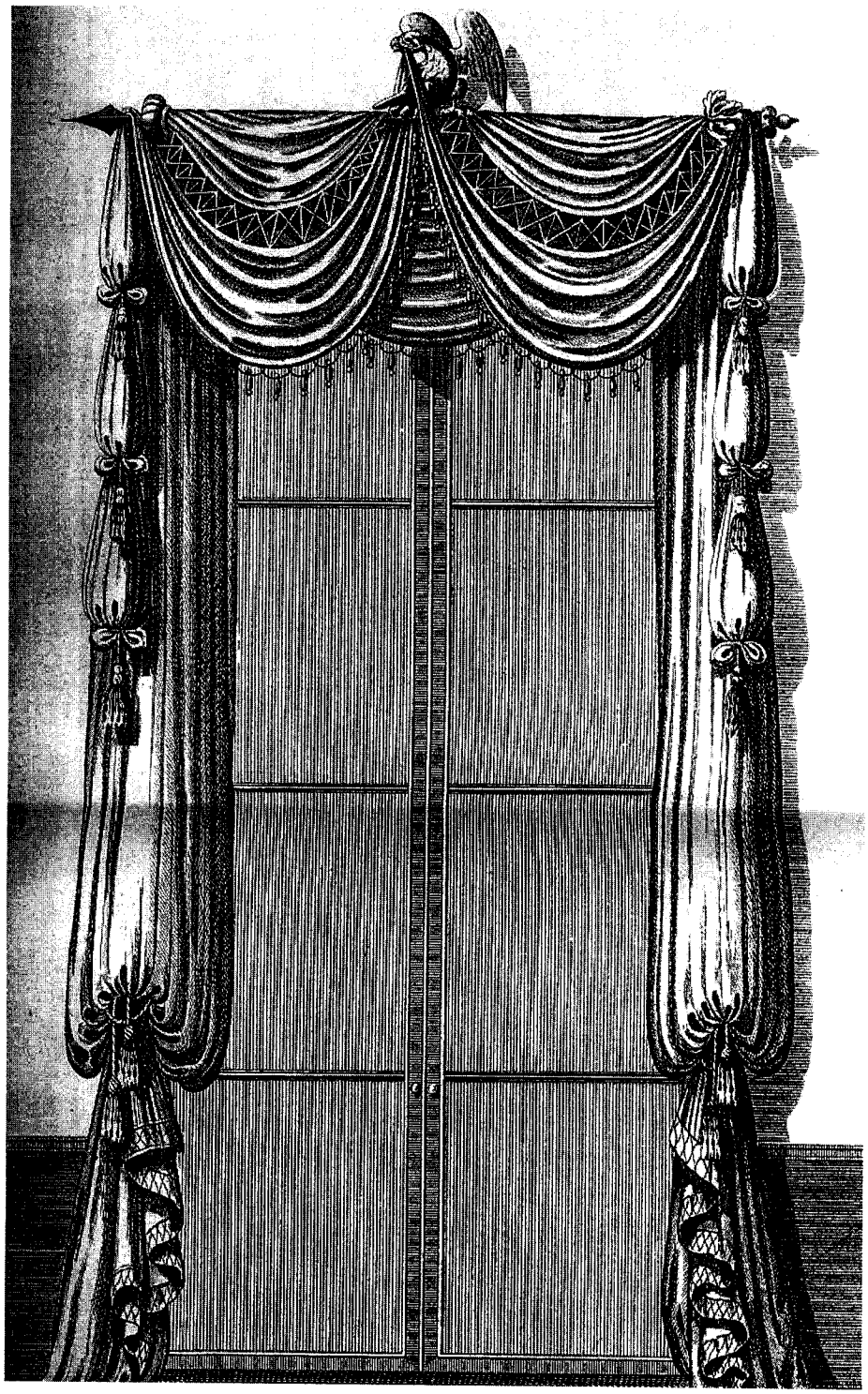

Figure 31: Window Treatment, Thomas Sheraton, *Designs for Household Furniture*, 1812, Pl. 3. Courtesy of the Winterthur Library, Printed Books and Periodicals Division, Winterthur, DE.

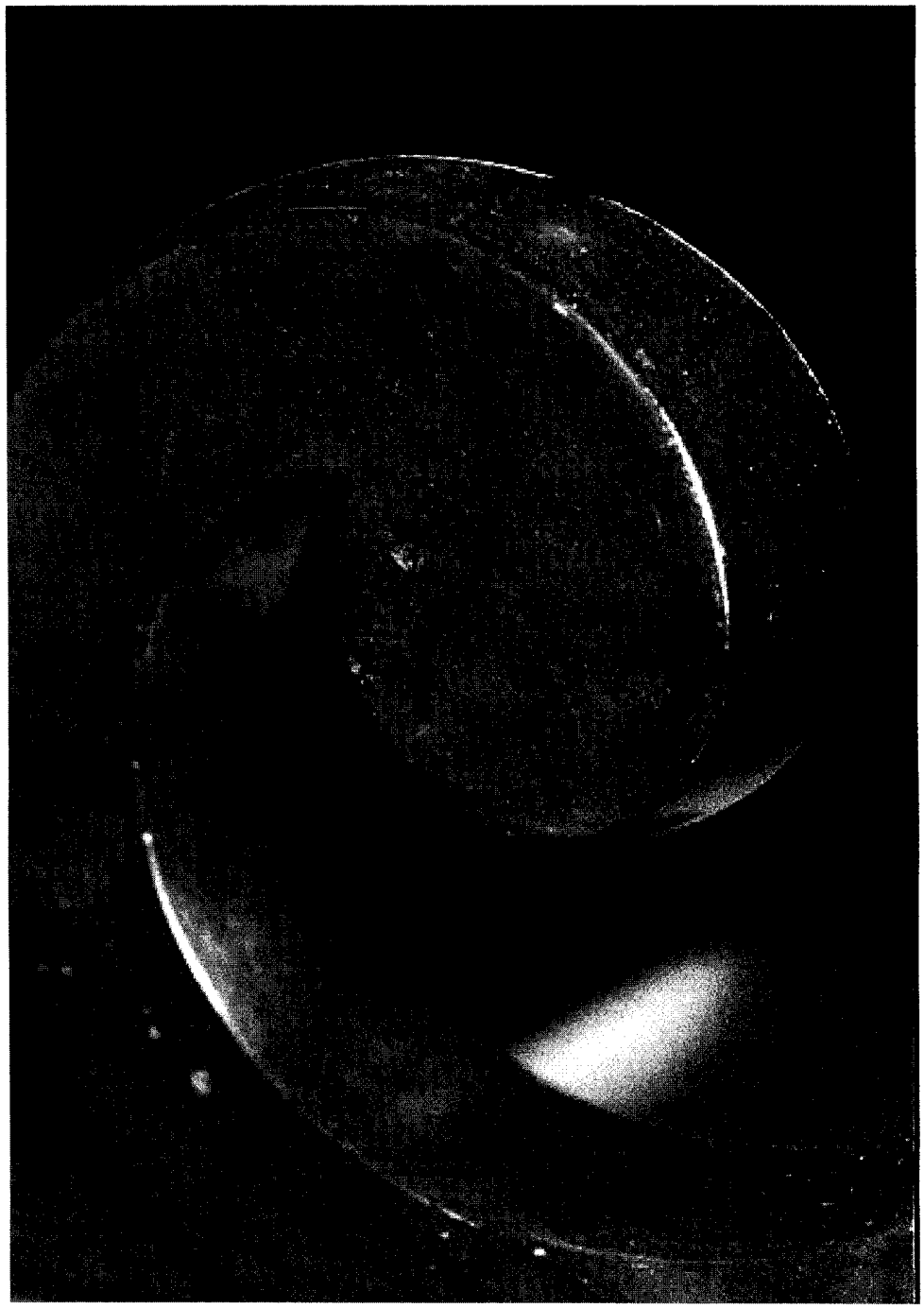

Figure 32: Detail, Inside of Proper Left Arm, Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1822-1823, Attributed. Courtesy North Carolina Museum of History. Acc. # 1991.171.1. The two filled holes at the termination of the scroll indicate where a brass ornament once sat. Photograph by the Author.

Figure 33: Lithograph, *Christ Church*, Drawn by J.B. Forrest, Engraved by J.T.E. Prudehomme, from Henry M. Onderdonk, *A History of the Prostant Episcopal Churches in the City of New York* (New York: H.M. Onderdonk, 1844).

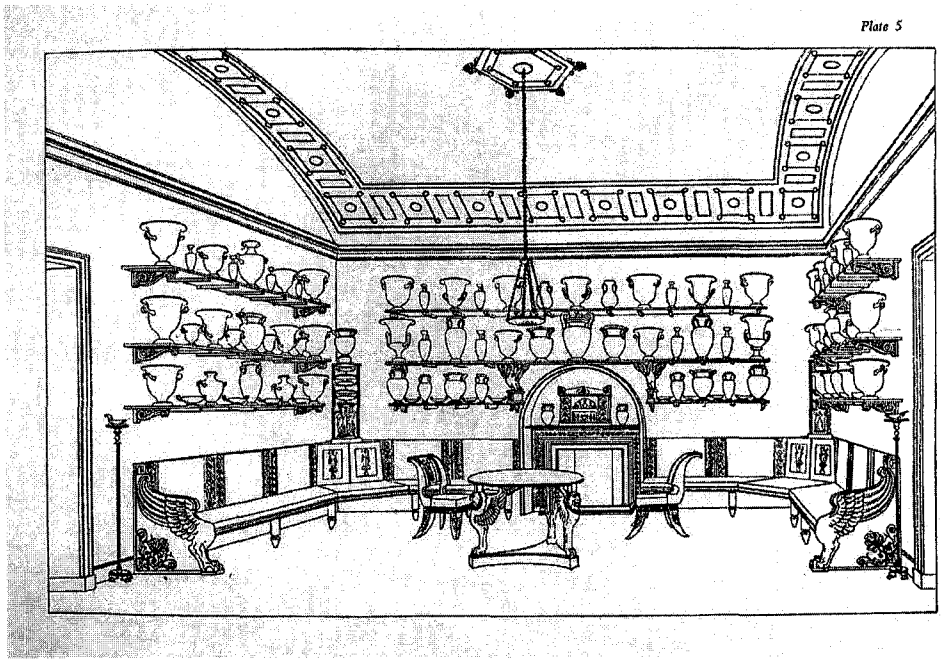

Figure 34: Print, Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, 1807, Pl. 5. Courtesy of Printed Books and Periodicals Division, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

Figure 34a: Print, Thomas Hope, *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration*, 1807, Pl. 29, No. 5. Courtesy of the Winterthur Library, Printed Books and Periodicals Division, Winterthur, DE.

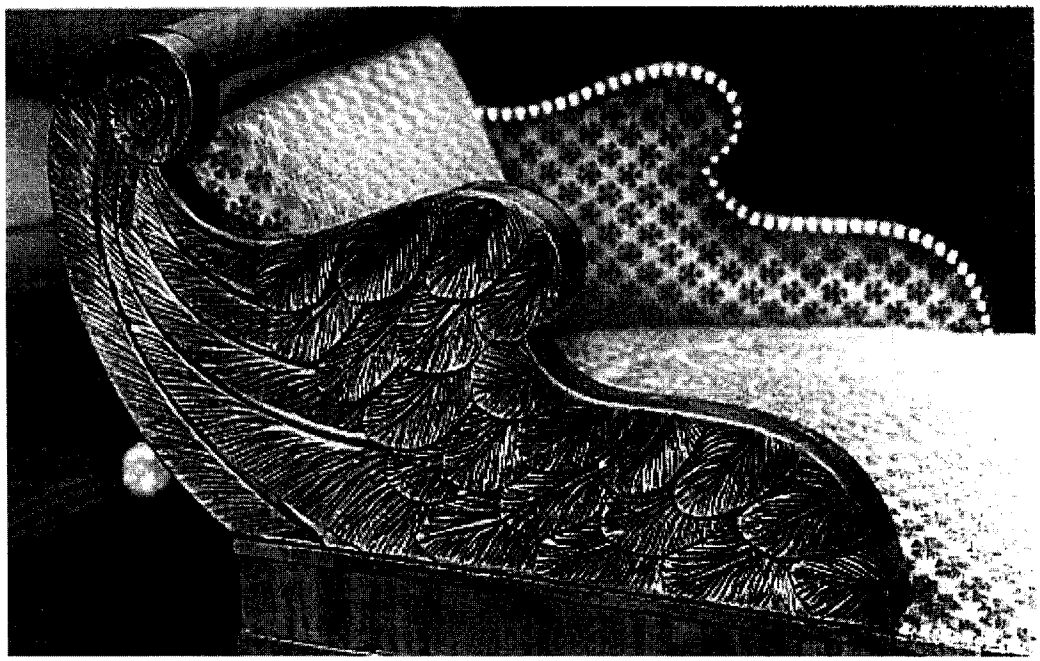

Figure 35: Detail, Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1824-1825.

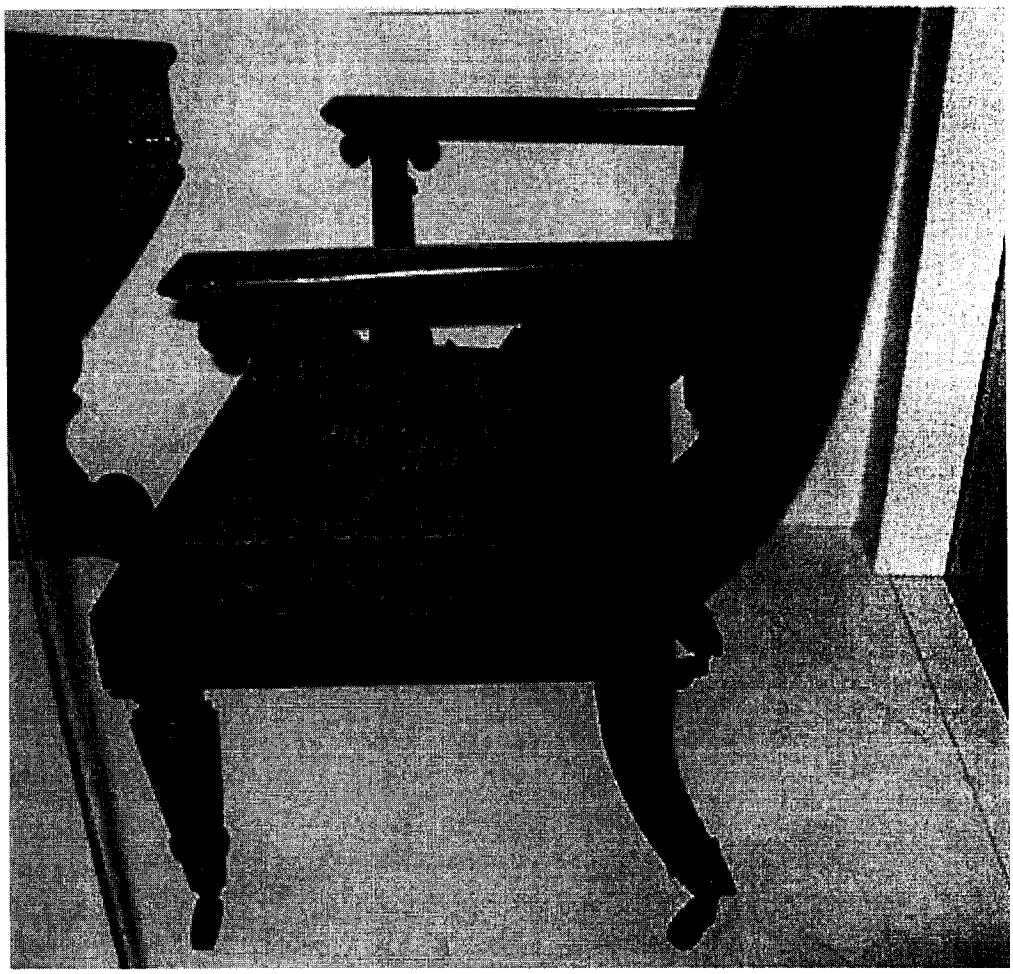

Figure 36: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1819, Marked Castors. Courtesy of Beauvoir, the Jefferson Davis House and Presidential Library, Biloxi, MS.

Figure 37: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1819, Attributed. Private Collection. Photo by Wendy Cooper.

Figure 38: Armchair, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1824-1825, Attributed. Courtesy of Union Philanthropic Literary Society, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, VA. Photo by Sumpter Priddy, III.

Figure 39: Pier Table, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1817-1820, Attributed. Courtesy of Bernard and S. Dean Levy, Inc., New York, NY.

Figure 40: Desk, Thomas Constantine, 1818-1819, Attributed. Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, Washington, DC. This desk is a fragment of what was originally a desk with three or four drawers.

Figure 41: Desk, Thomas Constantine, 1818-1819, Attributed. Courtesy of the National Park Service, Quincy National Historic Site, Quincy, MA.

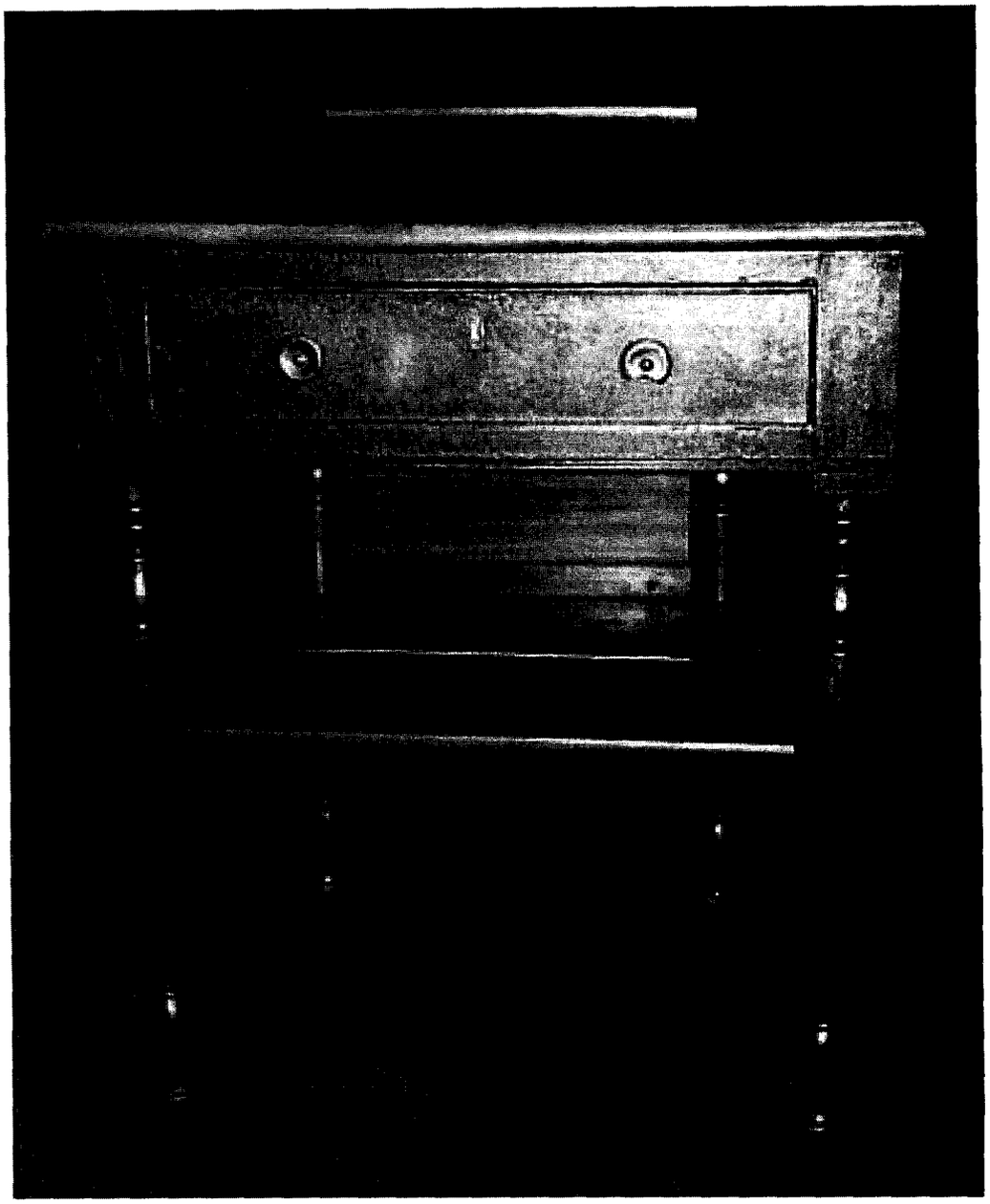

Figure 42: Desk, Thomas Constantine, 1818-1819, Attributed. Courtesy of the Office of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, DC. Photograph by the author.

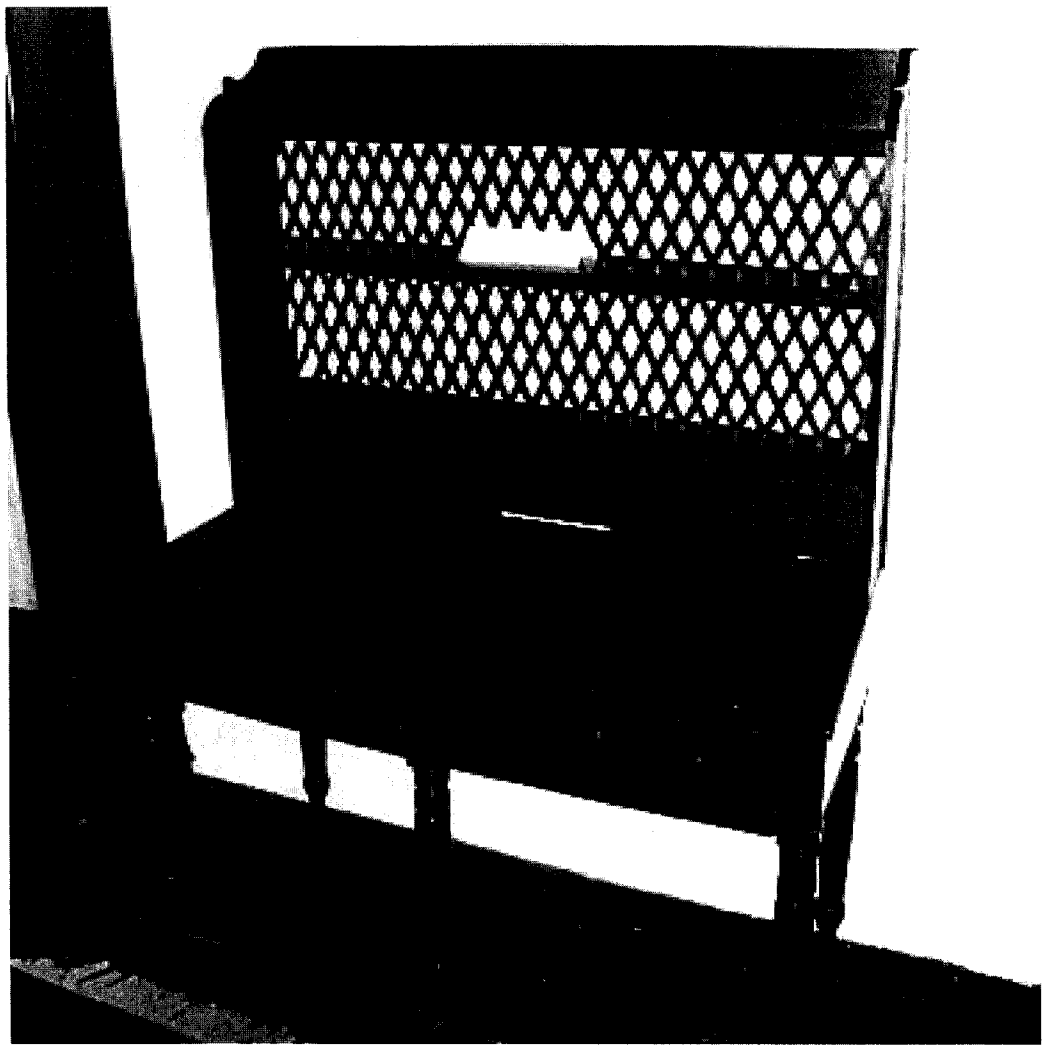

Figure 43: Desk, Thomas Constantine, 1818-1819, Attributed. Courtesy of the Sewell-Belmont Museum, National Woman's Party, Washington, DC. Photograph by the author.

Figure 44: Desk, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1819, Attributed. Courtesy of the Office of the Senate Curator, Senate Commission on Art, Washington, DC. Acc. # 66.00029.001.

Figure 45: Desk, Thomas Constantine, New York, 1819, Attributed. Courtesy of the Office of the Senate Curator, Senate Commission on Art, Washington, DC. This example features the various adaptations of the Senate desks, including the writing box, shelf, microphone holder, and grilles.

APPENDIX A:

LIST OF THOMAS CONSTANTINE'S WORK AS A JOURNEYMAN IN THE SHOP OF JOHN HEWITT

[Page 50][1]

		Work done by Tho.s Constantine		
1812				
Feb.y	14	By making 2 pair Card Tables solid Tops	38.	89 ½
Feb.y	19	By making 1 4 feet dining Table	3.	74
March	20	By making coffin for Mr. Lacklam	2.	"
	20	By making a Sideboard Eliptic [sic] center & Card Draws	35.	71 ½
[April]	17	By making 1 French Sideboard	40.	"
May	1	By making 1 pair Breakfast Tables reeded legs	12.	58
	15	By making 1 coffin for Mr. Dealing	2.	"
	30	By making 1 French Sideboard	40.	"
June	18	By making 1 French Sideboard	40.	"
July	1	By work @ medisine [sic] chest	".	62 ½
	9	By making 1 Pair Card Tables	21.	13 ½
	20	By making 1 Pair Card Tables	21.	13 ½
Aug.t	20	By making 2 Clock Cases	26.	2
		By making 1 Small Glass case for Mr. Denston	".	31 ¼
Sep.r	2	By 2 hours work for Mr. Randle	".	25
	15	By making 6 Moddalls [sic] for Mr. D.....	3.	"
	29	By making 2 Pair Card Tables 1 Pr. Scrolled @ $19.44 & 1 Do Vineers [sic] $21.13 ½	40.	57 ½
		By making 1 Dressing Case	2.	50
Oct.r	7	By making a Gun.....	3.	"
	24	By making a Secretary bureau for S. Cornell	10.	"
Nov.	3	By making 1 Pair Card Tables rolled tops	19.	44
	5	By making a Stand for Ware bank (?)	1.	50
	12	By making 2 3ft. brek.t Tables reeded legs	12.	58
	17	By making a Porch for Mr. Henderson	2.	50
		By repairing a Porch for Mr. Henderson	1.	"

[1] The pages in John Hewitt's Account Book are not numbered, but were assigned them by Marilyn Johnson during her work on the manuscript. See JHAB, M. 492, Joseph Downs Collection of Manuscripts and Printed Ephemera, Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

		By repairing a brush	.....	
		By making a Tray Stand	1.	"
Dec.	5	By making 2 Breakf.t Tables reeded legs	12.	58
	19	By making 1 Sett [sic] 4 ft. 6 dining Tables reeded legs	17.	42 ½
	16	By making 1 Counting house Desk & Boxes	29.	73
	20	By making 1 Pair Glass doors for Higgins	4.	20
[1813]				
Feb.	10	By making 6 3 ft. 6 dining Tables	19.	25
	18	By making a ..... for Mr. Randle 37 ½	".	37 ½
	19	By making 1 Sett [sic] 4 ft. dining Tables reed legs	15.	29
[Mar.]	11	By repairing Mahogany Chair for Bruen	".	50
		By making a case for watch	1.	25
	17	By making 2 patterns for Mr. Bryan	0.	75
	12	By making 20 pieces for Mr. Bl.....	".	50
	24	By making a French Sideboard	46.	34
April	3	By making 1 Sett [sic] 4ft dining Tables Plain		12.
	"			
			541.	89 ¼

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		Brought forward	541.	89 ¼
April	6	By Making 3 News Paper Sticks	".	75
	7	By Making a Pattern for J. Bryan about 37 ½	".	37 ½
	15	By making 1 Sett [sic] 4 ft. dining Tables reed legs	15.	43 ¾
		By 8 hours work	1.	"
		By putting leg to chair	".	62 ½
		Mending chair	".	12 ½
		Work for Randle	".	75
		Mending Clock Case	".	12 ½
		Sizing Secretary for Cloth	".	37 ½
		Repairing bason [sic] stand	".	18 ¾
		Putting on 1 Sett Table fasteners	".	41 ½
		Helping with Coffin	".	25
		Glass Frame for Denston	".	50
		A Small Clock Case	1.	25
		Part of a Coffin	1.	"
			$565.	05 ¾
		Deduct on Putting Castors on 3 Pair Tables	".	68 ¾
			$564.	37
May	4	By making French Sideboard Plain	30.	11

	8	By making 2 Rulers	".	12 ½
	10	By making 2 Circular Card Tables Solid Tops	10.	10 ½
	11	By making small Frame for Cap.n Williams	".	31 ¾
	17	By making 2 Card tables Eliptic [sic] Solid Tops	15.	87 ½
	28	By making a Counting House desk with 4 draw	18.	9[0]
	29	By making 2 Counting desk stools	3.	00
	31	By making a plat form [sic] about 3 ft.	".	25
[June]		By making a Newst [sic] draws for Mr. D.....	2.	47 ½
	16	By making 2 2 ft. 10 breakft Tables..... reeded	10.	53 ½
	24	By making bookcase demand No.	13.	87 ½
July	17	By making 2 Glass cases for Mr. Madguand (?)	".	10
Aug.t	10	By making 2 doubel [sic] Glass Cases for Huggins	30.	"
	28	By making a French Side	52.	59
Sep.r	11	By making a Pair Card Tables Octagan [sic]	17.	3[0]
	23	By making 2 breakft. Tables reeded legs	11.	5[0]
[Oct]	3	By making 1 Sett [sic] 4ft Octagan [sic] Dining Tables	14.	52
	9	By a Job for Mr. Hull about 18 ¾	".	25
	16	By making 2 Octagan [sic] Tables for Allen	9.	10
	16	By Repairing Dining Table for Allen		
Nov	5	By making a Cradle	8.	89
	13	By making 2 3ft 10 breakft Table Plain	5.	12
	19	By a Job for Mr. Shaw	".....	
	21	By making 2 Large breakft Table reeded 3 ft	11.	79
Dec.r	1	By making 3 Busks	".	50
	9	By making a Side Table for Frenchman	12.	"
	11	By sawing vineers [sic] 4 hours	.....	
307.			60	

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1813 Thomas Constantine Continued

Dec.r				
	18	By making 1 Pair Pillor [sic] & Claw Card Tables	34.	50
	24	By making a case for Mr. Gibson	7.	20
[				
Jan	12	By letting Inlay into M..... for Mr. Rogers	".	37 ½
	30	By Making 2 ladies work tables	32.	64 ½
[Feb]	10	By making a Swing Cradle	7.	50
	12	By making 1 Circular Easey [sic] Chair	7.	"
	23	By making 2 Swing Cradles	9.	"
	28	By making a Mahogany Crib	5.	"
April	12	By making a open Sideboard with Pillors [sic]	86.	30
		By work @ 4 Portraits	1.	25
	21	By making a Sideboard 4 legs	25.	74

29	By making a bookcase for Docter [sic] Castille	12.	"
	Altering tall chest	".	18 ¾
	1 Bottle draw	".	81 ¾
	Altering work table top	".	34 ½
	1 Prop bedstead	13.	72 ¾
	Job for Rodgers	".	34 ½
	By Making 1 Pair Card Table	16.	18 ¾
	2 Cocks putting on	".	10
	Mending Draw	".	25
	Settled	518.	30

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		Thomas Constantine C.o By Work
April	16	By finishing 1 Pair Card Tables
	20	By 3 Glass Cases
	24	By Coffin
[May]	6	By 1 French Sideboard
	9	By 1 Sideboard for Mr. Davis

APPENDIX B:

CATALOGUE OF LABELED AND ATTRIBUTED WORKS

(Listed in order of form and date of origin)

CHAIRS:

Armchair, 1818-1819, Figure 8

Association: Printed paper label affixed to interior of rear seat rail
Materials: Primary: Mahogany; Secondary: Ash, white pine, maple
Dimensions: H: 37 ½", W: 23", D: 19"
Location: Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History, #259603

Discussion: Of the 192 chairs sent from Constantine's store to Washington in the fall of 1819, this is the only extant labeled example. Klapthor refers to two additional chairs from the House of Representatives suite in private collections but neither retained a label.[1] The lack of surviving chairs in general likely relates to their rather plain appearance and the brevity of their stay in the House chamber. When the Representatives moved into a new hall within the Thomas U. Walter addition in 1857, they purchased new furniture based on designs provided by the architect and decided to sell of their obsolete furnishings.

The desks and chairs were sold at public auction on June 29, 1858.[2] The notice mentions "275 solid Mahogany Writing Desks, of various sizes," and "300 Mahogany hair cloth covered Arm Chairs." An article regarding the sale described the "animated" bidding for those "articles which were most intimately connected with associations of the nation's greatest men."[3] The symbolic value of some artifacts had been solidified, and while most desks and chairs sold for between $3 and $10, those belonging to John Quincy Adams, a nine term Representative (MA, 1831-1848), were purchased for $50. In general, however,

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[1] Klapthor, 206.

[2] *Washington Star*, June 21, 1858. Cited in Klapthor, 204.

[3] *Washington Star*, June 29, 1858. Cited in Klapthor, 204-205.

this associative value may not have been very strong because few of the extant pieces survive with a history of its congressional owner.

In a governmental body as large as the House, the furniture likely shifted quite frequently as the number of legislators changed with the addition of new states and according to population increases. These supplemental tables and chairs were provided, in the most part, by Henry Hill, the Washington cabinetmaker who provided the models of the desks and chairs in 1818. Hill continued to receive payments for repairing and constructing new furniture through the late 1830s.[4] By 1834, the House had increased in size to 248 members.[5] Therefore, when the chamber's contents were sold in 1858, less than two-thirds of the furniture there had been provided by Constantine.

One of the repair jobs likely assigned to Hill during the 1820s and 1830s was the introduction of front, rear, and side stretchers to support a woven cane rack. This feature was not specified in the proposal published in 1818, and, according to the woman who donated the chair to the Smithsonian, it was added after the chairs arrived in Washington as a hat rack for their occupants.[6] The stretchers were added without dismantling the chair and, thus, were simply tenoned into the front legs and slid into notches cut into the rear.

The chair in the Smithsonian's collection was purchased by George Shea at the 1858 auction along with three others and returned with him to New York. In an 1869 letter from Shea that was affixed to the bottom of the chair, he claims to have acquired them "as souvenirs of better and nobler days." He was disappointed that while the Senate, "with a happy reverence," retained their furniture, the House thought its "unfit for the present gaudy assembly-room."[7]

Provenance: House of Representatives, to George Shea in 1857, by descent to Gladys P. Lehmann, to Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History.

References: Klapthor, 191-210.

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[4] Klapthor, 204.

[5] "Plan of the Hall of the House of Representatives of the United States," *American Daily Advertiser*, March 15, 1834. Illustrated in Klapthor, 205.

[6] Klapthor, 191.

[7] George Shea to Rev. Frances Strinton, August 6, 1869, Smithsonian Institution, National Museum of American History. Cited in Klapthor, 191.

Armchair, 1818-1824, Figure 12

Not examined by author

Association: Printed paper label on interior of rear seat rail
Materials: Primary: Mahogany; Secondary: Ash, white pine
Dimensions: H: 35 ½", W: 22 ½", D: 18"
Location: Unknown, brought to Winterthur Museum on June 18, 1969 by furniture restorer Frank Getty of Manchester, Maryland

Discussion: In a New England context, this chair is of the type referred to in the period as a lolling chair and more recently by collectors as a Martha Washington-style chair. Like the seats produced for the House of Representatives, it features a fully upholstered seat and back and open arms. The juncture of the elbows and arm stumps is accentuated by a turned button in both cases, as well. The noteworthy difference, however, are the square, tapered, and fluted front legs on this chair in contrast to the elaborately turned legs found on the House chairs. Despite this difference, Mr. Getty assumed his chair was from that same commission. This example more closely resembles the suite produced by Thomas Affleck for the United States Senate for their chamber in Philadelphia than Constantine's House furniture.

The author argues that Getty's example was built for a private patron using the model of the House chair design or vice versa. One would logically expect all of the seating furniture in the House commission to include turned legs, for they were meant to match the desks. The fluted legs may have replaced the turned ones at a patron's request or by the cabinetmaker's desire. By doing so, this chair imitates the Affleck chairs in Philadelphia

A newspaper article from 1969 describing Mr. Getty's discovery mentions that the chair was originally upholstered with black leather and stuffed with horsehair. It is impossible to tell if this covering was original or the product of a later refinishing campaign, but Claxton's advertisement and the 1858 sale of the House furnishings clearly indicate the use of haircloth.

Provenance: Unknown, Mr. Getty only mentioned that the chair had been brought to him with two others for repairs and reupholstery.

References: *Winterthur Newsletter*, Vol. XV, No. 10 (December 1969), 1-3; and John Woodfield, "Countian Authenticates 1819 Congressional Chair," *The News American* (Baltimore), July 28, 1969.

Armchair, 1818-1825, Figure 13

Not examined by author

Association: Loosely attributed, similar in construction and design to the chairs Thomas Constantine & Co. produced for the United States House of Representatives
Materials: Primary: Mahogany; Secondary: White oak
Dimensions: H: 34 ¾", W: 22 1/16", D: 24"
Location: Private Collection, New York, NY

Discussion: There are clear design connections between this chair and those that Constantine's shop made for the House of Representatives in 1818-1819. The significant difference between the them being the scrolled arms found on this example. Where as the House arms have a turned button applied to the joint of the s-curved elbows and arm stumps, the arms on this chair includes buttons on both sides of the termination of the scroll. It has also been suggested that this example might represent one of the yet undiscovered thirty-six chairs that Constantine sent for the Senate Committee rooms at the cost of $14, but one would presume those would have resembled more closely the group of forty-eight used in the Senate chamber. The author suggests that, like the Getty chair, this chair was produced as a retail product using the general design of the House of Representative's commission. Where as the legs were modified on Mr. Getty's chair, in this instance the arms were changed.

The use of white oak as a secondary wood is atypical of New York cabinetmaking in this period—ash, maple, tulip poplar, and white pine being more common. The castor's on this chair, which are thought to be original, are stamped on the cup with the name "TOLER." Another chair associated with Constantine's store features castors with the Toler mark, as well. Toler appears as a merchant at 113 Pearl Street from 1816-1819 and again in 1822-1823. There was also a hardware company in New Jersey that operated under the name Toler beginning in the second-quarter of the nineteenth-century.[8] This could suggest that the chair is later than expected or that the castors are replacements.

Provenance: Charles and Rebekah Clark, Nolensville, TN to Hirschl and Adler Galleries, Inc., New York, NY to a private collection, New York, NY.

References: None

[8] Fennimore, 409.

Armchair, 1819, Figure 9

Not examined by author

Association: Pair of marked castors on the rear legs, reading "T. Constantine N. York."
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer; Secondary: Maple
Dimensions: H: 38 5/8", W: 23 ¼", D: 19 ½"
Location: Private Collection, New York, NY

Discussion: This chair is one of the set of forty-eight built by T. Constantine & Co. for the United States Senate. This chair features a variety of numbers on the interior of the rear seat rail. They were applied with chalk and on paper labels, but most are now illegible. It is not known when chairs for the United State Senate began to leave the chamber. According to Isaac Bassett, a page and assistant doorkeeper in the Senate during from 1831-1895, all forty-eight original chairs were still in use when the chamber relocated to its present position in 1859.[9]

By the 1860s photographs and printed illustrations of the Senate clearly illustrate the variety of chairs used in the latter part of the century.[10] A 1867 photograph shows a round-back, tufted leather, pivoting base armchair sitting on the Senate floor adjacent to one built according to the Thomas Hope design.[11] Similar variation is seen in S.S. Kilburn's 1888 engraving "The Senate Chamber."[12] This ad hoc mixture may have resulted from the replacement of original chairs that had been sold or damaged with more comfortable high-back swivel chairs. The purchase of such seating furniture instead of replicas of the

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[9] "The Senate Chamber Chairs," Office of the Senate Curator, unpublished manuscript, 1997.

[10] Although the artists who drew the Senate chamber often glossed over the details of specific articles such as furniture in their renderings, they did distinguish between different types of seating furniture such as a four-legged chair and one sitting on a pivoting base.

[11] Unidentified 1867 photograph, "Section 6, Issue: Grilles on the Feet of the Senate Chamber Desks," Report on the Conservation of the Senate Chamber Desks, 1998, Office of the Senate Curator, Washington, DC.

[12] S.S. Kilburn, "The Senate Chamber," in *Picturesque Washington* (1888), hand-colored wood engraving. Illustrated in United States Senate Commission on Art, *United States Senate Graphic Arts Collection: Illustrated Checklist, Volume 1* (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1995), 20, Acc. # 38.00645.

Constantine chairs as new states entered the union could also explain this phenomena.

Despite the rapid admission of new states following the War of 1812, the Senate did not allow for the extra space that would be required as their ranks continued to swell. They only ordered enough seating for the members of twenty-four states.[13] With the admission of six states between 1816 and 1821, the Senate had not only occupied all of the furniture it ordered from Constantine within two years of the commission, but it had also reached the maximum capacity set forth when Latrobe redesigned the chamber in 1816.[14] However, assuming that Constantine's furniture held up well, the Senate would not have had to purchase new chairs and desks until Arkansas earned statehood in 1836.

A newspaper article from the 1870s mentioned that the Senate furniture remained "substantially as it did a half century ago," i.e. 1820, and that few "of the old chairs have been reupholstered, but most of them have never been repaired, being appraently as good today as they were when first placed in the chamber."[15] In the article, Bassett claimed that all of the original chairs were still in use by this point and that he knew the location and history of each. He "made a mental note of every change, and could, if he desired, point them out at once."

Bassett later reported that his predecessor had sold Jefferson Davis's chair to Senator Milton Latham (CA, 1860-1863).[16] Mr. Latham later asked Bassett for permission to purchase Davis's desk, but the door keeper refused on the grounds that it was not his property to sell. It is hard to say how quickly the remaining chairs left the Capitol over the next decades; the tradition permitting a Senator to take his chair upon his departure from the Senate was firmly established in the twentieth century. Without more provenanced chairs it will be difficult to determine the rate at which chairs were removed from the chamber in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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[13] This decision actually showed some forethought, for the Senate only needed forty-four chairs and desks when the ordered was submitted in 1819.

[14] The six states were Indiana (1816), Mississippi (1817), Illinois (1818), Alabama (1819), Maine (1820), and Missouri (1821).

[15] Transcription of an Article from the Washington Star, n.d. (c. 1870), Office of the Senate Curator.

[16] Bassett did not say why a Senator from California would have been so interested in Davis's chair. Latham was born in Columbus, OH but did live in Alabama for five years before moving to California in 1850. Latham was serving when Davis withdrew with other secessionist Senators in 1861.

Provenance: United States Senate to Jonathan Chace (1829-1917, RI, House of Representatives 1881-1885, Senate, 1885-1889) by descent to present owner, New York, NY.

References: The Senate commission is mentioned in Klapthor, 200-202; Beck, 26-27; Allen, 449; Cooper, 229; and Voorsanger and Howat, 282.

Armchair, 1819, Figure 36

Not examined by author

Association: Pair of marked castors on the rear legs, reading "T. Constantine N. York."
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer; Secondary: Maple
Dimensions: H: 38 ½", W: 23", D: 19 ½"
Location: Beauvoir, The Jefferson Davis House and Presidential Library, Biloxi, MS

Discussion: Although museum records indicate that Jefferson Davis used this chair before he departed the Senate in 1861, there is no surviving documentation to link it to Senator Latham, who allegedly purchased Davis's chair.

Since the marked castors connect link this chair to the Constantine commission of 1819, one can ideally make an informed assessment of the variation in appearance that might separate those produced in New York to later replacements and additions manufactured in Washington. The most significant anomaly concerns the carving on the arm supports which appear to be executed by different hands. However, because Constantine outsourced much of the Senate commission to other New York cabinetmakers as a result of the speed with which the order needed to be filled, one would expect some variation among the chairs sent to Washington. Constantine would have hired multiple carvers for this project, and his chairs would have illustrated this subcontracting through different interpretations of the design and anomalous shop practices.

The alternative explanation would be that the Davis chair was produced in Washington to supplement the suite of Constantine furniture as more states were added to the union. As mentioned in the discussion of the Chace family chair, new chairs were first required in 1836 with the addition of Arkansas as a state.

The notion that Mississippi was a member of the United States prior to the purchase of the furniture in 1819 does not support this attribution. A Senator from Mississippi would have sat in an original chair during the 1820s, but there was not a rigid association of Senators and their seat as there is today. Thus, at a given session of Congress, the legislator might find himself with any number of chairs. The variety of numbers, labels, and chisel marks on the seat frame certainly suggest a number of inventorying campaigns in which seats were reassigned. As a result of this intermingling of the new and old, Davis could easily have been sitting in a replacement chair when he left the Senate in 1861.

Provenance: Given to the museum prior to 1958

References: None

Armchair, 1819, Figure 37

Association: Loosely attributed, part of the set of chairs made in 1819 by Thomas Constantine for the Senate Chamber
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer; Secondary: Maple
Dimensions: H: 38 3/8", W: 23 ¼", D: 19 ½"
Location: Private Collection, New York, NY

Discussion: The absence of marked castors on this chair prohibits a conclusive attribution to the Constantine shop, but the series of markings on the seat frame and an established family provenance firmly connect it to the Senate chamber. While closely related to the Chace chair, there are still come variations in the construction and design that suggest this example was the product of a different shop. Like the Davis chair, the Hamlin example shows yet another hand in the carving on the arm supports. Additionally, the convex shape and half-dovetail joints of the medial brace on the Chace chair contrast to the straight brace with full dovetails on this example.

As with Mississippi and Rhode Island, Maine had received statehood by the time Constantine was hired to furnish the Senate chamber. Thus, through the late 1830s, a Senator from Maine would have certainly sat on a Constantine-made chair.

In consideration of the provenance attached to the three chairs that have been located, no matter how tentative it may be, it appears that the bulk of the Senate chairs were sold in the last decades of the nineteenth century. If Latham purchased Davis's in 1862 or 1863, Hamlin purchased his chair in 1881, and Chace brought his home in 1889, one might expect that others were following suit during this period. It is also logical to assume that the chairs of other prominent Senators from earlier in the century—Webster, Calhoun, Clay, etc.—might have been purchased early on as well.

Provenance: Hannibal Hamlin (US Senator, Maine, 1848-1857—D; 1857-1861, 1869-1881—R; Vice President, 1861-1865), by descent to Charles Hamlin, to Cyrus Hamlin, to Hannibal Hamlin, to Cyrus Hamlin to present owner, New York, NY.

References: Myra Sawyer Hamlin, *Eleazer Hamlin and His Descendants* (Bangor, ME: M.S. Hamlin, 1909), 32.

Armchair, 1819-1825, Figure 11

Association: Pair of marked castors on rear legs
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer; Secondary: Maple (interior rails, may not be orginal)
Dimensions: H: 37", W: 23 3/8", D: 19 ¾"
Location: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1998.0009

Discussion: Originally thought to have been produced in 1819 for use in the Senate Chamber at the United States Capitol, it is now thought that Constantine made this particular chair as either a prototype for that commission or as a later affectation of that design for a private patron. The former explanation is offered because of the roughly hewn joinery of the seat rail.[17]

Of the extant chairs connected to Thomas Hope's Plate 59, this example is furthest from the details expressed in the line drawing found in *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). Unlike the other chairs with the marked castors, this example was carved in a different manner. Most notably, on Winterthur's chair:

1. Stay rail is not reeded
2. Sunbursts at the termination of the back supports are not fully developed with carved rays
3. Front legs terminate above the castor in a different turning sequence
4. Turned capitol on the front legs done in a different sequence
5. Upper terminations of the rear posts are not carved with a sunburst
6. Front side of rear posts are not reeded below the junction with the arms
7. Arm supports are carved in a more refined manner in comparison to the simple cross hatching found on the Senate chair
8. Does not include a maple cross brace running front to back and attached to the seat rails via a sliding dovetail
9. Reeding on the rear saber legs is more blocky and robust rather than tapering to a point as on the Senate chairs

In consideration of these drastic contrasts, one cannot assume that the Senate received such a disparate selection of seating furniture. The more robust reeding on the rear legs is closely related to the treatment of the Christ Church chairs and, thus, could date to the later 1823-1825 period. Overall, the refinements to the design that appear on the Winterthur chair suggest the passage of time from Constantine's first encounter with and more direct copying of the Hope drawing. Also, this chair shorter by 1 ½" and ½" wider, thus suggesting a less formal purpose. The notion that Constantine's shop produced this artifact on contract following the completion of the Senate commission is supported by the presence of armchairs that seem to resemble the House of Representatives design.

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[17] Personal conversation with Mark Anderson and Michael Podmaniczky, Winterthur Museum, Winterthur, DE.

Provenance: Allegedly purchased in Reno, NV in 1997, to Thomas Livingston Antiques, San Francisco, CA, to Milly McGehee, Riderwood, MD, 1997, to the Winterthur Museum, 1998.

References: Beck, 27.

Armchair, 1822-1823, Figure 10, 47

Association: Attributed, chair mentioned in bill of sale to Thomas Constantine's brother, John, a New York Upholsterer, and resembles labeled furniture made for the United States Senate.
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer, gilded brass (now missing); Secondary: Mahogany throughout
Dimensions: H: 35", W: 25", D: 24"
Location: North Carolina Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1991.171.1.

Discussion: One of the few objects to survive a disasterous 1831 fire that gutted the Capitol (constructed 1792-1794, extensively remodeled 1818-1822). Constantine's store furnished this chair for the Speaker of the Senate, and it had arrived by early 1823. Like the United States Senate chairs the seat frame and rear legs are taken from Plate 59, No. 1 of Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). The front legs, carved scrolled arms and crest rail, while executed and ornamented in a manner found on other contemporary New York furniture, are combined in a wholly unique manner in this case. The dimensions are also quite enhanced as compared to the US Senate chairs: this example is 4 ½" wider, 1 ½" taller, and 1 ¾" deeper. The ornament is as elaborate as it is unconventional. Tack holes indicate the presence and location of decorative brass mounts that were applied around the seat frame and at the termination of the arm scrolls and crest rail. The seat retains its original linen covering and stuffing of horsehair, Spanish moss, and cotton: all materials commonly used in early nineteenth-century upholstery. The chair was likely finished with a crimson fabric to match the damask and moreen that John Constantine hung on the walls of the Senate chamber. Large screws bored through the side seat rails connect the scrolled arms to the frame.

Provenance: North Carolina State Senate, to North Carolina State Hall of History in 1919, to the North Carolina Division of Archives and History in 1991.

References: Raymond Beck, "Thomas Constantine's 1823 Speaker's Chair for the North Carolina State House: Its History and Preservation," *Carolina Comments* Vol. XLI: No. 1 (January 1993): 25-38; Wendy Cooper, *Classical Taste in America: 1800-1840* (Baltimore: Baltimore Museum of Art, 1993), 229-231, 298, Catlogue # 186; Catherine H. Voorsanger and John K. Howat, eds., *Art and the Empire City* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 282-283, Figure 232.

Armchair, 1 of 2, 1823-1825, Figures 14 & 56

Not examined by the author

Association: Pair of marked castors on the rear legs
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer; Secondary: Maple
Dimensions: H: 27", D: 17 ½", W: 25"
Location: Westervelt-Warner Museum, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Discussion: The design for this chair likely comes from two plates in Thomas Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807). The seat frame and legs are adapted from Plate 59, No. 1, and the carved-wing arms are probably taken from Plate 29, No. 5. The arms and seat are upholstered directly to the frame, but it is unknown whether this technique is original to the chairs. The back slides into place and is held by a removable crest rail. As mentioned in Part 2, Chapter 3, these chairs are unique for their low back. Compared to the US Senate chairs, the Christ Church backs are 10" shorter. The seats are 1 ½" wider but lack 2" in depth. These proportions presumably speak to the formal, upright countenance taken by a rector during religious ceremonies and while wearing the costume required of such an event.

In consideration of the amount of money Constantine received from the Church, he may have produced other furniture en suite with these chairs for use in the sanctuary. Carved wings are common to New York furniture of this period, but the technique seen here most closely resembles an anonymous sofa of 1815-1820 seen in Christie's, January 18, 1997, page 188.

Provenance: Christ Church, New York, NY to Christ and St. Stephen's Church in 1975 to Hirschl and Adler Galleries, Inc. in 1994 to the Warner Collection in 1994.

References: Christie's, January , 1994, Lot # 297, Page 148; Tom Armstrong et al., *An American Odyssey: The Warner Collection of Fine and Decorative Arts* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2001).

Armchair, 1823-1825, Figure 15

Not examined by the author

Association: Loosely attributed based on similarities in design to the pair of chairs produced for Christ Church
Materials: Primary: Mahogany; Secondary: unknown
Dimensions:
Location: Private Collection

Discussion: This chair is interpreted as yet another example of the adaptation of Constantine's public commission designs for a private client. Although specific aspects of the design differ from the Christ Church chairs

Provenance: Charles and Rebekah Clark, Nolensville, TN to Private Collection,

References: None

Armchairs, 1 of 3, 1824-1826, Figure 38

Association: Attributed, resemblance in construction and design to Thomas Constantine's labeled work for the United States Senate, the North Carolina State House, and Christ Church, New York, NY
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer; Secondary: Mahogany throughout
Dimensions: Chairs for Vice President and Clerk: H: 43", W: 23", D: 22"; Chair for President: H: 45", W: 25 ½", D: 23"
Location: Union Philanthropic Literary Society, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, Virginia

Discussion: These chairs were produced for the Officers of the Union Society at Hampden-Sydney College. They are attributed to Constantine's shop based on their similarity to the cabinetmaker's other work. Large and ceremonial in nature the Society's chairs also fit into Constantine's interest in public commissions involving the prominent display of his classically designed seating furniture. The profile of the scrolled arms closely matches the plan of the Speaker's chair in North Carolina, and the Hampden-Sydney examples are the only other early nineteenth-century New York armchairs to feature an elaborately carved crest rail above a broad table of inset veneer. With a slip seat and upholstered back, the chair is covered in a manner similar to the United States Senate and Speaker's chair, as well. Although there are no secondary woods to point toward its New York origin, the design and construction do suggest Constantine's shop traditions. If from this cabinetmaker's store, the chair seats most likely originally featured a French edge seat as found in the US Senate.

The Union Society was founded in 1797 as the second collegiate debating organization and remained a prominent fixture of campus life through the late nineteenth-century. In an era when the group's membership was marked by great wealth and its library holdings even exceeded the College's, the purchase of such elaborate chairs is justified. When the group was given a new home in the early 1820s, it set out to furnish this facility in manner that would illustrate their standing on campus.[18] Since the rival debating organization, the Philanthropic Society, was undergoing similar renovations, a competitive edge marked this process.[19] The minutes of the Union Society reference the acquisition of three chairs in 1825 for the use of the President, Vice President, and Clerk.[20] Mr.

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[18] June 7, 1823, Minutes of the Union Society, Volume 3, Rare Book Collection, Eggleston Library, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, VA. Hereinafter MUS.

[19] John L. Brinkley, *On This Hill: A Narrative History of Hampden-Sydney College, 1774-1994* (Hampden-Sydney, VA: Hampden-Sydney College, 1994), 314-315.

Cushing, the president of the college, purchased the chairs on behalf of the Union and was reimbursed for $150.[21] Unfortunately, the specific source of this furniture is not mentioned, save a reference to carting fees for bringing them from Farmville, a neighboring town.[22]

As the seating for the organization's top three officers, these chairs were meant to illustrate their significant contributions and standing. In a manner similar to the North Carolina Speaker's chair and those provided for Christ Church, Constantine manipulated the dimensions of his seating furniture to reflect both function and hierarchical variation. The Vice President's and Clerk's chairs are of equal standing yet smaller than the President's seat. However, all three are more substantial than the chairs used in the US Senate and North Carolina State House. The most notable difference comes in height, with the back of the Union chairs extending between 4 5/8" and 6 ½" further than the Senate chairs produced in 1819. Furthermore, the chairs sat on a short platform with the group's motto, "Me Socium Summis Adjungere Rubus," painted on a small canopy above.[23]

The Union merged with the Philanthropic Society, in 1921, to become the Union Philanthropic Literary Society. The organization continues to operate today, and the three chairs, which still stand on a riser below the Society's motto are now used by the President, First Reviewer and Second Reviewer.

Provenance: Union Society, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, VA to Union Philanthropic Literary Society, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, VA to present.

References: None

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[20] August, 14, 1824 and August 20, 1825, MUS.

[21] November 11, 1824; March 17, 1826; and August 20, 1825, MUS.

[22] October 20, 1826, MUS. Cushing was raised in Rochester, NH and received an education at Dartmouth before his appointment at Hampden-Sydney in 1817. He does not appear to have had any connections to New York other than through the channels provided by the Presbyterian seminary on campus. A trustee of the Seminary, John Rice, led successful fundraisers in New York in the early 1820s and could have met a patron of Constantine if not the cabinetmaker himself. Brinkley, 87, 138.

[23] November 15, 1823, MUS. When translated, the motto reads: "I wish to ally myself to the greatest things."

DESKS:

Desk, 1818-1819, Figures 40-43

Association: Loosely attributed, bills of sale and receipts from US House of Representatives to Constantine for purchase of desks
Materials: Primary: Mahogany; Secondary: Tulip popular, white pine
Dimensions: Various
Location: Office of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, DC; National Museum of American History, Washington, DC; National Woman's Party, Sewell-Belmont Museum, Washington, DC; Quincy National Historic Site, Quincy, MA; Southern Pines Public Library, Southern Pines, North Carolina; and Frederick Douglas National Historic Site, Washington, DC.

Discussion: As referenced in the discussion of the House chairs, Congress sold its furniture in 1858 after moving into the Thomas U. Walters extension of the Capitol. On July 29, 1858, the House offered "275 mahogany writing desks of various sizes."[24] This number is the source of some confusion, for if we take an 1834 floorplan of their chamber as an accurate illustration of the desks found their, we find that the Representatives sat at only 66 desks: four 1-person desks, eight 2-person desks, thirty 3-person desks, ten 4-person desks, eight 5-person desks, and twelve 6-person desks.[25] Even though only fifteen years had passed since Constantine furnished their chamber, this breakdown is also quite different from the 1819 order by Henry Clay and Thomas Claxton for the House's 188 members.[26] By 1858, the number of Representatives sat at 241.[27]

The high number may imply that the larger desks had been broken apart before the auction. Considering the extensive dimensions of the three, four, five and six-person desks, the domestic utility of most of these was small. A desk owned by the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History represents a fragment of a larger example and illustrates a probable solution to the need to convert these broad writing surfaces into a useful size. These modifications may

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[24] *Washington Star*, June 21, 1858. Cited in Klapthor, 204.

[25] Klapthor, 203.

[26] There is some confusion even within Claxton's request for bids. In the written description of the commission he references fifty-one tables and then, later in the advertisement, fifty-three 8' desks, sixteen 6' desks, and two 4' desks that could sit a total of 264 Representatives. However, in the notice that announced Constantine as the winner, he refers to seating for 192 members. See Klapthor, 193-198.

[27] See http://www.clerkofthehouse.gov.

have been done prior to the 1858 sale to render the desks into more appealing commodities. This decision would also explain the discrepancy in the number of desks auctioned that year.

The desk with the strongest provenance is that which belonged to John Quincy Adams, who served as a Representative of Massachusetts from 1831 until his death in 1848. The desk and chair used by Adams were specifically referenced in an article describing the auction, for they fetched the highest price, at $50.[28] Since Adams had passed away only a decade prior to the sale, they retained a strong connection to the popular New England political figure. According to the Quincy National Historic Site, Charles Adams, a relative, purchased the desk and chair in 1858.

Since Adams began his first term in office before new furniture was required to supplement the Constantine desks and chairs, he probably used one made by the New York cabinetmaker's shop during his first years in office. However, he likely did not occupy the 1-person desk owned by the Quincy NHS throughout his eighteen years at the Capitol. In the 1834 floor plan he is sitting at a 2-person desk in the second row. The four 1-person desks were located in the first and seventh rows.[29]

This group of tables has proved to be a knot too large to untangle for the purpose of this project. All of these tables have seen at least some modern modifications, and they illustrate a good deal of variation in construction, proportion, and design. As none are labeled, there is not a framework by which to measure the entire group. To get a better handle on this matter, a group of these desks should be brought together for an intensive comparative study. Since four of them are currently situated in Washington, DC institutions, such a study is certainly feasible.

References: Klapthor, 191-211.

Provenance: Various

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[28] *Washington Star*, June 29, 1858. Cited in Klapthor, 204-206.

[29] Although the desks would have been rearranged quite frequently with the entrance of additional states and new districts, Claxton originally requested that the desks include "an elbow or knee, of wrought iron, to admit two screws on the inner side of the legs and two on the floor." This implies a more sedentary expectation than was ultimately realized.

Desk, 1 of 48, 1819, Figures 44 & 45

Association: Attributed, Petition of Thomas Constantine to the United States Senate for payment on desks purchased in 1819
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany and rosewood veneers; Secondary: Mahogany, tulip poplar, white pine, ash
Dimensions: H: 35", W: 24 ½", D: 19 3/16"
Location: Office of the Senate Curator, United States Senate, Washington, DC

Discussion: The design source for the Senate desks is not as clear as for the Senate chairs. The fixed, slant-top resembles the tables provided by Constantine for the House of Representatives, but the paneled sides and trestle feet are a notable departure from the earlier commission. As suggested in Part 2, Chapter 1, the profile of these supports clearly resembles aspects of two tables in Hope's *Household Furniture and Interior Decoration* (1807): a side table in Plate 5 and Plate 20, No. 2 **(Figure 25)** and a library table in Plate 26, No. 7. **(Figure 26)** On the Constantine desks, the central roundel accentuated by rosewood cross banding is presumably taken from the former, and the scrolled upper terminations were borrowed from the latter. Although this connection is not entirely conclusive, Constantine's continual references to Hope's designs suggests that he may have found inspiration for the desks in *Household Furniture*, as well. If Latrobe or Bulfinch had provided the chair design, they most likely developed this plan, as well.

This particular example, the so-called "Daniel Webster desk," is one of the forty-eight purchased from Thomas Constantine in 1819 for the Senate chamber. Each desk features a slanted, stationary top with a single drawer, and panel side supports terminating in trestle feet. Just as the Senate chairs were supplemented as new states entered the union, so were new desks produced by Washington cabinetmakers.

Over the past decade the Senate has been sending a small number of their desks each year to Robert Mussey and Associates in Boston, MA for conservation. In addition to rehabilitating these artifacts, the Senate is also hoping to learn which of the 100 are from the 1819 suite provided by Constantine. By cross-referencing the specific dimensions, construction methods, materials, and design illustrated in each desk, the firm expects to accomplish this task. The Webster desk is thought to be from the Constantine commission for a variety of reasons. The secondary woods—ash, mahogany, white pine, and tulip poplar—correspond with this group of 1819 desks. The veneers used on the case sides and front and the side supports and the rosewood crossbanding on the supports are common to the original forty-eight, as well. This desk also features a rectangular recess in the top to allow for a box that contained an inkwell, sander, and pen tray. Furthermore, the Senate believes that at some point in the late 1830s or early 1840s, the fifty-two desks extant at that time were numbered on the drawer bottom. The Webster desk is inscribed with a "41." Finally, although it no longer

carries a Constantine label, in 1974, a cabinetmaker employed by the Senate recalled that, "in 1965, while doing some restoration work...he found attached to it a yellowed portion of a cabinetmaker's label....The label bore the name of Constantine."[30] The desk referenced here is the Webster desk. This discovery suggests that each desk may have been originally affixed with a paper label to compliment the marked castors on the Senate chairs.

In terms of determining their age, another important feature of the desks is their shape. Constantine certainly knew of the semi-circular orientation of the congressional chambers and adjusted the depth of the curve of each desk depending on its particular position in the row. Those desks on the outside aisles are narrower and angled where as those toward the middle are wider and squarer.

The extensive repairs and adaptations carried out on the Senate desks are also noteworthy. **(Figure 45)** The example at hand is the only one not to have received a supplementary hinged-lid writing box on top of the original stationary writing surface. These lift top compartments were introduced between the 1830s and 1860s for the convenience of the Senators, and photographs and illustrations form this period reflect this process. According to Senate lore, Webster refused to accept this addition on the grounds that his predecessors had survived without it. Other changes include the introduction of metal grilles around the trestle feet to allow for a ventilation system that came up through the floor and the application of microphone holders on the side of each desk. While the majority of them have been repaired, few illustrate major structural cracks or breaks.

The distinct numbering systems found on the drawers and frames of the desks underscore their mobility. These resemble the series of markings found on the Hamlin and Chace chairs. Seven separate campaigns can be found on some desks. With the steadily increasing number of members over the nineteenth century and the regular shuffling of their arrangements, this mixture of Roman and Arabic numerals allowed the Senate to track their furnishings.[31]

Without original Senate chairs in the chamber, the desks have taken on a great symbolic significance over the past two centuries. Due to its unique appearance and the esteem for its former owner, the Webster desk is treated "as a holy relic."[32] It is granted each session to the senior Senator from New Hampshire, a tradition that became law with the adoption of Senate Resolution

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[30] "Memorandum to Senate Desks File," April 2, 1974, Object File 66.00029.001, Office of the Senate Curator, United States Senate Commission on Art, Washington, DC.

[31] Office of the Senate Curator, "The United States Senate Chamber Desks," unpublished manuscript, 2003, 3. Hereinafter: OSC, 2003.

[32] Richard A. Baker, "Senate Historical Minute," *The Hill* (Washington, DC), July 23, 1997. A leader of the Whig party, Webster was a major theorist and leader in the Senate and is best known for his support of Henry Clay's compromise of 1850.

467 (93rd Congress, 2nd Session).[33] In a similar fashion, the desk occupied prior to the Civil War by Jefferson Davis is given to the senior member from Mississippi according to a 1995 Senate Resolution.[34]

Since at least the early twentieth century, Senators have inscribed their names on the itnerior side of the drawer bottom. Those nineteenth century members found in these lists are not original signatures and were likely added by later owners of the desk or by staff members responsible for recording their histories.[35] An article from 1966 states that Alfred Shelby, a custodial employee, "has continued the practice of his predecessors in printing the name of the Senator on the bottom of the drawer when it is assigned and on such other desks he may use during his service as a Senator."[36]

As desks have accumulated these associations, many Senators have taken more of an interest in their particular assignment. They take great pride in not only the specific desk at which they sit but their location in the room, as well. In the 1960s, yet another tradition began in the Senate in which the Republican sitting in a particular back row desk became responsible for stocking it with candy. The writing box has since been filled with goodies that represent its owner's home state. George Murphy (CA) began this practice in 1965 by putting a supply of Raisinettes in his desk. Currently, Rick Santorum (PA) provides his colleagues with Hershey's Kisses.

Although the Senate currently rearranges the desks at the outset of each session according to the distribution of its members between the parties, this practice is a twentieth century phenomena. Previously the desks were evenly distributed among the two sides, without regard to majority representation. Furthermore, the tradition whereby majority and minority leaders and their assistants sit in the front row along the center aisle only began in the second quarter of the twentieth century.[37]

The discovery of desks resembling those found in the US Senate, but not believed to have been used there, presents and additional quandry. The Office of the Senate Curator does not believe that any desks have been permanently

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[33] Although Webster served as a senator for Massachusetts, he was born in New Hampshire.

[34] Jefferson Davis's desk is recognizable by the large patches on its side panel where a Union soldier allegedly bayoneted it during the occupation of the Capitol in 1861.

[35] OSC, 2003, 3.

[36] Senate Document 50, 87th Congress, *Our Capitol*, June 29, 1961, 21.

[37] Democrats began doing this in 1927, and the Republican Party followed in 1937. OSC, 2003, 5.

removed from the Senate chamber.[38] Within the past decade the Senate Curator has received information concerning three desks in particular, and their appearance is especially compelling. In 1997, a private collector notified the curator of the purchase of a convincing look-alike. While similar in appearance to the Senate desks, the dimensions of this example were diminutive in height, width, and depth.[39] Although the desk was purchased with an association to Levi Lucky, Secretary to President Grant, it is more likely a modern affectation produced as a movie prop for a film such as *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. It is intriguing to note that this "stunt double" included the details of a curved front and conforming back and the reserve for an inkwell and pen tray.

More significantly, in 2001, another desk surfaced in Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada at an auction held by Tim Issac.[40] Although closely resembling those produced by Constantine for the Senate, this mahogany desk was linked to New Brunswick cabinetmaker Thomas Nisbet. Evidently, Nisbet borrowed the design to construct desks for the New Brunswick Senate and Legislature at some point in the second quarter of the nineteenth century.[41] The incorporation of the plan of the US Senate desks in a foreign government setting is noteworthy, and perhaps further research will illustrate the manner in which Nisbet acquired the design.

Provenance: United States Senate, Washington, DC, to present

References: Allen, 449; and Senate Document 50, 87th Congress, *Our Capitol*, June 29, 1961, 21.

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[38] OSC, 2003, 1.

[39] Scott Strong, Office of the Senate Curator to Private Collector, June 24, 1997.

[40] Peter Smit, "Annual Easter Sale Offers Something for Everyone," *Maine Antiques Digest*, July 2001, 40-B.

[41] Smit mentions that the Nisbet desks were previously believed to have been only produced in butternut, but a local museum curator and a few antique dealers in attendance were confident with this attribution.

TABLES:

<u>Pier Table, 1817-1820</u>, Figures 3-6, 16-17

Association: Printed paper label on interior of rear rail
Materials: Primary: Mahogany, mahogany veneer, marble, mirrored glass, gilded wood, *verde antique*, brass; Secondary: White pine, tulip poplar, gesso.
Dimensions: H: 35", W: 42", D: 19"
Locations: Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY, 1941.1179

Discussion: This pier table is believed to be one of a pair purchased by James de Wolf of Bristol, RI for his Federal-style mansion, The Mount (1808). Constantine's wife, Ann Eliza Hall, is the likely link between the New York cabinetmaker and a Rhode Island family. A native of Providence, she appears to have maintained close ties to the city, for upon her husband's death in 1849, his obituary is published in newspapers there. De Wolf, a wealthy merchant, was connected to New York through his business interests. Furthermore, his daughter married Jonathan Prescott Hall, a prominent New York attorney and lived in the city.

In the third quarter of the nineteenth-century, the pier tables appear in a group of images of The Mount's grand double parlor. A Worthington Whittredge painting titled *A Bit from the de Wolf House, Bristol, Rhode Island* (c. 1860) shows the pier table sitting between two windows at the far end of the room. **(Figure 4)** Additionally, a series of photos of the house's interior, taken by David Davidson at a later date, show the tables at opposite sides of the rooms. **(Figures 5-6)** While too large for the pier that they stand in front of, the tables are of the same date as the convex looking glasses sitting above. A pair of classical style New York sofas can be seen in arched niches on an adjacent wall. The tables must have been moved out of the house before it was razed by fire in 1904.

In terms of design and ornament, this pier table illustrates the influence of the French taste on American consumers in the early 1800s. The marble top and columns, stamped brass banding, gilded wood, heavy paw feet, canted corners, and incurved front and sides are reminiscent of tables produced in the 1810s by Lannuier. However, unlike Lannuier and other New York cabinetmakers, Constantine reached a unique conclusion for the rear feet in the turned balls that sit below carved acanthus leaf blocks, both of which are treated with *verde antique*. Other anomalies include the gilded quarter round molding along the base and veneered bollection frieze. The construction of this table closely resembles that of a square pier table of 1815-1820 featured in Kenny et al. Plates 44 and 93, with the back posts connecting the upper and lower rails with large dovetail joints reinforced by screws and a solid backboard attached solely with screws. The brass mounts found on the marble front columns are almost identical to those on a contemporaneous New York sideboard in the collection of the Metropolitan

Museum of Art, 1981.436. The rear pilasters, bases, and capitals are of marbleized and gilded wood.

The unique oak leaf and acorn pattern of the brass banding located below the bollection frieze is notable but has not yet been found on other tables of this period. Despite its rarity, an attribution based solely on this characteristic is not suggested. Cabinetmakers could obtain European decorative hardware and stamped ornaments directly from the manufacturers, through merchants who specialized in European fancy goods, or from fellow craftsmen who had imported a surplus. Thus, although the brass banding of oak leaves and acorns is unusual, this extensive mixing of sources suggests that historians will be hard pressed to connect pieces of furniture to a shop solely on similarities in hardware.

There have been significant losses to both front feet. The laminated, gessoed, and carved paws are missing most of their toes.

Provenance: James de Wolf (1764-1837) by probable line of descent to William Bradford de Wolf (1810-1862) to his wife, Mary Solely de Wolf, to their son, William Bradford de Wolf, Jr. (1840-1902), to unknown relatives, to Paul E. Gardner, to his wife, to Brooklyn Museum of Art, 1941. Mary Solely de Wolf owned the house during the period in which both the Whittredge painting and the Davidson photos were executed.

References: Kenny et al., p. 46, fig. 24; Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., "Property of Mrs. Paul E. Gardner, Long Island," October 30, 1941, Lot 178, p. 26; and Donald C. Pierce, "New York Furniture at the Brooklyn Museum," *The Magazine Antiques* (May 1979), fig. 10, p. 999.

Pier Table, 1817-1820, Figure 39

Not examined by the author

Association: Attributed based on design and construction similarities to the above
Materials: Primary: Rosewood veneer, marble, brass, mirrored glass, gilded wood, *verde antique*; Secondary: White pine, gesso.
Dimensions: H: 34 ¾", W: 42 ½", D: 18"
Location: Private Collection, Virginia

Discussion: This table includes most of the characteristics of the labeled example seen above, save for the bollection frieze. The gilded quarter-round molding, canted corners, marble top, marble front columns contrasted by marbleized wood rear pilasters, stamped brass border, and boldly curved sides and front are all present. Although the front feet are handled differently here, the rear reflect the same unique juxtaposition of a turned ball below an acanthus-carved block.

Provenance: Bernard and S. Dean Levy Galleries, Inc., New York, NY, to present owner.

References: None

Dining Table, 1817-1820, Figure 7

Association: Printed label on exterior rail
Materials: Primary: Mahogany; Secondary: White pine, birch
Dimensions: H: 28 ½", W: 59 ¾", L: 9' 10 ¼" (extended)
Locations: Private Collection, New York, NY

Discussion: The true origins of this table have been disputed in recent years. Drop-leaf dining tables with four fly-hinged pillar-and-claw legs are generally attributed to Boston. In his recent monograph on Boston cabinetmaker's John and Thomas Seymour, Robert Mussey attributed the entire group to Thomas.[42] The author happily accepts the Boston origin of those tables with conclusive lineages in New England families, but this should not require all of these tables to be from that city. For the sake of argument, I will disagree with this proposition and offer an alternative interpretation with the labeled Constantine example as the center of my discussion.

Dozens of drop-leaf dining tables of this type are in public and private museum collections today, yet the Constantine piece is the single example with a cabinetmaker's label. Those who side with the Boston theory suggest that the printed paper label was affixed to the rail of this table when Constantine imported it from Boston for retail sale in his Fulton Street store. This theory is offered despite the lack of evidence to suggest that Boston cabinetmakers were exporting furniture to New York during this period or that Constantine was importing New England wares. If this were the case, then it would be logical to expect to find other Boston-made furniture with New York provenance or to see contemporary references to this practice in newspapers, bills of sale, diaries, or letters. The importation of Boston household goods was common in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries but was not practiced in this period.

Following the American Revolution, the mobility shown by craftsmen suggests that this form could have been known to cabinetmakers in New York, Boston, or other larger urban centers in the United States. Although New Yorkers of the period seem to have favored telescopic or accordion-action dining tables, this does not preclude the possibility that the "Cumberland Action" tables were produced contemporaneously in multiple cities. Nor does it eliminate the possibility that Boston cabinetmakers learned of the form from an example

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[42] Mussey, 327. In approaching this argument, I wish to bring no offense toward those situated in the pro-Boston camp. The research Mr. Mussey compiled for his study on the Seymours represents the upper echelon of decorative arts analysis. He has kindly assisted my understanding of these tables and humored my questions throughout this investigation. His generous allocation of time and remarkable collegiality represent the munificent behavior to which we all should aspire.

imported from New York. After all, it is more likely that Constantine labeled the table for export than for retail in his own shop.

The secondary woods found in this table, white pine and birch, are cited as further evidence of the Boston connection. This pair is more commonly found in New England furniture than in New York, but white pine was as frequently used in the latter city as elsewhere. Birch, while less common, was not unknown to cabinetmakers of New York. For a craftsmen who was closely tied to the wood trade, such as Constantine, even hard woods more traditionally associated with New England could have been obtained when necessary. Montgomery referenced the importation of northern white pine into Philadelphia by 1750, and that cabinetmakers began to incorporate imported secondary woods after 1790.[43] By the early nineteenth century, birch could be found in the seat rails of New York chairs, the fly rail of New York Pembroke tables, and the headposts of New York beds.[44]

Further clouding the issue is the absence of an English design source for these tables. We have assumed that the term "Cumberland Action" references the form's British origins, but discussions with English decorative arts historians have failed to locate any extant examples abroad. Since this term has not been found in any period sources, either, it may be a collector's affectation applied in the not-so-distant past.

To compare the design and construction techniques illustrated by variations of this form, I have intensively analyzed three "Cumberland Action" tables: the Constantine table and then additional examples in the collections of the Chipstone Foundation and the SPNEA. My findings suggest the possibility of multiple shop traditions.

Firstly, the majority of the group has elaborate catch mechanisms to allow one drop leaf on each section of the table to be removed for greater flexibility. While some of the hinges on the Chipstone table are not original, it was never fitted for this type of movement. On the Constantine and SPNEA tables, the catches have a very different orientation. On the former, the sliding mechanisms sit parallel to the tabletop and run through a cut in the mahogany facings that stand at each end of the frame. On the latter, they are attached to the interior of the support frame and run perpendicular to the top.

Secondly, the execution of the pillar and claws found on these tables speak more to the hands of different craftsmen and perhaps different shop traditions than the range of options offered at a solitary manufactory. Most have reeding or a series of bamboo-like ring turnings running sitting on the pillar. The reeded pillars and claws on the SPNEA table are almost certainly the product of the same hand as those on "Cumberland Action" dining tables owned by the White House Historical Association and a private collector.[45] However, the graceful

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[43] Montgomery, 29.

[44] Montgomery, Catalogue #s, 4, 72, and 330.

proportions and skilled execution seen there is quite different than the bold, poorly rendered reeds and rings seen in a table in Sack's Brochure No. 21.[46] In a similar fashion, while the turned rings on the Chipstone and Constantine tables look consistent, they differ markedly from a table in the collection of the Brooks Museum in Memphis, TN. At closer inspection, the layout of the pillars on the Chipstone and Constantine tables contrast, where as the distance between the sets of rings on the former increase from top to bottom, but on the latter it remains constant. Furthermore, the pillars are of a different length and diameter.

Wrought iron spider clamps are found underneath the frame that unite the saber legs, pillars, and stretchers. Although they are fairly consistent between the Constantine and SPNEA example, this piece of hardware is very different in shape on the Chipstone table. These clamps could have been made as easily in New York as anywhere. Even though his blacksmith father died while he was still young, Thomas may have remembered the appearance of high quality iron hardware produced in his father's Front Street shop. Countless local metalworkers could have provided these parts. A Cherry Street resident by the name Robert Norris, operated and iron foundry in the city "where all orders in that line will be thankfully received, and faithfully and promptly executed on moderate terms."[47] Considering the unique design of the Cumberland Action form, these clamps would have been produced for a specific order and at the particular dimensions set by the cabinetmaker.

Details such as the turned button caps and chisel stab numbering do not point to the work of a single shop, either. The turned buttons applied to the top of each knuckle joint on the stretchers are rather incongruous among the three tables. There is more consistency between the buttons on the Constantine table and the Constantine House of Representative chairs than among the tables. The practice of numbering various parts of the table with punched chisel marks is found on all three tables and most of the group as a whole. However, numbering is not necessarily found on the same parts. For example, the hinge joints of the Chipstone table are numbered, but on the aforementioned table in a private collection, the marks are found on the underside of the stretcher joints. Craftsmen throughout the United States employed this technique. The labeled Constantine pier table at the Brooklyn Museum of Art includes a similar series of markings on the rear posts, feet and base.

Other variations among the Chipstone, Constantine, and SPNEA tables include: the treatment of the edge of the table top, the profile of the claws, the shape of the drop leaves, the dimensions of the frames, the size of the stock used to construct the frame and stretchers, the means of joining the members of the

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[45] Mussey, Catalogue #s 96 and 97.

[46] Sack, *Opportunities in American Antiques*, 3, 809.

[47] *Mercantile Advertiser*, February 20, 1826: 1. Norris's foundry was located at 389 Cherry Street.

frame, the method of attaching the fly rails to the frame and the frame to the top, and the overall dimensions of the tables.

As Mussey so eloquently underscores, ultimately, this form is significant not as contribution to an argument on regional craft traditions, but rather as a representation of changing dining habits, equipage and interior space. In order to realize a large dining table's full potential, a patron required a sizable room, a large number of guests, and the glass, ceramics, silver, and staff necessary to properly serve them. Perhaps more than any other piece of circumstantial evidence, this requirement of space and wealth suggests that the dozens of "Cumberland Action" tables could not have been consumed by the citizens of a single market and, hence, not produced by one cabinetmaker in one city.

Provenance: John Walton, Inc., New York, NY, to Herbert T. Darlington, Binghamton, NY, to John Walton, to Private Collection, Boston, MA to Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc., New York, NY in 2004.

References: Sotheby's, January 30, 31, and February 1, 1986, "Important Americana," Lot #609; Advertisement, John Walton, Inc., Antiques, June 1987, P. 1130; Christie's, January 16, 2004, Sale 1279, "Important American Furniture," Lot #569, PP. 314-315.

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