

CHAPTER EIGHT

ARCHITECTURE:

1785–1830

After seven long, hard years of war, independence finally was won in 1783. All the world watched to see if the Americans could govern themselves justly and effectively, despite the diverse interests of the thirteen colonies that were now called “states.”

At the end of the War, the government was in the hands of a quarreling Congress—which had no permanent home—operating under the Articles of Confederation. George Washington resigned as commander-in-chief of the army, and there was no navy to speak of.

The problem of a treasury that was not only empty but heavily indebted, with no guaranteed way of raising revenues, was surpassed only by disagreements over such divisive issues as states’ rights, and the authority of a strong, central, federal government.

America, however, was also the home of a large number of exceptional men—George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, Benjamin Franklin, and Alexander Hamilton, to mention but a few. A Constitutional Convention was called to meet in Philadelphia in 1787 to transform the Articles of Confederation into a constitution. The result was the United States Constitution, one of the most original and effective political documents ever conceived. With its ratification in 1789, America had a government. The Bill of Rights was amended to that document in 1791. On 4 February 1789, the people chose George Washington as the first president of the United States.

Hardly had President Washington appointed his cabinet when dissension erupted. Washington, Adams, Chief Justice John Jay, and Hamilton advocated a central government of broad powers. Their views had been presented in essays in *The Federalist*, written mainly by Adams, Hamilton, and James Madison in 1787–8. Thomas Jefferson, who believed in more control of government by the people, headed the opposition Republican Party. Thus the two-party system came in with the birth of the new government itself.

Since the federal government had no permanent home, one of the first actions taken by Congress was to designate that the national capital should be located somewhere on the Potomac River, then a central site for the thirteen seaboard states. In 1790, they empowered President Washington to select a site for Federal City. Meanwhile, the

government was to reside in Philadelphia.

On 18 September 1793, the president laid the cornerstone of the United States Capitol, and in 1800 the seat of government was transferred to Washington, D.C., named after the first president. A new federal government meant that new buildings were needed, and each of the states now had similar needs. A break with the past—with monarchy as a form of government—had been made. The question was, what style of architecture best expressed the new government, be it a republic or a democracy?

The War of Independence had been waged as much over commercial issues—taxation of goods and freedom of trade, for instance—as political ideology. After five years of post-war depression, a boom in commerce, industry, and agriculture began. In 1784, the first few hundred bales of American cotton were shipped to England. By 1830, the South was producing over 700,000 bales annually. By then, much of the cotton was going to American rather than English fabric mills. In 1793, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin, and five years later perfected the manufacture of interchangeable parts for firearms. America took its first steps into the Industrial Revolution. Factories began to appear, at first waterpowered, and then steampowered.

On 22 February 1784, the *Empress of China* began her epoch-making voyage to Canton, commencing the American China trade. Before, Chinese goods came to America only through European, usually English middlemen. In 1785, Elias Hasket Derby sent his *Grand Turk* around the Cape of Good Hope to Canton. Soon after, the seaport town of Salem, Massachusetts, had many ships in the China trade. By 1806, it had over 130 ships in its merchant fleet. Much of the wealth brought back from the Orient went into the fine new houses erected by shipowners like Derby, as we will soon see.

During the Napoleonic Wars the United States fought its own war with England—the War of 1812. This arose over Britain’s interference with American trade with France, and British impressment of seamen aboard American ships. In 1814, towards the end of the war, Francis Scott Key watched the bombardment of Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor, and was moved to write “*The Star-Spangled Banner*.”

About a month earlier, the British had landed at Washington, D.C., seized the capital, and burned such buildings as stood there, among them the new but unfinished Capitol, and the White House. With peace concluded a few weeks later, Americans returned to other pastimes—which included building and rebuilding. Architecture was used to express the political, social, and cultural ideals and ambitions of the new nation—a nation that was more unified than ever, and more aware of its strength and identity than before.

NEOCLASSICISM: AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT

During the era following the Revolutionary War, inspiration no longer came from the works of Wren, Jones, Palladio, or Gibbs, but from Rome and Pompeii. Neoclassicism arose in the middle of the eighteenth century as a reawakening of interest in antiquity. It spread from Italy to other parts of the Continent, and to England. Excavations on the slopes of Mount Vesuvius at Pompeii and Herculaneum—buried by volcanic ash since A.D. 79—presented a view of the daily life of ancient Romans. The unearthed objects and buildings with their wall paintings were new sources of inspiration for architects, painters, sculptors, and decorative artists. Scholar-antiquarians such as Winckelmann wrote histories that considered not only Roman art, but that of Greece as well, finally recognizing the latter as the fountainhead of classical art.

Neoclassicism was an international movement from the beginning. Winckelmann was German, and the French architect Charles Louis Clérissieu (1721–1820) came from France to study the Roman ruins. The Italian Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–78) created exciting visions of Roman grandeur in his engravings. Two Englishmen—James Stuart (1713–88) and Nicholas Revett (1720–1804)—ventured from Rome to Greece to take measured drawings of the magnificent buildings there, such as the Parthenon and the Erechtheum, which they later published in *Antiquities of Athens* (London, 1762). The Scottish brothers James and Robert Adam also made the Grand Tour to Rome, where they imbibed the new spirit of classicism, which they carried back to England.

Among painters, the German Anton Raphael Mengs (1728–79) created idyllic scenes of Apollo amid the classical muses to decorate the rooms of Cardinal Albani’s Roman villa. Benjamin West (1738–1820) and, later, the Frenchman Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825) absorbed the lessons antiquity offered in order to formulate new modes of history painting in London and Paris.

Antiquity struck a responsive chord for several reasons. Just as some sought to discover there the origins of western

culture, others saw in Greco-Roman architecture the expression of republicanism and imperialism. The noble grandeur of antiquity offered an alternative to the lavish frivolity of the Rococo style that had emerged from the French court.

Neoclassicism was introduced into America mainly in two forms—the one, a purer brand, is found in Thomas Jefferson’s design for the Virginia State Capitol; the other, a rather free interpretation of the Greco-Roman style, is exemplified by the Adamesque work of Charles Bulfinch. Neoclassicism took different forms according to whether it was imported via England or France.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: GENTLEMAN-ARCHITECT

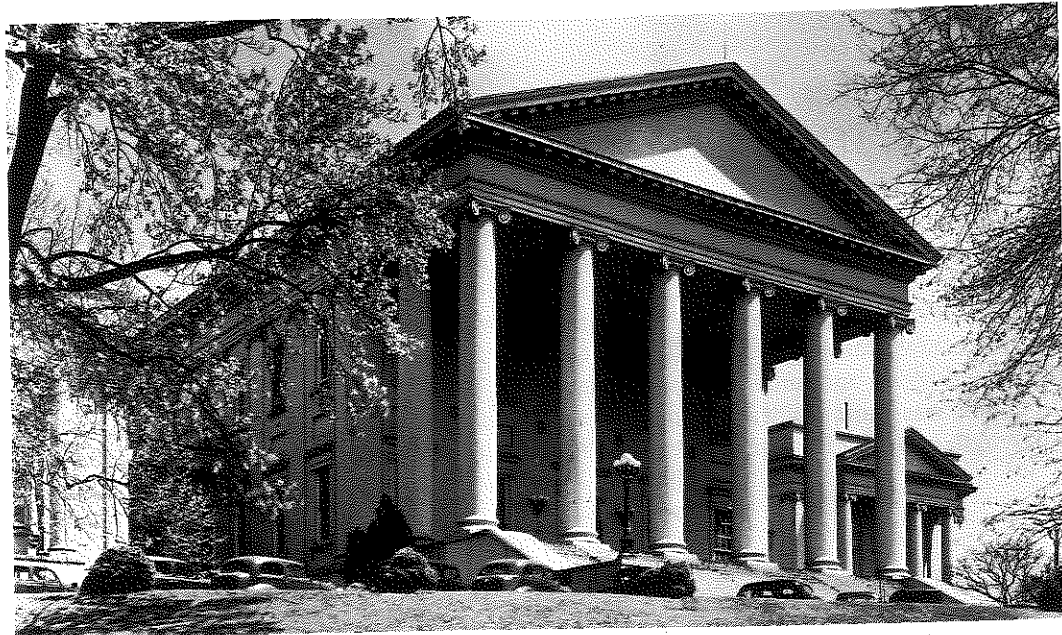
Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826) represents the brilliant culmination of the gentleman-architect tradition in America. This remarkable man, who was the first to introduce neoclassical architecture into his native land, was also a lawyer, educator, scientist, and farmer. Jefferson was the author of the Declaration of Independence, minister to France, governor of Virginia, and, for two terms, the third president of the United States (1801–9). For Jefferson, architecture was a joy in itself, the carrier of all the things he held in the highest regard—taste, cultivation, and reason, the noblest aspirations of civilization, both past and present.

Jefferson’s interest in architecture was aroused when he attended the College of William and Mary, where he began to acquire English design books, and became devoted to the theory of Palladio. From George Wythe he received not only his training in the law, but also in the Wythe House (Fig. 6.20) he undoubtedly met Wythe’s father-in-law, Richard Taliaferro, one of the most gifted gentlemen-architects of colonial Virginia.

As Jefferson began his practice of law, he began to design a home for himself, choosing a mountaintop site near Charlottesville. He called it Monticello, and took the plan from an English design book, Robert Morris’s *Select Architecture* (1755), while the elevation was based on a plate in Palladio’s *Four Books on Architecture*. The house, erected between 1769 and 1782, was a provincial exercise. Before long, Jefferson rejected the eighteenth-century English style, and Palladio ceased to be his ultimate authority for the interpretation of classical architecture. Monticello was eventually thoroughly rebuilt, as a result of Jefferson’s exposure to other sources during his travels in France.

NEOCLASSICAL INFLUENCES

During the Revolutionary War, Jefferson placed himself at the center of events. Afterwards, when he was appointed the American minister to France, in 1785 he went to live in Paris. A whole new world of culture and sophistication opened up to him. The buildings of his homeland seemed



8.1 Thomas Jefferson, Virginia State Capitol, Richmond, Virginia, 1785–9.

provincial in contrast to the beautiful houses being erected in Paris—such as the Hôtel de Salm, or the elegant Hôtel de Langeac, designed by Jean François Chalgrin, which Jefferson rented as his embassy home.

The neoclassical interiors of these houses were planned for gracious living and entertaining. They tended to be single-story, with oval rooms and high, narrow French doors and windows—features that appeared when Jefferson returned home and redesigned Monticello.

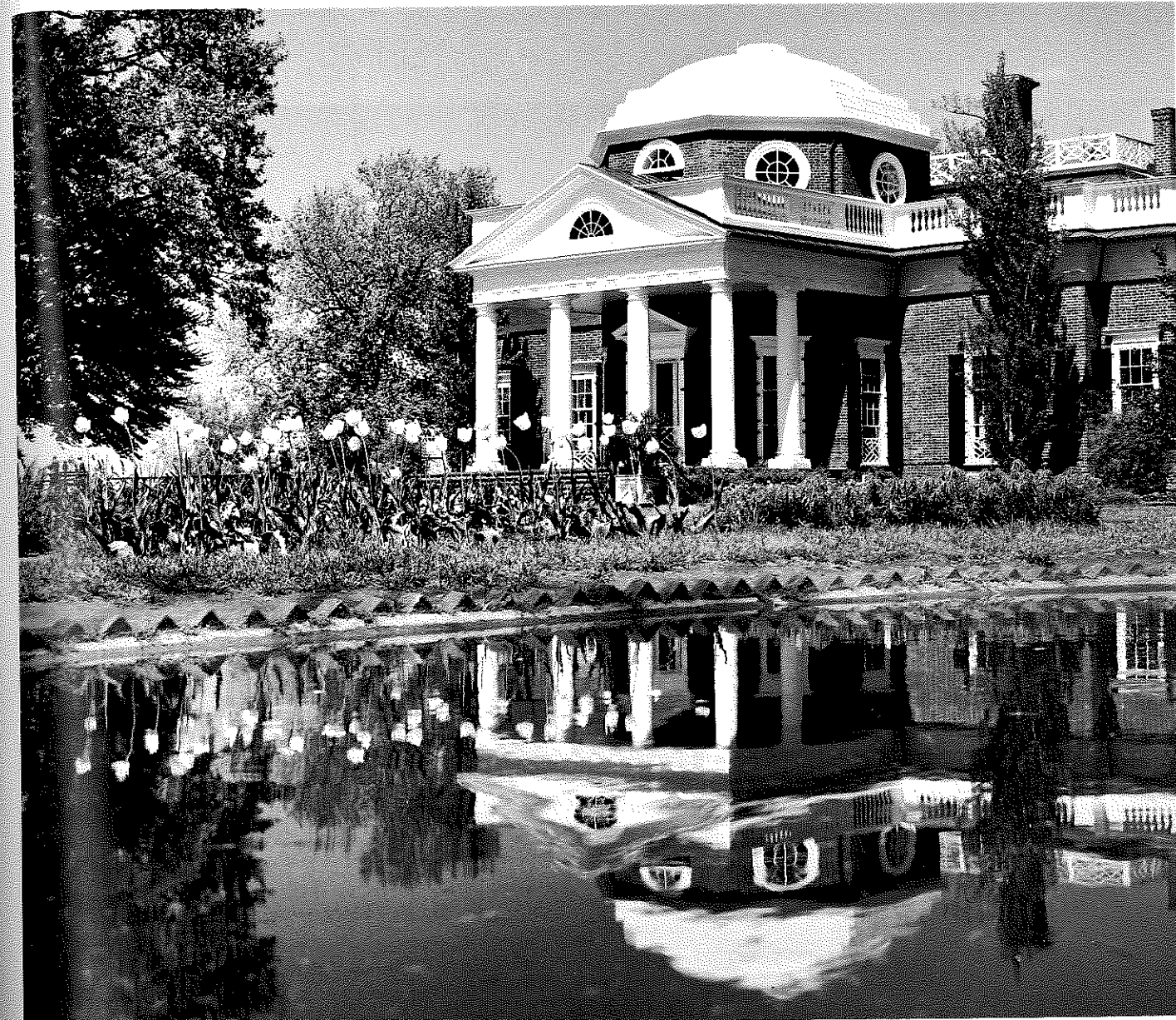
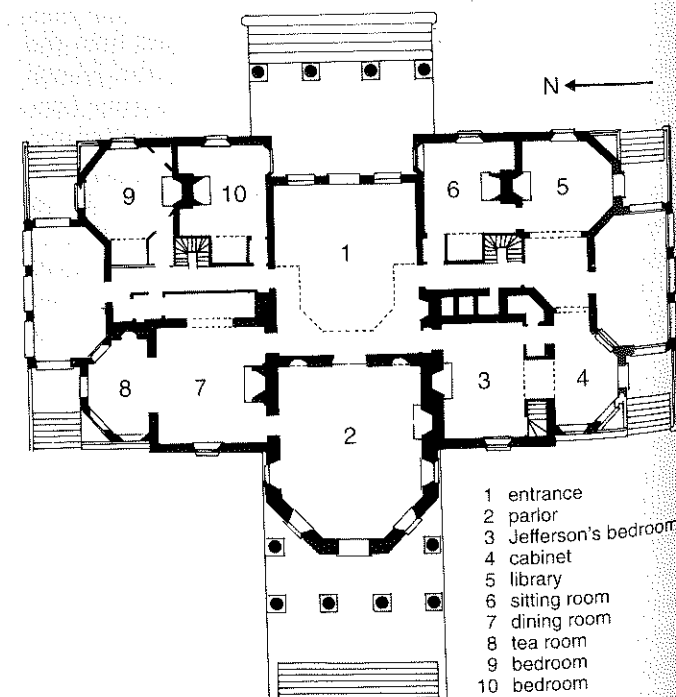
While in Paris, Jefferson became friends with Charles Louis Clérisseau, the noted archeologist and architect who had been the mentor of the Adam brothers in Italy. Jefferson bought a copy of Clérisseau's *Antiquités de la France* (*Monuments de Nîmes*, 1778). The plates were of classical models, which he now much preferred over the English Georgian style. One of the most significant events of Jefferson's French sojourn was his visit to Nîmes, where he saw for the first time an original Roman building—the Maison Carrée, a beautiful little temple of the first century B.C. The impact upon Jefferson's mind and architectural aesthetic was powerful, and bore immediate fruit.

Virginia State Capitol When the Virginia legislature called upon Jefferson to procure a design for the new state capitol in Richmond, he characteristically produced one himself. Done in consultation with his friend Clérisseau, it was based on the Maison Carrée (Fig. 8.1). Of course, a man with Jefferson's creative mind did not slavishly copy his model. He changed the Order from Corinthian to Ionic, reduced the depth of the portico from three to two columns, and replaced the pilasters of the side walls with windows (the pilasters were later reinstated).

The Virginia State Capitol was the first volley announcing the arrival of Neoclassicism in the United States. To Jefferson and his contemporaries, the classical portico on the front of an American government building symbolized the democratic, republican, and humanistic values for which their new country stood.

Monticello: Final Form When Jefferson returned home in 1789, the Monticello he had left behind seemed provincial, amateurish, and old-fashioned. In the second phase of the construction of Monticello (1793–1809) the two-story elevation was reduced to what appears to be a single story à la fashionable Parisian houses, but the plan was enlarged (Figs. 8.2 and 8.3). A central axis is created by the entrance and gardenfront porticoes, which give access to the foyer and the drawing room. Over the latter rises a hexagonal drum, which supports a low saucer dome. This beautifully proportioned central section of fully developed portico—with its broad triangular pediment, the hexagonal drum with exquisitely scaled white-framed oculi, and the hemispherical

8.2 Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, near Charlottesville, Virginia. 1793–1809. Plan.



8.3 Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, near Charlottesville.

dome—testify to the reasoned geometry that pervaded Jefferson's architectural sensibilities, and the classical nature of his aesthetics.

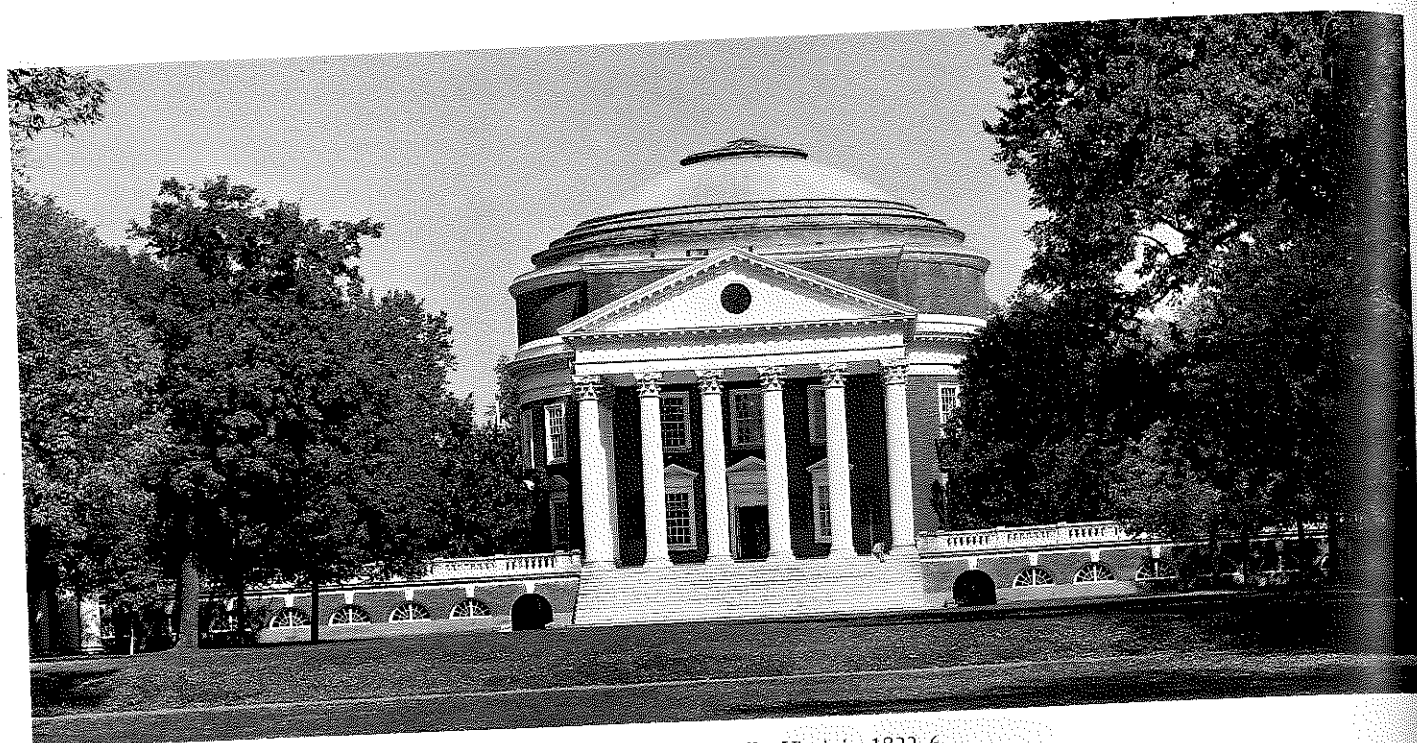
The central axis is crossed by suites, which function for public or private activities. To one side are the dining room and the little six-sided tea room—a beautiful ambience for gracious entertaining. On the other side is Jefferson's private and very personalized suite, including his bedroom, cabinet, and library. All four corner rooms terminate in hemi-octagonal bays, but the interior shape of each is different. This love of variety in room spaces—thereby avoiding the boxlike uniformity of the rooms of Georgian houses—becomes characteristic of American Neoclassicism, and of the Federal style. Rooms are well lit by the elegant French doors and tall windows.

On the exterior, the complexity of the overall form is unified by the bold Doric entablature and balustrade, which run continuously around the building. The balustrade also serves to conceal the low, hipped roof. From the main

structure, long arms extend outward on the garden side, and then turn at right angles to form a large "U" with terminal pavilions, in one of which was Jefferson's law office. The "arms," kept low by sinking them partially below ground-level, contained support areas such as the kitchen, wine room, and beer room—all placed below the line of vision so as not to distract from the main edifice.

A NEOCLASSICAL UNIVERSITY

Before 1817, American colleges had developed more or less at random, with little coordination of the various buildings. Jefferson conceived a unified scheme for the University of Virginia that extolled order, reason, and diversity within harmony. The aim was to reflect the immutable natural laws and classical learning that were the linchpins of contemporary civilization. As the architect of the institution—the curriculum as well as the buildings—Jefferson believed that in a democracy, education was a responsibility. Only an



8.4 Thomas Jefferson, The Rotunda, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 1822–6.

enlightened citizenry should be entrusted to protect the rights and liberties established under the new ideology he had helped to found. Jefferson consciously rejected Oxford and Cambridge universities as models, for they carried connotations of Englishness and church-controlled education—and Jefferson disliked both. Naturally, he turned to a neoclassical solution.

In the center of Jefferson's plan was the beautiful temple of learning, the rotunda, based on the Pantheon in Rome, but scaled to half its size (Fig. 8.4). The library was housed in the dome room, and by its dominating position, Jefferson stressed the importance of the accumulated wisdom held in books. Like its Roman model, the rotunda has a Corinthian portico applied to a circular drum, capped with a low dome. Unlike its ancient counterpart, it has windows placed in the walls to admit light.

Arms extend from the rotunda, then turn at right angles and run parallel to create a broad central mall. Each parallel arm has five pavilions, between which are student dormitories. Each pavilion belonged to a professor of a given discipline, and contained a classroom below, with living quarters above. As Jefferson wanted the students to be aware of the special beauties of the several classical Orders, each pavilion was conceived in a different Order: Pavilion I is Doric, based on the Baths of Diocletian; Pavilion II is Ionic, based on the Temple of Fortuna Virilis in Rome; Pavilion III is Corinthian, and so on.

For Thomas Jefferson, being a gentleman entailed a study of all those disciplines of learning that combined to produce an intelligent and cultivated social being, including the art of architectural design and theory.

THE FEDERAL STYLE IN NEW ENGLAND

To trace the line of Neoclassicism that entered America through English, not French, sources, it is necessary to look to New England, where the style of London was transformed into the Federal style. French Neoclassicism will be encountered again in certain buildings or regions, but the British version had a much greater, and more widespread influence.

ROBERT ADAM

The leading exponent of the new style in British architecture was the Scottish-born architect Robert Adam (1728–92). Adam's delicate Neoclassicism displaced the Georgian style, just as the neoclassical style in furniture designs by Thomas Sheraton (c. 1751–1806) and George Hepplewhite (d. 1786) replaced the Chippendale mode.

Robert Adam left his native Edinburgh in 1754 to embark on the Grand Tour. This ultimately took him to Italy, where he visited Pompeii and Herculaneum after settling in Rome. There, his friends included Piranesi and Clérissseau, the latter accompanying him to inspect the great Roman ruins at Spalatro on the Adriatic coast. The visit resulted in the publication of Adam's *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (London, 1763). After further intensive study of antiquity—and Renaissance versions of it—Adam left Italy to settle in London in 1758 where, in collaboration with his brother James, he had

immediate and enormous success through his innovative interpretations of antique architectural forms and decorative motifs. English connoisseurs delighted in the new interior spaces and décors Adam created when he remodeled, for example, Syon House (1760–71), Kedleston Hall (1761–4), and Osterley Park (1765–85).

The rooms from Lansdowne House (1762–8), which have been installed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Philadelphia Museum of Art, reveal Adam's brand of Neoclassicism to be elegant, decorative, and original interpretations—not austere, or pedantic imitations of antiquity. In the introduction to volume one of *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam* (London, 1773), the Adam brothers wrote that they had attempted “to seize... the beautiful spirit of antiquity, and to transmute it, with novelty and variety.”

Adam's rooms became circular, elliptical, rectangular, and apsidal. Classical proportions were consciously attenuated for the sake of elegance and delicacy, and classical Orders were willfully redesigned in the interest of originality. As interior space was more innovatively manipulated, wall surfaces became more two-dimensional. Classical simplicity and respect for basic form permitted greater emphasis on decorative elements such as swags and urns, which were inspired by antiquity. Such were the characteristics that were imported to the United States, beginning in the mid-1780s. Once there, they were transformed into the Federal style of architecture and interior design.

SAMUEL MCINTIRE

Samuel McIntire (1757–1811) offers an excellent case for the study of the rise of Federal architecture in America, for in his work the transition from Georgian to Federal is easily observed. Born in Salem, where his father, grandfather, brothers, and uncles all worked as carpenters, McIntire rose from carpenter to architect. McIntire's hometown prospered greatly in the decades following the War of Independence, with shipping, shipbuilding, and worldwide trading activities providing the wealth with which many splendid new mercantile mansions were commissioned. New Englanders became well informed of the new modes of design, and wanted their dwellings to express their sophistication and taste.

The Peirce-Nichols House and the Gardner-Pingree House The Peirce-Nichols House reveals the transition from Georgian to Federal. It was originally designed and built by McIntire in 1782 in an essentially Georgian manner (Fig. 8.5). The bold, fluted, corner pilasters, the massive cornice, balustrade, and pedimented Doric portico all seem to be an assemblage of parts from architectural design books. There are so many windows with shutters and projecting headers that the integrity of the façade is lost in a multitude of Georgian ornament. The house is woodframe with clapboard siding, which is associated with the colonial style. The

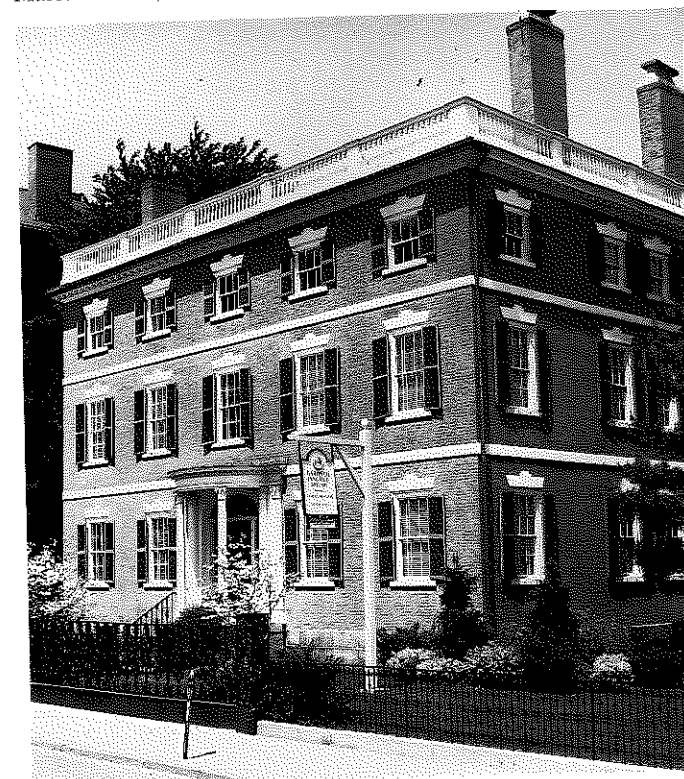


8.5 Samuel McIntire, Peirce-Nichols House, Salem, Massachusetts, 1782.

owners evidently found this old fashioned, for in 1801 they had McIntire “modernize” the interior by applying decorative details inspired by the new Adamesque Neoclassicism.

That McIntire was capable of synthesizing Adamesque classicism into a mature expression of the Federal style is demonstrated in the Gardner-Pingree House (Fig. 8.6). In his design, McIntire was influenced by Charles Bulfinch's

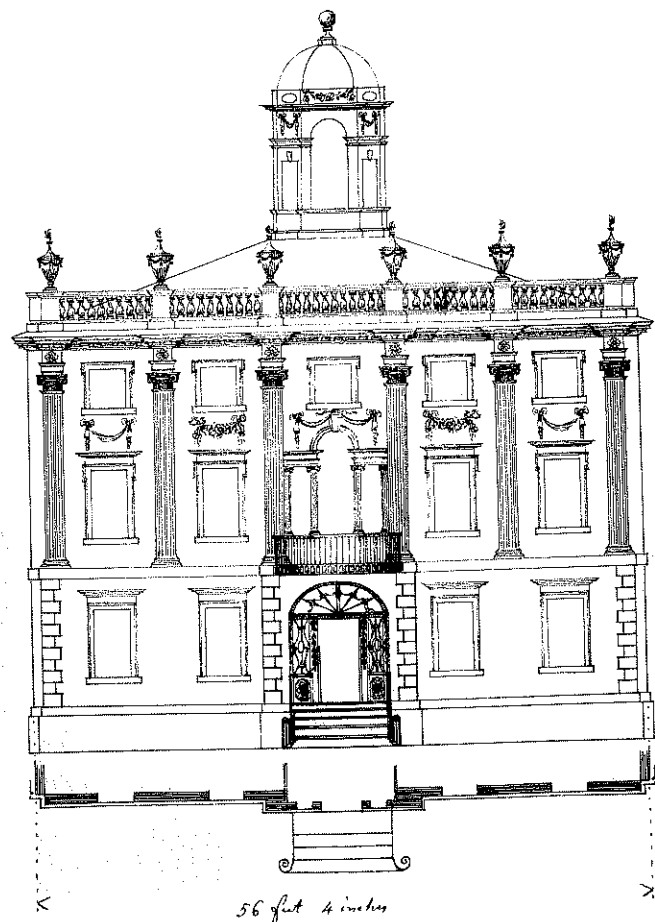
8.6 Samuel McIntire, Gardner-Pingree House, Salem, Massachusetts, 1810.



First Harrison Gray Otis House, Boston—one of the seminal buildings of the Federal style in New England (Fig. 8.10). The first thing one senses in the Salem house is its geometric beauty and simplicity, for decorative details have been reduced to delicate accents, which permit the wall plane to exist intact. Gone are the great corner pilasters. Instead we find the elegant beauty of one plane joining another to form a neat, crisp angle. The emphasis on delicacy is seen in the cornice, which is much smaller than the one on the Peirce-Nichols House. The integrity of the plane is retained by placing the stone window headers almost flush with the brick of the wall, whereas in the earlier house they had projected like three-dimensional hoods.

Instead of architectural ornamentation vying for the viewer's attention, simplicity prevails, and the eye focuses upon the exquisite classical detailing around the doorway. The portico is the only projection that is allowed to break the plane of the wall. In typical Adamesque fashion, its pilasters and columns have been attenuated, and the viewer is treated to a rich feast of elegant neoclassical embellishments in the capitals and around the top of the cornice. The elliptical form—frequently used in Adamesque and Federal design—is repeated in the fanlight above the door.

8.7 Samuel McIntire, Architectural elevation for the Ezekiel Hersey Derby House, Salem, Massachusetts, 1799.



8.8 Samuel McIntire, Gardner-Pingree House, Salem, 1810. Mantel, front parlor.

The Gardner-Pingree House was commissioned by John Gardner, Jr., one of Salem's prospering merchants, who owned a dozen ships, including the *Hazard*, which made three voyages to India. The profits garnered from silks, spices, and other exotic commodities allowed the Gardners to build their fine house.

A drawing of the elevation of the Ezekiel Hersey Derby House shows how completely McIntire had mastered the Adamesque style and adapted it for American use (Fig. 8.7). The conception and details of the Derby House are thoroughly Adamesque—especially the use of urns, swags and garlands, the delicate pilasters, and the doorway with its elliptical fanlight. As always, lightness, variety, and delicacy are the guiding principles of Federal-style design.

The same characteristics are present in the interiors of McIntire houses. By the 1790s, he had begun to work oval rooms into his plans, following the example of Bulfinch's Joseph Barrell House of 1792–3. A typical McIntire interior was uniformly white or offwhite, or yellow with white trim, with decorative features restricted to a small ceiling cornice, and doorway and fireplace enframements.

In addition to being a carpenter and architect, McIntire was also a woodcarver of exceptional ability, and he often executed exquisite reliefs of garlands, baskets of flowers, cornucopias, and so on for the panels around his doorways and fireplaces, or for the furniture (Figs. 9.1–9.3) that this

talented and versatile man created. The front parlor of the Gardner-Pingree House has an excellent example of McIntire's carving in its fireplace reliefs (Fig. 8.8). Here is a specific instance of the Adamesque style being transmitted to America by way of a design book, for the fireplace is based on plate 16 of *Pain's British Palladio, or The Builder's General Assistant* (London, 1793) by William and James Pain.

FEDERAL MANSIONS

A dozen or more of McIntire's fine Federal mansions graced the streets of Salem. The new style was popular up and down the Eastern Seaboard—as in the John Brown House (1785) and the Thomas Poynton Ives House in Providence, Rhode Island; Homewood in Baltimore (1798–1801); Gore Place (1797–1804) in Waltham, Massachusetts; in the Woodlands (1788–9) and the William Bingham House (1789, destroyed) in Philadelphia; the Octagon in Washington, designed by William Thornton (1798–1800); and in Charleston, South Carolina, the Nathaniel Russell House (1809). In each of these, classical simplicity of plane and form rules, while architectural decoration is confined to specific areas, allowing the eye to focus upon the buildings' delicate beauty.

8.9 Boscobel, Garrison-on-Hudson, New York, c. 1805.



Boscobel (Fig. 8.9), now relocated in Garrison-on-Hudson, New York, is an especially good example of the Adamesque style in America. The decorations and attenuated columns of the porch are the epitome of English-style neoclassical elegance. An ancient precedent for slender, elongated columns of these proportions was set in Pompeian wall paintings. Boscobel was begun by States Morris Dyckman in 1804, after he had returned from a four-year period in England, during which time he acquired a taste for the Adamesque style.

CHARLES BULFINCH

The American who best understood English Neoclassicism was Charles Bulfinch (1763–1844). He was America's first native-born professional architect, although he had no training, and emerged from the gentleman-amateur tradition. Born into a wealthy, cultivated Boston family, in his youth Bulfinch studied the architectural design books in his father's library. While attending Harvard College, he familiarized himself with Robert Adam's *Works in Architecture* and Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*, two of the primary British conveyors of Neoclassicism.

In 1785, Bulfinch embarked upon a European Grand Tour in order to complete his education as a gentleman. His chief interests in England, France, and Italy were in architecture, particularly in those examples of the new neoclassical design, rather than the ancient specimens from which they were derived. In London, Bulfinch studied the recently erected buildings by Robert Adam and William Chambers (1726–96). When he returned to Boston in 1787, he was a polished young man, wellinformed in architectural design.

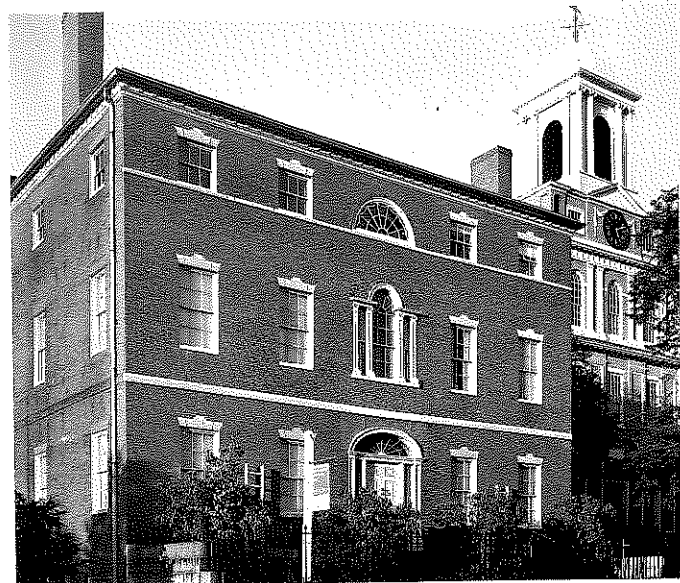
At that time Bulfinch had no idea of becoming a professional architect. He went into public service, occasionally providing designs for friends or institutions as a sideline, in the old tradition of the gentleman-amateur architect. Among the most important of his early works was the Joseph Barrell House (1792–3, Somerville, Massachusetts, destroyed), which was one of the first buildings to introduce the Adamesque neoclassical design into New England. The main feature of the plan was a large oval salon, which, with the flanking sitting and dining rooms, formed an elegant suite for gracious entertainment.

HARRISON GRAY OTIS HOUSE

Harrison Gray Otis and his wife were among the leaders of Boston's elite. Bulfinch designed three houses for them, the first of which offers an excellent example of the new Federalist style (Fig. 8.10). Otis was a lawyer, mayor of Boston, and a member of Congress, who in 1817 helped to secure Bulfinch's appointment as architect of the Capitol.

In his design for the first Otis House (1795–6), Bulfinch was probably influenced by the William Bingham House (Fig. 8.14)—said to be the most elegant private home in

8.10 Charles Bulfinch, First Harrison Gray Otis House, 1795–6, and Asher Benjamin, West Church, 1806. Boston, Massachusetts. Courtesy Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Boston.



America—which Bulfinch had praised and sketched in Philadelphia in 1789. The façade is dominated by neoclassical simplicity and precision. The plane of the wall is respected, the corners are neat and crisp, symmetry prevails, and decoration is confined to specific areas, relying on exquisite refinement rather than overwhelming profusion.

The Otis House is built of brick, its three stories being clearly indicated by flush stone stringcourses. Stone window headers do not violate the flatness and unity of the plane. The cornice is reduced to a delicate enframement that leaves the eye free to concentrate on the other beauties of the façade—such as the central axis that, in contrast to the sharp rectilinearity of the rest of the scheme, is marked at all three levels by semicircular or elliptical forms: the fanlight on the first floor, the Palladian window of the second, and, finally, the glazed lunette with lithe mullions in a spoke-and-garland pattern. The attenuation of columns and pilasters of the doorway and Palladian window are direct reflections of Adamesque proportional relationships.

Bulfinch gave the town of Boston a new appearance. In designing Tontine Crescent—a row of sixteen townhouses set on a slight curve, facing a green, treelined sward—he hoped to establish a neoclassical precedent, following examples he had seen in England, specifically at Bath and Buxton. The Tontine venture, however, was a financial failure that nearly bankrupted him.

Among Bulfinch's commercial structures were two of the most important mercantile buildings of his day—India Wharf (1803–7) and the enlarged Faneuil Hall (1805–6). For Harvard College he designed Stoughton and University Halls (1804, 1814), and the New South Church (1814) in Boston and the Church of Christ (1818) in Lancaster, Massachusetts, were also of his design.

MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE

During the designing and execution of the Connecticut State House (1793–6) in Hartford, Bulfinch honed his skills for the greatest challenge of his Boston period—the Massachusetts State House (Fig. 8.11). Typically, the design is based on examples of English Neoclassicism rather than on antique sources. For inspiration, Bulfinch looked to William Chambers's celebrated river façade of Somerset House (1778–86), which he probably saw when he was in London.

The State House is built of red brick, highlighted with marble trim. The columns, originally wooden, have Corinthian capitals that were carved in the shop of John (1746–1800) and Simeon Skillin (1756/7–1806). The central section of the State House rests on a simple, cleancut arcade. Above this rises a gallery with great Corinthian columns, which are paired at the corners and single in the middle. The wings have gracefully arched windows on the second story, the central one being of Palladian design recessed in a blind arch. At the third level, behind a pediment, towers the great dome, coated in gold leaf, and glistening below a handsome cupola, capped with a gilded pinecone.



8.11 Charles Bulfinch, Massachusetts State House, Boston, 1795–8.

The interior of the State House, particularly Old Representatives' Hall, splendidly demonstrates Bulfinch's extraordinary mastery of Adamesque delicacy. The Senate Chamber has a flattened vault that is compartmentalized and adorned with elegant Adamesque stucco designs in low relief. When completed in 1796, Bulfinch's Massachusetts State House ranked with Jefferson's Virginia State Capitol as the finest examples of Neoclassicism in America. Bulfinch will be discussed again, for in 1818 he left Boston to assume his post as architect of the United States Capitol.

PUBLICATIONS OF ASHER BENJAMIN

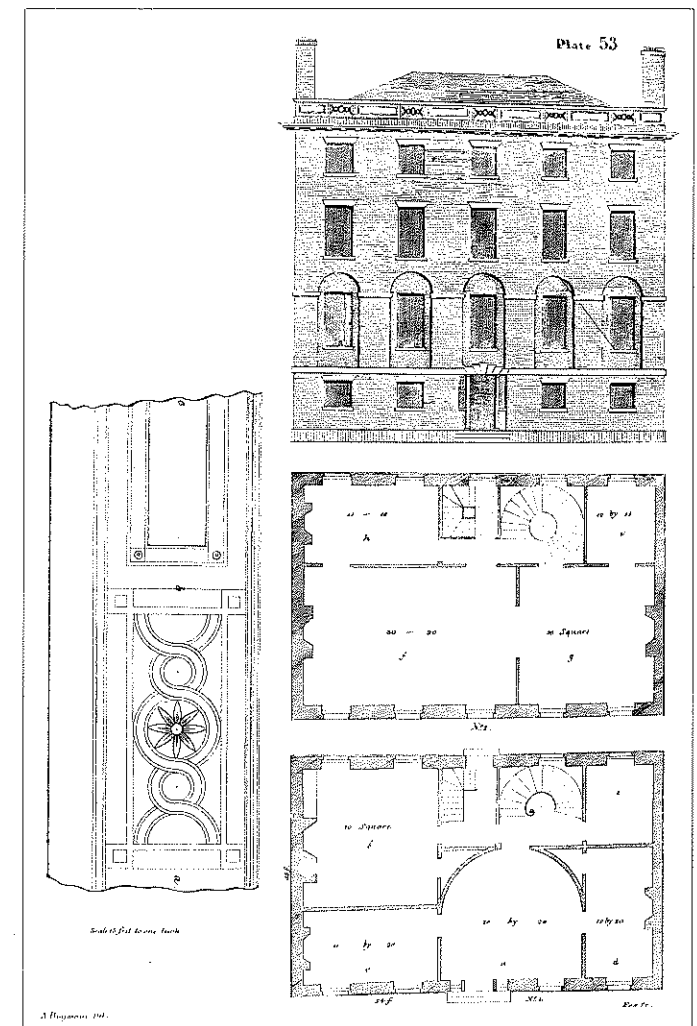
The new style that Bulfinch introduced into New England was spread in part by the publications of a Yankee carpenter-turned-architect named Asher Benjamin (1773–1845). Benjamin's career began in the 1790s in the Connecticut Valley. In 1797 he published the first American architectural design book, the *Country Builder's Assistant*, which was based on William Pain's *Practical House Carpenter* (London, 1789). Its thirty plates provided plans for houses and a meetinghouse, and designs for mantels, cornices, moldings, and the like.

Benjamin settled in Boston in 1802, and soon after he published an even more influential volume, *The American Builder's Companion* (Boston, 1806). Again, this borrowed heavily from Pain's publications, but the classical forms and details were tempered with common sense by providing designs that carpenters could execute, and that were labor- and cost-effective. Bulfinch had by then altered the course of architectural design in New England, and Benjamin's book incorporates many of the innovations of the Adamesque Federal style. *The American Builder's Companion*

offered numerous plates, one of which shows the impact Bulfinch had on façade design, the use of curved interior walls, and neoclassical ornament (Fig. 8.12). One of the best examples of Benjamin's architecture is the West Church (1806) on Boston's Beacon Hill, next door to the Otis House, and not far from Bulfinch's State House. It is partially visible in Figure 8.10.

Altogether, Benjamin published seven books, most of which ran through several editions. Just as his earlier volumes had been instrumental in the spread of the Federal style, so those of the 1830s circulated the designs of the new Greek Revival. One need only look through the engraved plates of *The Practical House Carpenter* (1830), the *Practice of Architecture* (1833), and *The Builder's Guide* (1838) to understand how effective Benjamin's publications were in carrying new styles to the distant regions of the expanding nation, as well as all over New England. It has been estimated that over 35,000 copies of his books were sold.

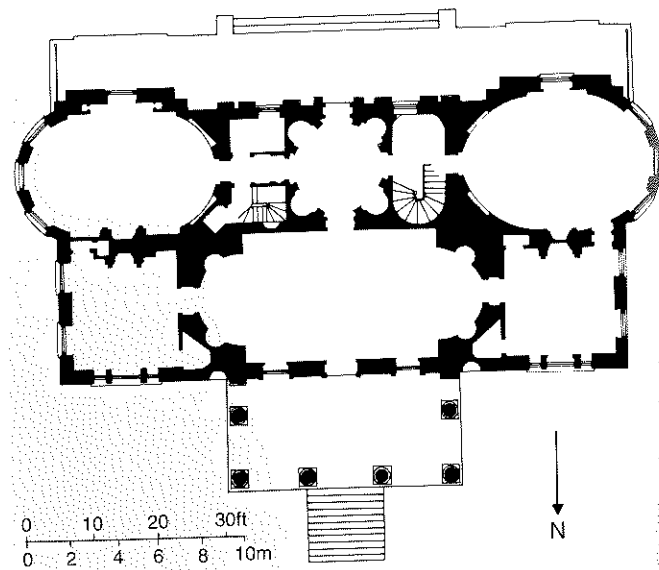
8.12 Asher Benjamin, Engraving, plate 53, from *The American Builder's Companion, or, A New System of Architecture* (Boston, 1806, fourth edition 1820). Morris Library, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware.



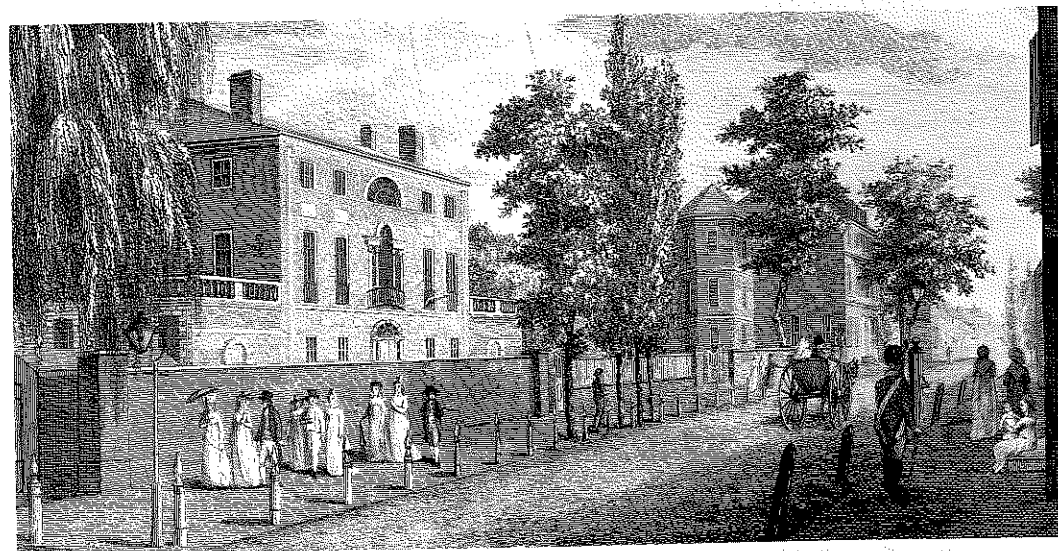
THE FEDERAL STYLE IN PHILADELPHIA

While the new Federal City on the Potomac was being readied, Philadelphia flourished, serving as the state capital until 1799, and as the national capital from 1790 to 1800. Its location on the Delaware River facilitated economic exchange, as well as an infusion of arts, objects, goods, and styles from Britain, Europe, and far-distant places of the world.

The Quaker City had some of the earliest and most influential examples of domestic architecture created in the Federal style. Woodlands, for example, was remodeled in 1788–9 according to the new Adamesque style, with square, circular, and elliptical rooms, and a large rectangular hall that has apsidal ends (Fig. 8.13). William Hamilton, the owner, may have brought the plans for remodeling the house back with him when he returned from England. In any



8.13 Woodlands, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1788–9. Plan.



8.14 William Bingham House. Engraving, detail of plate 18, from William Birch, *The City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1800).

8.15 (below) Samuel Blodget, Jr., First Bank of the United States, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1795–7.



event, Woodlands became the first full statement in America of the style of Robert Adam. On its façade, a grand, two-story, three-bay temple portico is the domestic equivalent of that which Jefferson applied to the front of the Virginia State Capitol, which was being built in the very same year.

In 1789, William Bingham, a wealthy banker, built his splendid townhouse in Philadelphia (Fig. 8.14). When he and his wife returned from several years in Europe, they brought with them crate upon crate of fashionable furnishings. They also brought the plan for their new house, which had been drawn up by John Plaw (c. 1745–1820), a London architect and builder, based on Manchester House in London. The Adamesque features of Bingham House so impressed Charles Bulfinch that he imitated them in his design for the Otis House in Boston.

Turning to commercial and governmental architecture, the First Bank of the United States in Philadelphia possesses

an imposing classical grandeur seldom known in America before it was erected (Fig. 8.15). Its designer was Samuel Blodget, Jr. (1757–1814), a merchant. His source may have been an engraving of the Royal Exchange in Dublin, designed in 1769 by Thomas Cooley (1740–84). The great portico expresses republican ideals through the imitation of ancient Roman architectural forms, which were considered appropriate for governmental institutions. The portico, which recalls that of La Madeleine, begun in 1762 in Paris, was a harbinger of federal Romanism, which developed in the new national capital.

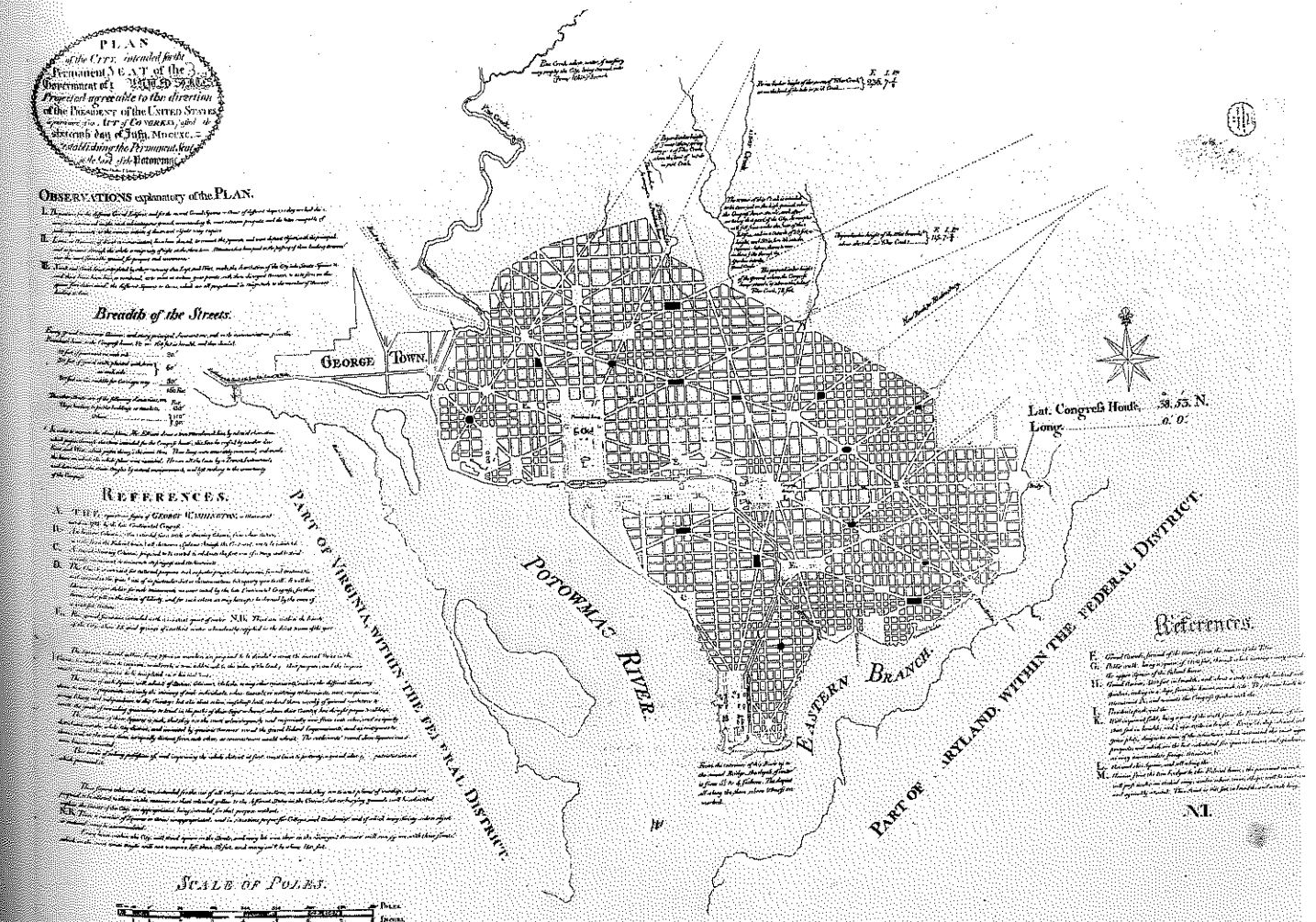
THE NEW FEDERAL CITY

Sitting in Philadelphia in the summer of 1790, Congress established a federal district on the banks of the Potomac River. The land was given by Virginia and Maryland, and Congress decreed that it was to be the permanent seat of the national government. The following year, President

Washington appointed Pierre-Charles L'Enfant (1754–1825), a Frenchman and engineer, to draw up a plan for the new city (Fig. 8.16). The site was a raw wasteland, offering a rare opportunity to start from scratch—both in terms of city planning, and as an expression of political and ideological concepts. Whereas towns such as Boston had grown in a rambling manner, here was a chance to create a magnificent capital, unencumbered by the accidents and errors of previous urban expansion.

L'Enfant established two main focal points—the site of the Capitol near the center of the city, and the President's House in the northwest sector. From these, major avenues radiated, linking them with secondary squares or intersections. Pennsylvania Avenue created a connecting axis between these. Upon all of this, a rectilinear grid was imposed for the rest of the city, and splendid vistas and sites for great buildings and memorial monuments were established throughout. L'Enfant knew well the grand scheme of the palace and gardens of Versailles, and its influence is seen in his design for the national capital.

8.16 Pierre-Charles L'Enfant, Plan of the city of Washington, 1791. Library of Congress.



THE CAPITOL AND THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE

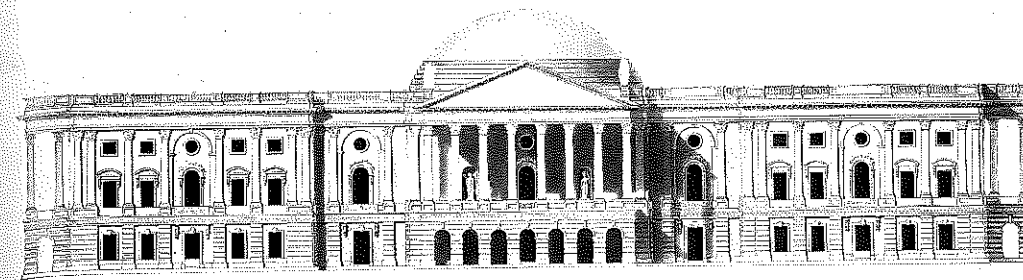
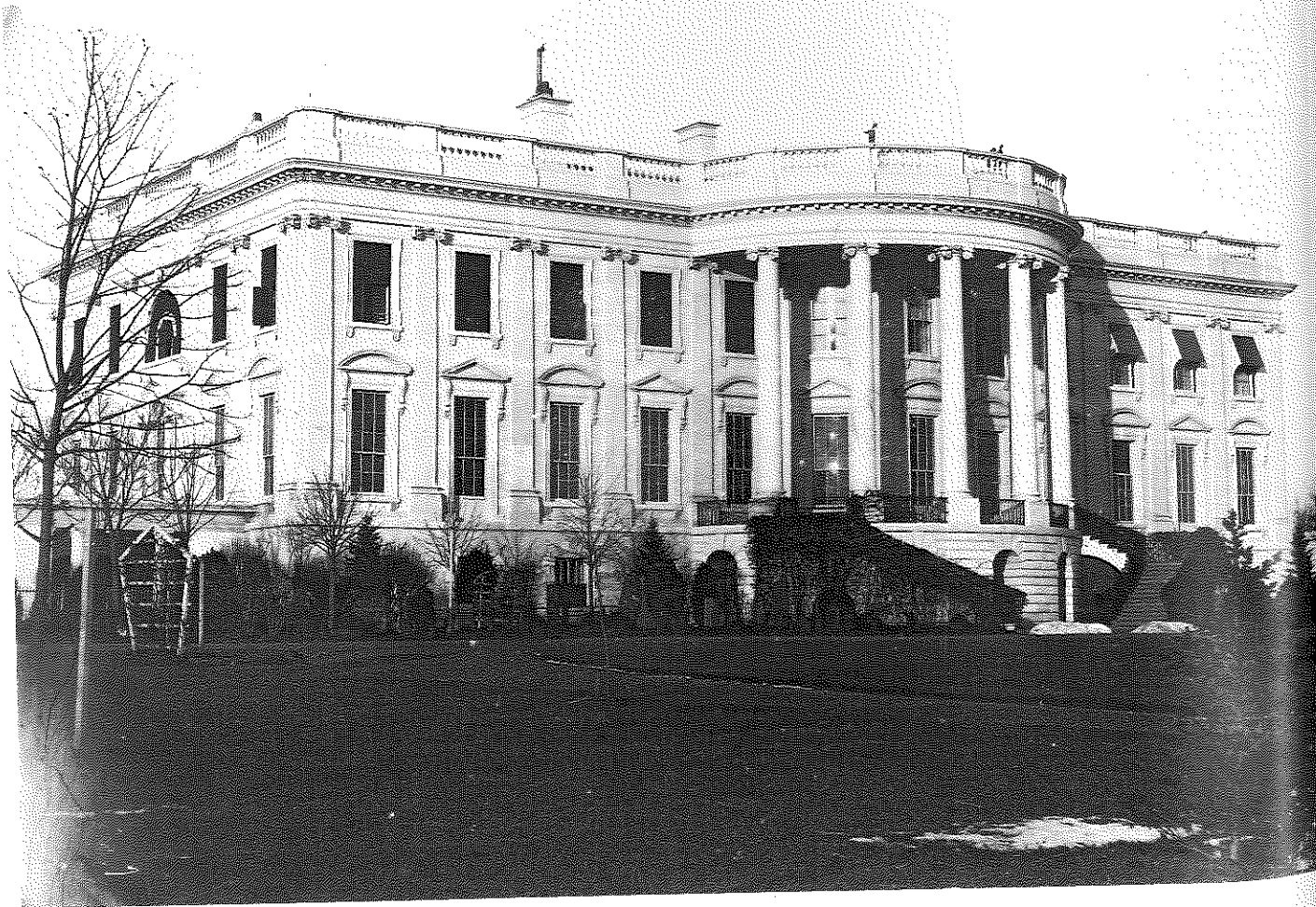
Two buildings were required immediately: The Capitol—to house the legislative and judicial branches of the government—and the President's House, the residence of the chief executive. At the suggestion of Thomas Jefferson, then Secretary of State, a competition for designs of each building was held. Of the wide variety of entries, most were typically eighteenth-century in character. For the presidential residence, that submitted by James Hoban (1756–1821) was chosen.

Hoban was the first of a wave of professional architects who emigrated to America in the Federal period. He was already a practicing architect when he arrived in Philadelphia from Ireland in 1785, although his training had been in the Palladian mode, rather than in the newer Adamesque manner. Hoban's design for the President's House was based on James Gibbs's *Book of Architecture*, and on Leinster House (Dublin, c. 1745), which Hoban would have known. Both were archetypally eighteenth-century in style. Although Hoban's design was modified by Jefferson and

Latrobe in the early nineteenth century, the end result was the building known today as the White House (Fig. 8.17). Its graceful Ionic pilasters, window surrounds, and alternating window pediments virtually cover the wall with applied decoration, which is typical of Georgian design, not neoclassical. But then, the Capitol also started out as an eighteenth-century building.

Of the numerous designs submitted in the Capitol competition, none was deemed entirely satisfactory. Then, a late entry was submitted by Dr. William Thornton (1759–1828), a young physician recently arrived from the Virgin Islands. Thornton was a typical gentlemen-amateur architect, who leafed through a few books containing plates, and from them assembled the components of his design. Thornton's entry had two wings that would house the House and Senate, with a central section fronted by a pedimented portico, which led to a rotunda capped by a low saucer dome (Fig. 8.18). Thornton's design looked backward rather than forward to a new style dominated by Neoclassicism. Although the central section bears a general similarity to the Pantheon in Rome, the wings are purely eighteenth-century in concept.

8.17 James Hoban, The White House, Washington, D.C., c. 1795.



8.18 William Thornton, Design for the United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., 1792. Library of Congress.

LATROBE AND THE NEW CLASSICISM

It was at this moment that Benjamin Henry Latrobe (1764–1820) appeared upon the scene. Born in England to a mother from Pennsylvania, Latrobe was educated in Germany. He traveled extensively in France and Italy before returning to London in 1784, his interests in engineering and architecture already awakened. From the first, Latrobe was fascinated by the radical, abstract classicism of the progressive French architects Claude-Nicolas Ledoux (1736–1806) and Etienne Louis Boullée (1728–99), as well as the theory of the architectural critic Abbé Marc-Antoine Laugier (1713–69).

The greatest influence upon Latrobe, however, was the architecture of Sir John Soane (1753–1837), whose Bank of England (London, 1792–3) heralded the arrival of a new form of classicism that was very different from the Adamesque. Whereas Robert Adam had drawn mainly upon Roman prototypes, the new classicism was based more on Greek architecture and theory. Of special significance was the fact that the new brand featured a bold, almost primitive, purity of Greek forms. An austere simplicity, a severity of plane, edge, corner, and cubic form, and a poetry of geometry,

precision, and proportional relationships replaced the delicate and decorative character of Adamesque classicism.

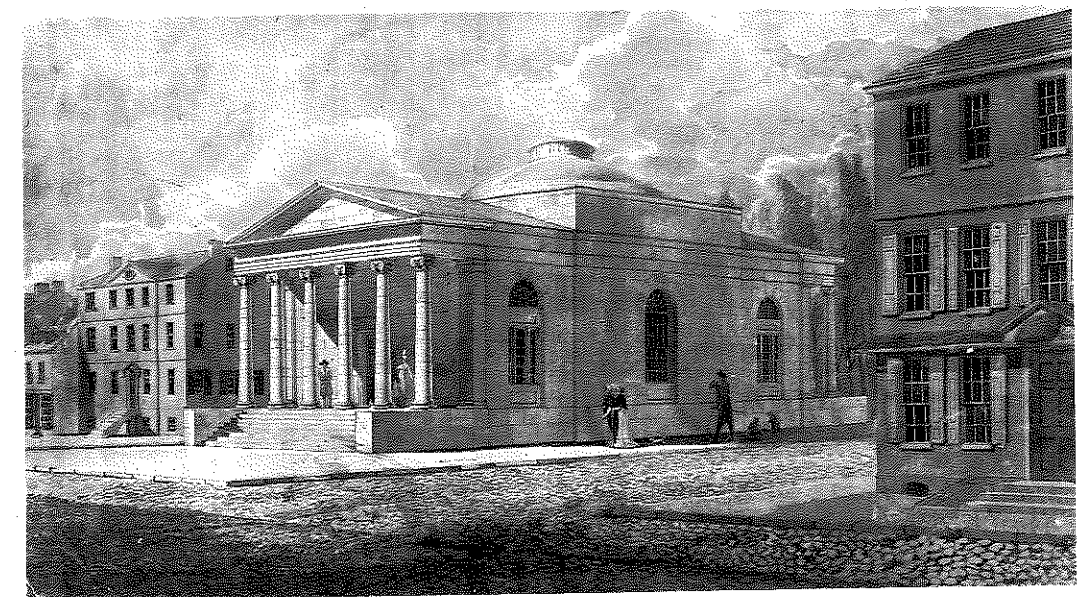
After receiving his architectural training in the office of Samuel Pepys Cockerell (1754–1827), Latrobe established his own practice in London in 1791. He also mastered the theory and technique of masonry construction in vaulting, which was virtually unknown in America.

BANK OF PENNSYLVANIA

After the death of his wife, and the cessation of nearly all building projects in England because of the Napoleonic War, Latrobe decided to try his fortune in the United States, arriving in Virginia in 1796. Two years later, he settled in Philadelphia, where he was appointed architect of the Bank of Pennsylvania (Fig. 8.19).

Soane's Bank of England must have been in Latrobe's thoughts as he designed his Bank of Pennsylvania, for it shows an assertion of the new classicism. The building is in fact an architectural manifesto of the Greek Revival, for the porticoes on either end were inspired by the Greek Ionic temple on Ilissus. The porticoes, however, are raised on a podium in Roman manner, and the central block is capped by a Roman-type depressed dome.

The purity of the classicism in this building is not due to



8.19 Benjamin Henry Latrobe, View of the Bank of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1798–1800. Watercolor on paper. Museum and Library of Maryland History, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.

its strict adherence to one or another Order, but rather to its absolute rationalism and logic, which governs everything from the overall basic form to the smallest detail. There is a geometric beauty in the simplicity of the central block, which is perfectly balanced by the two porches. Yet the whole is united into a single entity by a continuous entablature running all the way around.

Inside, the building was divided into three parts, with a great circular room in the center for conducting the daily business of the bank, and offices and meeting rooms in the end sections.

Latrobe's Neoclassicism forced Americans to make a considerable choice in their architectural tastes—between his bold, monumental, and often austere classicism, and that of Adamesque details, elegant decorations, and lithe proportions.

FAIRMOUNT WATERWORKS PUMP HOUSE

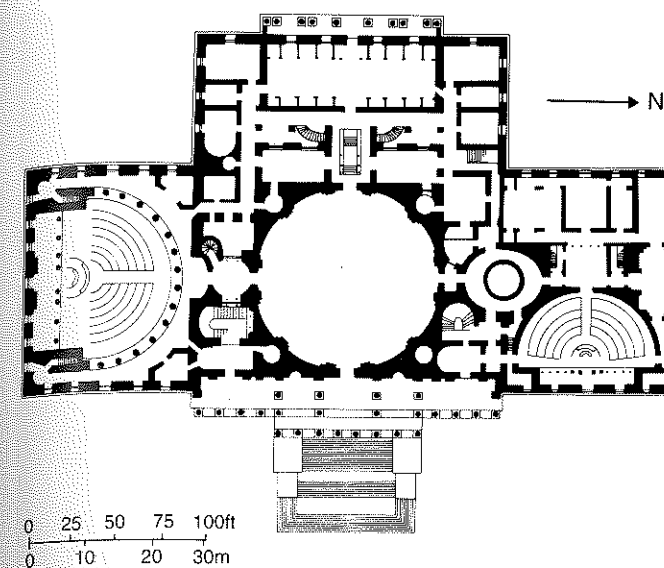
The next project Latrobe undertook tested his engineering as well as his architectural skills. Throughout Philadelphia, well-water was being polluted by drainage from privies. Latrobe proposed a scheme to raise fresh water from the Schuylkill River to a high point in the center of the city, by means of steampowered pumps, whence it was dispersed by gravity through wooden waterpipes. For one of the two

pumping stations, located on the present site of City Hall, Latrobe designed a structure that was radical in the severity of its classicism. The appearance of the pumping station is known from John Lewis Krimmel's painting of Center Square (Fig. 11.6). Geometric forms dominate in the lower cube, from which rises a cylinder crowned by a depressed dome. A recessed porch is of the Doric Order—the simplest, boldest, and most massive of all classical Orders. In this building, Latrobe demonstrated his comprehension of the fundamental theory that underlay classical architecture in its purest form. A comparison of Latrobe's Pump House with Ledoux's *Portes de Paris* (1784–9) confirms that the Frenchman's work was an influence on Latrobe's architecture.

A ROMAN CATHEDRAL

Latrobe's next major commission, awarded in 1804, was for a new cathedral in Baltimore. This was to be the first truly monumental Catholic cathedral built in America (Fig. 8.20). Latrobe supplied Bishop John Carroll with two designs—one in the Roman style, the other in the Gothic. The Roman was chosen. The result was a daring foray into domed and vaulted space, and an adventure in construction such as America had never known. The cathedral was built of stone on a Latin cross plan, with vaulted side aisles and a great dome (65 feet—20 m—in diameter) over the crossing of the nave and transepts. The entrance is through a colossal

8.20 Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *Baltimore Cathedral*, 1804–21. Watercolor on paper. Museum and Library of Maryland History, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore.



8.21 United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., c. 1815. Plan.

Roman temple portico with handsome Ionic columns. The exterior walls emphasize the bold simplicity of the plain, geometric cubic form and cleancut edges, with decoration kept to a minimum.

In 1803, President Jefferson appointed Latrobe Surveyor of the Public Buildings for the United States. This gave Latrobe supervisory power over the completion of the two main buildings being erected in the national capital. To Hoban's design for the President's House Latrobe added an oval room and recommended a portico. He even assisted Dolley Madison with the interior furnishings. At the Capitol, he inherited Dr. Thornton's eighteenth-century scheme, arriving upon the scene as the two wings rose from their foundations. The plan shows the location of the large semicircular hall of the House of Representatives at the left, while the smaller Senate chamber is at the right, with the huge rotunda in the center (Fig. 8.21).

Latrobe had considerable freedom with the interior of the Capitol, where he exhibited his knowledge of Greek architecture, which he preferred over Roman, and certainly over eighteenth-century styles. In the Supreme Court area he used the powerful Doric Order in proportions similar to those found in the Greek temples at Paestum. The Ionic Order was used in the Senate chamber, and the Corinthian capitals of the House of Representatives (Fig. 10.20) were inspired by the famous Monument of Lysicrates (334 B.C., Athens, Greece).

AMERICAN NEOCLASSICISM

For all his devotion to the artistry of the ancient Greeks, Latrobe kept in mind that America was his patron. Accordingly, he Americanized his capitals in the classical mode. These are the famous corncob capitals, with cornstalks for the fluting of the shafts. In the vestibule of the Senate wing,

and for the Senate rotunda, Latrobe substituted the tobacco leaf for the acanthus in the capitals (Fig. 8.22). An important canon of the neoclassical creed demanded the modernization of classical forms, rather than a slavish imitation of them. In subscribing to this principle, Latrobe continually infused new life into an ancient architectural vocabulary.

Although senators and congressmen were delighted with his uniquely American capitals, Latrobe was often at odds with members of Congress, who knew little about the theory, history, and traditions of grand architecture. He was dismissed in 1811, but after the British burned the Capitol and President's House in 1814, as the War of 1812 came to a close, Latrobe was recalled to repair the buildings. Following yet another confrontation with the commission in charge, however, he resigned his post in 1817, and left Washington, D.C., for New Orleans, where he died a few years later.

Latrobe was succeeded as architect of the Capitol by Charles Bulfinch, whose primary task was completing the central section with its dome over the rotunda. The height of the dome was increased considerably, giving it a very different character from the low, saucer dome Latrobe had planned (Fig. 17.6). Bulfinch completed the Capitol building—for the time being, at least—and his reputation soared as a result of his work.

By the time Bulfinch left the capital in 1830, he, along with Latrobe even earlier, had established the professional standing of the architect. Before these men there had been only gentlemen-amateurs or craftsmen-builders, all of whom worked from eighteenth-century design books. Now, there were professional architects, who became the final authorities in architectural design and structural methods.

8.22 Tobacco Leaf Capital, designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe for the United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., c. 1815.



THE FEDERAL STYLE IN NEW YORK CITY

Like Boston and Philadelphia, New York City had flourished during the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century. Pierre-Charles L'Enfant had designed a Federal-style Federal Hall (1788) for use while the seat of national government was temporarily located in the City, and the spire of St. Paul's Chapel (1790–5, Fig. 6.9) and John McComb's St. John's Chapel (1803–7) soon graced the skyline.

The town's chief glory was its new City Hall (1802–12), a collaborative effort by Joseph-François Mangin (d. after 1818) and John McComb, Jr. (1763–1853). Mangin, a French *émigré*, first appears in New York City in 1794, already trained as an architect and engineer. McComb had made a name for himself in the city as designer of a number of houses in the Adamesque style, and it was actually he who supervised the building of City Hall (Fig. 8.23). The decidedly French flavor in the exterior design of the building is no doubt attributable to Mangin. New York City also had a strong Francophile faction, which frequently expressed itself in matters of art.

8.23 Joseph-François Mangin and John McComb, Jr., City Hall, New York City, 1811. Shown here in John Hill, *City Hall*, 1826. Handcolored aquatint on paper, 17 × 28in (43.2 × 71.1cm). National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.



Mangin's design recalls specific French models such as Alexandre Théodore Brongniart's Hôtel de Monaco (c. 1774) or Jacques-Denis Antoine's Hôtel des Monnaies (c. 1770), both in Paris. It possesses something of the decorative delicacy of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French architecture before it became bold and ponderous under the spell of a monumental Roman classicism. The pavilion design—with arched windows, scrolled keystones, pilasters with finely cut capitals, and other rich adornment—reminds one more of the Garden Façade of the Palace at Versailles than of the severe, planar, and austere contemporary work of Latrobe. A handsome cupola crowns the exterior. Inside, where McComb was in charge, the French influence gave way to Adamesque classicism, particularly noticeable in the assortment of variously shaped rooms.

THE FEDERAL STYLE IN THE SOUTH

The South, too, had its architectural flowering during the Federal era, and many fine houses were erected from the Carolinas to Louisiana. The Thomas Fuller House (also



8.24 Parlange, near New Roads, Louisiana, c. 1785–95.

called the Tabby Manse because of the material of its construction) in Beaufort, South Carolina, is an early example of Adamesque Neoclassicism, for it was built in 1786. Its façade has the temple portico with attenuated columns and delicate cornice, and the flat, largely undecorated walls with plain, sharp corners that are typical of the new style. The Maxey House (c. 1813), also in Beaufort, has double galleries along one side, as frequently found in southern townhouses of this period.

At Parlange (c. 1790), in the bayou country of Louisiana, there are French and Caribbean influences (Fig. 8.24). A double gallery surrounds the house, the lower floor being a raised basement with the main living quarters above it. Its builder, the Marquis Claude Vincent de Ternant, came to Louisiana from France to establish an indigo plantation. He probably brought some notion of French Neoclassicism with

him, but the main influence at Parlange is a type of galleried house devised in the islands to cope with the heat. The galleries serve as the hallways for the house, with each room opening on to them. Windows and doors, the full height of the high-ceilinged rooms, were also designed for ventilation.

Although political independence had been won with the end of the Revolutionary War, cultural infusions continued to cross the Atlantic. Latrobe offered one form of Neoclassicism, while another variation came from France. Nevertheless, the architecture of the Federal period was unified by its commitment to classicism. It was to be more than a century before such homogeneity was again achieved, for succeeding decades employed a wide array of styles to suit their romantic inclinations, from Egyptian to Gothic, and from Renaissance to Oriental.