Bolstering a National Identity: President Andrew Johnson's Pottier & Stymus Furniture in the United States Treasury Department, 1865

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Introduction

Following President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, Secretary of the Treasury Hugh McCulloch, offered President Andrew Johnson his reception room on April 15, 1865, as a temporary Executive office until Mrs. Lincoln sufficiently recovered from her nervous breakdown to vacate the White House.[1] The Office of the Supervising Architects in the Treasury Department had completed their collaboration with Pottier & Stymus to decorate the interior of the Secretary's office in a cohesive patriotic statement only weeks prior to Johnson's occupancy. Images of this emblematic office furniture in Johnson's temporary office were disseminated internationally through visitors and newspaper drawings such as *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated* newspaper as it served as the "White House" where President Johnson led the country during a pivotal time in American history.

Following the Civil War and subsequent assassination of President Lincoln, the furniture in Andrew Johnson's temporary office was crucial in emphasizing the national identity at a decisive moment in United States history. Renaissance Revival style furniture was prevalent in library and office furniture in the mid-nineteenth century. The Renaissance Revival style of the Treasury suite furniture also associated the contemporary American government with illustrious past republics of Greece and Rome, emphasizing the United States' power, solidity, and longevity. The Treasury furniture

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[1] Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson, Vol. II April 1, 1864-December 31, 1866* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1960), 288. President Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth at Ford's Theater on April 14, 1865 and subsequently died on April 15, 1865. The Secretary of the State Department had been injured in an assassination attempt as he was recovering from a carriage incident. "Assassination of the President," *Washington Evening Star,* April 15, 1865, Washington, D.C.

further bolstered the national identity of America because it featured special national emblems as well.

As it would not have been proper for him to intrude upon the newly widowed Mrs. Lincoln in her grief-stricken state, Johnson had to find different accommodations for his office until he could take up residence in the White House.[2] The Secretary of the Treasury, McCulloch, who replaced the previous Secretary of the Treasury William Fessenden, offered him use of his reception room in his newly renovated office suite. Johnson's stay was appropriate since the Treasury Department, a powerful government entity, is located next to the White House. The Treasury Department played a crucial role in the Civil War as it was responsible for raising money for the war and maintaining the integrity of the economy so that the war could continue.[3] Johnson vacated his temporary office for the White House on June 9, 1865.[4]

An analysis of the furniture in the Treasury suite, in the context of the contemporary culture of establishing a national identity, demonstrates how the furniture in the Treasury suite bolstered the power of Johnson's presidency and the Union at a time of crisis. An exploration of the Pottier & Stymus commission, the Renaissance Revival Style furniture, shields on the furniture in the Treasury suite, and the influence of the commission on subsequent government furniture will provide further insight into the relevance of this furniture in future chapters.

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[2] Mrs. Lincoln left the White House on May 23, 1865. Thomas J. Craughwell, *Stealing Lincoln's Body* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 27.

[3] Craughwell, *Stealing Lincoln's Body*, 41.

[4] McCulloch noted that Johnson had stayed in his temporary office in the Treasury for six weeks. Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half a Century* (New York: C. Scribners Sons, 1888), 374. "President Johnson yesterday moved to the White House and is now in full possession of the mansion." *New York Tribune*, June 10, 1865; Almost a two-week discrepancy exists between these two sources. Francis de Sales Ryan, "The Treasury becomes Temporary White House, 1976," U.S. Treasury Department Archives, Washington, D.C., 16.

Climate of Political Unrest

Johnson's time in the Department of the Treasury was important as it was arguably the most tumultuous period in American history. Social and political unrest were extensive as a result of immigration, industrialization, national expansion, Civil War, and racial tension that had not been resolved through the termination of slavery following the victory of the Union. America's future was precarious because it faced massive internal strife and divisions.

The assassination of President Lincoln threatened to further disrupt the unstable balance at the conclusion of the Civil War. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* claimed that Lincoln's murder was, "one of the most terrible of national calamities and the country from one end to the other had been suddenly thrown into a state of mourning and agitation from the very height of hope and rejoicing."[5] While the South had been defeated, there was much work to be done to reunite the country. Both sides had suffered hundreds of thousands of fatalities and severe economic hardship. The country was disillusioned and still psychologically divided. Following Lincoln's assassination, the country looked to Johnson for guidance. McCulloch understood the status of unrest and attempted to assure the public by stating that his:

> hope is and [his] belief is that this great national calamity will teach the world a lesson which will be of most beneficial character to our Republican form of government: that it will show that the assassination of our Chief Magistrate does not affect in the slightest degree the permanence of our institutions or the regular administration of the laws and that an event which would have shaken any other country to the center does not even stagger for a moment a government like ours.[6]

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[5] "The First Cabinet Meeting Under the Present Administration," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, January 6, 1866, 245, Issue 536, col D, New York.

[6] "Letter from Hugh McCulloch, Secretary of the Treasury to Mr. John A. Stewart, Sub-Treasury," *New York Tribune*, April 18, 1865, New York. "Research Report, Library of Congress/ Madison Building, July 21, 1989," U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

A period of social and political reconstruction followed from 1865 until 1867 where freedom and unity were an integral part of the country as illustrated by the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, which abolished slavery.[7] In *Terrain of Freedom American Art and the Civil War*, Eric Foner commented that, "Among reformers, the war inspired a shift from antebellum anti-institutionalism, which saw the purification of the individual as the route to social change, to a state-centered vision in which political power could be harnessed in order to better society."[8]

Search for National Identity

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Americans struggled to find a national identity. Given the internal divisions and subsequent secession of the Southern states there were extensive debates and reevaluations of America's principles and beliefs resulting in a search for a national identity. The battle to unite the country was not just physical, but also psychological through the visual and verbal propaganda that promoted a united country.

What was America? In his Gettysburg Address at a cemetery dedication on November 19, 1863, Lincoln said "we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure."[9] He indicated that the entire country was integral to its identity. The result of the Civil War hung in the balance spurring a search for American icons to rally public sentiment and to tie, psychologically, the American populace together again. These emblems came from the

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[7] Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Despite the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, President Johnson did not enforce it allowing the Southern states to enact Black Codes that denied them their equal rights. Antietam, "Emancipation Proclamation," The National Park Service Archives, http://www.nps.gov/ncro/anti/emancipation.html. (accessed December 19, 2007).

[8] Andrew Walker et al., *Terrain of Freedom American Art and the Civil War*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (Chicago: The Art Institute of Chicago, 2001), 11.

[9] The Library of Congress, "The Gettysburg Address," http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/gadd/gatr1.html. (accessed December 19, 2007).

founding of America, which caused the public to recall past victory, strength and unity, but also allied the Republic with the past democracies of Greece.

Rebirth

To resolve the conflict that tore the country apart Lincoln suggested, "that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth," thus popularizing and promoting the rebirth or reinvention of the country's identity.[10] The concept of a new national identity was furthered by Illinois Congressman Isaac N. Arnold, an abolitionist and strong supporter of Lincoln, who believed that the United States was a new nation after the Civil War because it was free.[11]

Americans enjoyed the benefits of its collective past and consequently drew upon it in the formation of their identity. Ideology and symbols from the American Revolution strengthened states ties through nostalgia for their common history of the victorious fight for freedom from tyranny. The United States strengthened the states' solidarity by psychologically intertwining past democracies and the Union and Confederacy states' history so they were not two warring factions but one enduring democracy.

Union supporters conflated these two wars in the public perception. The American Revolution resulted in the birth of a new nation free from tyrannical oppression while the Civil War resulted in the rebirth of the nation with freedom for all of its citizens. This parallel is demonstrated in Lincoln's famous Gettysburg address where he recalled that, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent,

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[10] Ibid.

[11] In 1830, Daniel Webster said before the Senate, "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable." V. Jacque Voegli, *Free but not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 162-163.

a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."[12]

Leaders garnered support for the Union by recalling the golden period of the founding of the country where America had originally established its national identity. The original symbols and emblems were developed from past prestigious governments whose strength and principles Union leaders wished to emulate. Jennifer Ossman, stated in *Reconstructing a National Image: The State, War and Navy Building and the Politics of Federal design, 1866-1890* that, "Under Republican rule, the reborn nation stood for urbanity, prosperity, permanence and imperial ascendancy."[13]

Dissemination of Views of the Reception Room in the Secretary of the Treasury's Office Suite

Given the state of unrest in America, there was intensive scrutiny of President Johnson's actions while he guided the country through recovering from President Lincoln's assassination and reconstruction. Many macabre observers were fascinated with the fate of Lincoln's assassins and wondered if the South would be punished. The Reception room in the Treasury suite was at the epicenter of presidential action during this storm of speculation and attention.

President Johnson held his first Cabinet Meeting on April 16, 1865, and hosted a reception for Foreign Ambassadors in the Reception room in the Treasury suite on April 20, 1865. Both events were depicted in engravings in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated*

[12] The Library of Congress, "The Gettysburg Address," http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/gadd/gatr1.html. (accessed December 19, 2007).

[13] Jennifer Laurie Ossman, "Reconstructing a National Image: The State, War and Navy Building and the Politics of Federal design, 1866-1890" (Michigan: UMI Dissertation Services, 1996), 87.

newspaper (see figs. 1 & 2).[14] Other momentous occasions in these rooms included the proclamation for the rewards for the capture of suspected plotters of Lincoln's assassination on May 2, 1865 and Johnson's reconstruction proclamation on May 29, 1865.[15] Illustrations and accounts in newspapers and magazines documented Johnson receiving many visitors in the reception room of the Secretary of the Treasury's office. In May of 1865, Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy, commented that the visitors to the President, "have been useful in the peculiar condition of public affairs by inspiring confidence . . . ."[16]

The extensive proliferation of wartime images occurred for the first time in American history through newspapers, cartes de visites, stereographs, wood engravings, paintings and photographs from the war. Some artists and journalists traveled with the troops. Their work brought the war into the living rooms of the public, bringing rapid updates of victories, defeats, and gruesome images and drawings of the death and destruction.[17] This bombardment of images heightened the public's awareness and emotions of the Civil War. Accounts of the war and politicians' responses were reinforced when the politicians were surrounded by government symbols in official settings.[18]

Establishing a National Identity through the Arts

In addition to newspapers and political venues, the national identity of the United

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[14] "The First Cabinet Meeting under the Administration of Andrew Johnson," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, January 6, 1866; "The First Reception of Ambassadors by Andrew Johnson, at His Rooms in the Treasury Building Reception," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, January 6, 1866, 249, Issue 536, col. A, New York.

[15] "Official. By the President of the United States of America. A Proclamation." *Washington Evening Star*, May 30, 1865, Washington, D.C.

[16] Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles*, 292.

[17] Eleanor Harvey, "Civil War Exhibition" (proposal for a Civil War Exhibition in 2010, April, 2007).

[18] Mark Neely Jr. and Harold Holzer, *The Union Image: Popular Prints of the Civil War* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 75.

States was promoted through a variety of media including literature and fine arts. Artists and authors influenced the decorative arts, which aligned the possessor of these objects with the Union through images such as the American flag, and nationalistic emblems that evolved from the Great Seal of the United States. The search for a national identity, which was explored in literature and fine arts, informed the decorative arts as these artistic media were part of the same cultural search and propaganda for a national identity.

Literature

The importance of the search for a national identity was reflected in Edward Everett Hale's 1863 novel, *The Man Without a Country*, which he wrote to respond to Northern anxieties surrounding the preservation of the Union during and after the Civil War. He compared the loss of national identity with that of personal identity. This story was originally published as a series in the popular *Atlantic Monthly* during, "the darkest period of the Civil War, to show what love of country is."[19] Hale and other like-minded Union supporters used *The Man Without a Country* as propaganda for preserving the Union.[20] Like Hale's metaphorical novel, the furniture in the Treasury suite was also a propagandistic work that was rife with symbolic images that strengthened the power of the Union.

Fine Arts

In addition to literature and popular publications, the contemporary culture of

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[19] Hale wanted "the story . . . printed before the autumn elections of that year, —as [his] 'testimony' regarding the principles involved in them." Edward E. Hale, *The Man Without a Country* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1891), 1.

[20] Hale wrote this story, "in the summer of 1863, as a contribution, however humble, towards the formation of a just and true national sentiment, or sentiment of love to the nation." Hale warned Americans about the repercussions of the loss of the Southern states to the nation's identity. Ibid. 5.

establishing a national identity was influential in both the decorative and fine arts seen in Andrew Johnson's temporary office. Artist depictions of patriotic symbols ornamented decorative art, particularly furniture, in support of the government as seen in late eighteenth century and nineteenth century paintings aggrandizing American presidents. The colors, style, and ornamentation of the furniture and decorative arts in the Treasury suite relate to those depicted in Gilbert Stuart's contemporary painting of *George Washington* and Ralph Earl's circa 1830 portrait of President *Andrew Jackson*. The paintings are late eighteenth century and nineteenth century depictions of presidents from a previous "golden era" in American history that Union leaders desired to evoke. The Treasury suite and the paintings of Washington and Jackson all featured swags of fabric, columns, literary works and classically influenced furniture. Similarly, the furniture in the Secretary of the Treasury's Office recalled the enduring foundations of democracy.

Symbols of Presidential power in artwork occurs in Gilbert Stuart's painting of George Washington where the gilt table, red velvet curtain, throne-like chair, and classical columns recall democracies from antiquity.[21] The symbols, composition, pose, size and accoutrements in these presidential portraits are also evocative of English portraits of nobility in this period. Stuart's painting of George Washington depicted neoclassical furniture and motifs like the anthemia and reeded legs of the table (see fig. 3). Thirty-four years later, Ralph Earl's circa 1830 portrait of President Andrew Jackson (see fig. 4) depicts the nineteenth-century interpretation of political symbols of America.[22] Jackson is shown in the aristocratic gilt chair surrounded by grandiose

[21] White House Museum, "Portrait of President Washington by Gilbert Stuart, 1797," http:// www.whitehousemuseum.org/furnishings/ (accessed March, 2006).

[22] Baltimore Museum of Art, "Portrait of President Andrew Jackson by Ralph Earl, c. 1830," DAR Museum, Washington, D.C., http://www.tfaoi.com/aa/2aa/2aa141.htm (accessed December 19, 2007).

curtains and columns despite his "simpler, 'republican' tastes."[23] These paintings provide insight into the nineteenth-century view of appropriate furnishings for prominent government officials.

Decorative Arts

Designers and political leaders used decorative arts to establish parallels between the democracies of the United States and ancient Greece and Rome. The Treasury furniture suite is analogous to the notion of public monuments, which Kirk Savage, a contributing author of *Terrain of Freedom,* said:

> provide[d] answers . . . to show how great men and their deeds made the nation better and stronger than it was before. The purpose of such public monuments was to condense history's moral lessons and fix them in place for all time and . . . had to be imagined as part of a completed stage of history, and nestled safely in a sealed past.[24]

Conclusion

In 1864, the furniture in the Treasury suite was completed at a pivotal point in the Civil War. The Union had not achieved a quick decisive victory as it had originally thought. "American" images continued to garner support for the Union and were used to heal and consolidate the states after the war. James A. Abbott, Baltimore Museum of Art Curator of Decorative Art, commented that, "Each [presidential] object [through time] was designed to convey something specific—a president's goals and aspirations for the nation . . . each piece emphasizes . . . that 'marketing strategy' is not a modern concept regarding the presidency."[25]

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[23] S.M. Chase, Secretary of the United States Treasury, to A.B. Mullett, February 1, 1864, Letters Received, 1843-1910, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[24] Walker, *Terrain of Freedom,* 37.

[25] Baltimore Museum of Art, "Power, Politics & Style: Art for the Presidents, 2001," Traditional Fine Art Online, Inc., http://www.tfaoi.com (accessed March 2006).

Chapter 2: The Pottier & Stymus Commission

Introduction

In 1863, the United States Treasury Department commissioned Auguste Pottier and William Stymus to decorate the interior of the Secretary of the Treasury's office suite in a cohesive patriotic theme. Elisha Hussey, author of *Home Building* stated in 1877 that Pottier & Stymus, "unit[es] all the arts of house-decoration and furnishings . . . . From a vast museum of artistic samples and models [their designer] draws the themes that are to be realized . . . and the result is a harmonious whole, beautiful, interesting and reposeful."[26] Writing in 1893 Moses King reinforced the importance of cohesive design in, *King's Handbook of New York City: An Outline History and Description of the American Metropolis* stating that, "The foremost point in interior decoration is to have a firm like Pottier, Stymus & Co. attend to all parts of the work, so that the whole may be harmonious."[27]

The Supervising Architect, Isaiah Rogers; Alfred Mullett, the Assistant Supervising Architect of the Treasury, and the firm of Pottier & Stymus collaborated on the Secretary of the Treasury's suite of rooms completing them in 1864. The Office of the Supervising Architect supervised and contributed to the design of the furniture suite. Because of the high status of the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, the stylish firm of Pottier & Stymus was selected to create the furniture. Even though the Treasury Carpentry shop made furniture for the other governmental offices in the Treasury

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[26] Elisha Charles Hussey, *Home Building: A Reliable Book of Facts* (New York: Leader van Hoesen, 1877), 220; Kristin S. Herron, "The Modern Gothic Furniture of Pottier and Stymus," *The Magazine Antiques*, May 1999, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1026/is_5_155/ai_ (accessed March 3, 2006).

[27] Moses King, *King's Handbook of New York City: An Outline History and Description of the American Metropolis* (Boston, MA: Moses King, 1893), 854.

Department they were not involved in this project.

Pottier & Stymus

Auguste Pottier was born in Coulommiers, France, in 1823. In 1847, he gained experience in wood carving for three and a half years as an apprentice to, Janselme, a wood sculptor in Paris who trained Pottier to create the high quality carving and inlay that was a hallmark of Pottier's designs.[28] He immigrated to the United States and served as journeyman sculptor for E. W. Hutchings & Son, a New York furniture manufacturer, in 1850.[29]

In 1851, Pottier formed a business partnership with Gustave Herter (1830-1898) called Herter, Pottier and Company.[30] They worked in this enterprise at 48 Mercer Street and later that year at 59 Beekman Street where they remained until their company dissolved in 1853.[31] Later, Pottier & Stymus would become Herter Brother's leading competitor.[32]

In 1856, Pottier worked as general foreman at Rochefort and Skarren, cabinetmakers in New York City, where William P. Stymus was the upholstery foreman. Little information is known about Stymus before his work at Rochefort and Skarren. After Rochefort died in 1859, Auguste Pottier and William Stymus, formed their

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[28] L.C. De Montainville, ed., *Reports of the Grand Centennial Exhibition, series 20 Golden Book of Celebrated Manufacturers and Merchants in the United States* (New York: Crichton & Co., 1875), 8.

[29] Katherine S. Howe, Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen and Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, *Herter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 62; *The Official Catalogue of the New York Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations* in 1853 listed the participant, E.W. Hutchings & Son, at 475 Broadway. Association for the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations, *Catalogue of the New York Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations* (New York: George P. Putnam & Co., 1853), 83.

[30] Howe, *Herter Brothers,* 39.

[31] Ibid., 62.

[32] Ibid.

partnership, Pottier & Stymus, in New York.[33] On May 1, 1859, Pottier & Stymus operated a workshop at 115 Wooster Street and sold their merchandise from a salesroom at 623 Broadway. Pottier & Stymus moved their workshop to 172 Mercer Street in 1862.[34]

Pottier & Stymus was successful and continued to expand.[35] In 1871, the firm completed a large factory at 375 Lexington Avenue, which was the size of nearly half a city block. The six-storied building featured an Italian style façade.[36] By 1875, Pottier & Stymus was making more than 1.1 million dollars and employed 700 men and fifty women who manufactured wares in this building.[37] Pottier & Stymus's large building also had a first floor show room that held over 400,000 objects.[38]

The Golden Book of Celebrated Manufacturers and Merchants in the United States published after the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial exhibition indicated that Pottier & Stymus kept meticulous records of each object. Listing and organizing the many precise intricate steps required to complete their furniture contributed to, "the details of

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[33] De Montainville, ed., *Golden Book of Celebrated Manufacturers and Merchants in the United States*, 12.

[34] *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography, vol. 6* (New York: James T. White, 1896), 297; Elizabeth Wayland Agee Cogswell, "The Henry Lippitt House: A Document of Life and Taste in Mid-Victorian America" (masters thesis, University of Delaware, Newark, 1981), 255-257; Kristin S. Herron, "The Modern Gothic Furniture of Pottier and Stymus," *The Magazine Antiques*, May 1999, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1026/is_5_155/ai_ (accessed March 3, 2006).

[35] In the 1870 census, Pottier & Stymus reported the use of hand-powered tools. Howe, *Herter Brothers*, 73.

[36] Ibid., 70.

[37] De Montainville, ed., *Golden Book of Celebrated Manufacturers and Merchants in the United States*, 12.

[38] Ibid., 7-12, 129-30.

[39] The *Golden Book* was a "Report of the Centennial Exhibition" in Philadelphia in 1875, where Pottier & Stymus exhibited. The *Golden Book* claimed that at Pottier & Stymus's company, "from its first entrance to the building through its various stages in the different departments . . . Each piece, from the cheapest to the most expensive, is numbered in the beginning, and retains the same number till it comes forth in one of the numerous elegant productions. To the uninitiated this plan seems perfectly simple, but upon examination it develops a most ingenious combination, particularly in view of the details of perfect fabrication, which is the prime objective of this establishment." De Montainville, ed., *Golden Book of Celebrated Manufacturers and Merchants in the United States*, 16.

perfect fabrication, which is the prime objective of this establishment."[39] As Pottier & Stymus had a number of departments, each of which specialized in a specific technique, their detailed records, "serve[d] as a complete check," thus contributing to the, "perfect order which reigns throughout."[40] The records increased the quality control and efficiency of the woodworkers and artisans, and coordinated the departments. Each piece was numbered, registered in a ledger, and photographed. *King's Handbook of New York City* claimed that Pottier & Stymus had a, "world wide reputation for superior grades of furniture and wood-work which they manufacture, as well as for their artistic conceptions in interior decoration."[41] The wood was carefully dried in special brick chamber heated to over 120 degrees to reduce the possibility of the wood on the finished furniture warping or splitting.[42] All this attention to detail contributed to making the firm one of the most respected and desired firms.

Pottier & Stymus Manufacturing Company became Pottier & Stymus Company in February 1888.[43] Most records of their firm were destroyed in a fire at their factory on Lexington Avenue March 1, 1888. The next day the *Daily Graphic* published a detailed drawing and described the remains as "a pile of rains [*sic*] now covers the ground where

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[40] De Montainville, ed., *Golden Book of Celebrated Manufacturers and Merchants in the United States*, 9.

[41] David A. Hanks, "Pottier & Stymus Mfg. Co.: Artistic Furniture & Decorations," *Art & Antiques*, 1982, 84.

[42] De Montainville, ed., *Golden Book of Celebrated Manufacturers and Merchants in the United States*, 7-12, 129-30.

[43] In 1888, after the firm made a succession of changes, the president was Adrian Pottier—Auguste's nephew, the vice president was Auguste Pottier, the treasurer was Frank Pentz. William P. Stymus Sr. and Jr. worked for the company. Kristin S. Herron, "The Modern Gothic Furniture of Pottier and Stymus," *The Magazine Antiques*, May 1999, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1026/is_5_155/ai_ (accessed March 3, 2006).

the great buildings stood."[44] Pottier & Stymus was liquidated and the stock sold to a new corporation, Pottier, Stymus & Co., which had Pottier's nephew Adrian Pottier and Stymus's son, William P. Stymus, Jr. on the board. Pottier, Stymus & Co. built another factory on this site. The company's last listing in the New York City business directory was 1918-1919.[45]

Commissions

The Treasury suite furniture set the precedent for office furniture of other men in powerful positions who sought to emulate the President and the most important "American" office. Pottier & Stymus made the furniture in the Treasury suite to associate the Secretary of the Treasury and later President Johnson with the strength and longevity of governments of antiquity. Similarly, other wealthy and powerful executives adopted the furniture designs of the Pottier & Stymus Treasury commission to associate themselves with the power and prestige of the United States government officials.

In addition to the Treasury Department, Pottier & Stymus received other important commissions like President Grant's Cabinet Room in the White House in 1869.[46] This New York firm also completed work for wealthy entrepreneurs such as Henry Flagler, William Rockefeller, Leland Stanford, George Westinghouse, Frederick Steinway; prominent hotels such as the New York City's Plaza Hotel, the Savoy, the Waldorf Astoria; and other government officials including Gideon Wells, Secretary of the

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[44] "Auguste Pottier died in 1896," *New York Tribune*, February 21, 1888; Kristin S. Herron, "The Modern Gothic Furniture of Pottier and Stymus," *The Magazine Antiques*, May 1999, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1026/is_5_155/ai_ (accessed March 3, 2006).

[45] King, *King's Handbook of New York*, 854.

[46] Betty Monkman, "The Cabinet Room Furniture of the Executive Mansion, 1869" (Office of the Curator of the White House, 1973); Kristin S. Herron, "The Modern Gothic Furniture of Pottier and Stymus," *The Magazine Antiques*, May 1999, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1026/is_5_155/ai_ (accessed March 3, 2006).

Navy.[47] Pottier & Stymus was commissioned for interior design projects, and even designed Aubusson rugs, mosaics, architectural ornaments, gas fixtures, mirrors and tapestries.[48] However, the partners primarily made furniture.

Office of the Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury Department

The Office of the Supervising Architect of the United States Treasury Department designed many federal buildings across the nation from its inception in 1852 until 1939.[49] In 1887, the *American Architect and Building News* predicted that:

> [T]o the future historian of American art, the succession of the Government Architects will be nearly as important as that of the kings of England in British secular history.[50]

While time has proven this false, the prediction is indicative of the importance of the office at that time and the focus concentrated on the Office of the Supervising Architect. The buildings created under the auspices of the Office of the Supervising Architect symbolized the authority and aspirations of the government of America. Antoinette Lee, author of *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architects Office,* found that, "[t]he evolution of American public architecture paralleled and reflected the development of the country itself."[51] The Office of the Supervising Architect was responsible for disseminating a united national identity through its highly publicized designs. As Lee observed, it "served as the central design agency for civilian

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[47] Diana J. Strazdes, "The Emerging Aesthetic Interior: Pottier and Stymus at the Stanford Mansion in San Francisco," (lecture presented at the Winterthur Museum in Winterthur, Delaware, October 12, 1996); Kristin S. Herron, "The Modern Gothic Furniture of Pottier and Stymus," *The Magazine Antiques*, May 1999, http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1026/is_5_155/ai_ (accessed March 3, 2006).

[48] Howe, *Herter Brothers,* 71.

[49] Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architects Office* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), xi.

[50] *American Architect and Building News, vol. 22*, (July 30, 1887), 45.

[51] Lee, *Architects to the Nation,* 7.

government architecture in the United States."[52] The workload and commissions in the Office of the Supervising Architect were severely reduced in 1858 in anticipation of the Civil War, which began in 1861.[53] However, at the height of the Civil War, in 1863, the Office of the Supervising Architect commissioned one of the most expensive firms in the United States, Pottier & Stymus, to create the Treasury suite. Lee suggests the expenditure of money for the Treasury furnishings, a symbol of authority, was warranted because the architecture, "attested to a confidence in the stability of the young nation and its government institutions."[54]

Isaiah Rogers

Isaiah Rogers was the Supervising Architect, and consequently the official supervisor of the Treasury suite commission. In July 1862, Secretary Salmon Chase, who was in office during the Treasury suite commission and its completion, appointed Isaiah Rogers, of Isaiah Rogers, Son & Co., a Cincinnati architectural firm, to the position of engineer in charge of the Bureau of Construction.[55] The title evolved to Supervising Architect of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department in 1863, and Rogers retained that position until his departure in 1865. As the budget for government offices was cut, from 1862 to 1864, to aid the war effort he primarily oversaw construction of the west wing of the current Treasury Department, where Andrew Johnson's temporary office in the Treasury suite was located.[56]

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[52] Ibid., 10.
[53] Ibid., 47.
[54] Ibid., 17.
[55] Ibid., 66; Lincoln appointed Chase as Secretary of the Treasury on March 7, 1861 and later to the Supreme Court in 1864. Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 65.
[56] Ibid., 33.

Alfred Mullett

Alfred Mullett was the Assistant Supervising Architect and contributed to the Treasury suite commission. Mullett (1834-1890) worked at Isaiah Rogers, Son & Co. from 1856 until he became partner there in 1859 or 1860. He entered the Treasury Department in 1861 as clerk for the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury. In 1863, Mullett became a clerk in the Bureau of Construction under the supervision of Rogers, and later that year became Assistant Supervising Architect.[57] He was insubordinate and continually bypassed Rogers to contact Secretary Chase directly. He, himself, later served as Supervising Architect of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department between June 1, 1866 and 1874.[58] He supervised construction of the north wing of the Treasury Department from 1866 to 1869.[59]

Design principles

Documents filed in the Congressional Court of Claims report revealed that the "Committee on Appropriations put the Treasury in charge of all the furniture and fitting and repairs in the entire buildings under [Mullett's] charge."[60] Mullett was ordered to furnish buildings as well as to design and build them. Mullett's philosophy on furniture was to use it to smarten up government buildings. He wanted to maintain the high quality of furniture in the government buildings. To further his goal, in his 1870 Annual Report he, "urge[d] the importance of more liberal appropriations for furniture."[61]

Mullett encouraged the cultivation of art and believed government designed

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[57] Ibid., 69.
[58] Ibid., 73.
[59] Ibid., 33.
[60] Mullett brought a lawsuit in 1888 to recover fees he claimed the government owed him for working in excess of his capacity as Supervising Architect during the Civil War. Mullett was not successful in his suit against the United States. Court of Claims, Congressional, No. 88, "Alfred B. Mullett v. The United States," May 24, 1888.
[61] Annual Report of the Supervising Architect, 1870, Ossman, *Reconstructing a National Image*, 10.

buildings, and by extension their designed furniture, should be a vehicle for teaching citizens good taste, and be "in accordance with the principles of architecture."[62] Mullett thought that the integrity and quality of the designs directly correlated to the dignity and stability of the nation. Accordingly, he never "attempted to obtain a reputation for economy at the expense of the design or the quality of the work."[63] Ossman in *Reconstructing a National Image: The State, War and Navy Building and the Politics of Federal Design, 1866-1890*, said that, "Mullett appealed to the patriotic desire for government buildings, as physical representations of federal authority."[64] Mullett's efforts to unify architectural design also bled over to the furniture designs he supervised, and that resulted in a cohesive statement of political unity and strength in the Treasury suite.

Rogers, Mullett and Pottier & Stymus

Political wrangling ensued as Mullett tried to oust Rogers from his position, which led to hostility between the architects. Secretary Chase sent correspondence and criticism directly to Mullett. On February 1, 1864, Secretary Chase bypassed Rogers and wrote directly to Mullett of his displeasure in the elaborateness of the rooms in his office stating his:

> decided disapprobation of the expense [Mullett had] incurred in finishing them; they are in [Chase's] opinion entirely too ornate for a Public Office, and a violation of the Republican simplicity I desire to observe in finishing and furnishing this Building. [Mullett] will therefore make the necessary changes.[65]

Rogers, in a November 1864 letter to William Fessenden, who had by then replaced

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[62] Annual Report of the Supervising Architect, 1866, 189. Ossman, *Reconstructing a National Image*, 87.

[63] Annual Report of the Supervising Architect, 1867, Ossman, *Reconstructing a National Image*, 6.

[64] Ibid.

[65] S.M. Chase, Secretary of the United States Treasury, to A.B. Mullett, February 1, 1864, Letters Received, 1843-1910, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Chase as Secretary of the Treasury, complained that, "Mr. Mullett has been greatly incensed at me and has been treating me in such a manner that both of us cannot be retained in the positions we now occupy."[66] Secretary Fessenden replaced Secretary Chase in 1864 and served as Secretary of the Treasury until Lincoln appointed Hugh McCulloch Secretary of the Treasury in March 1865.[67] It was Secretary McCulloch who offered the reception room to President Johnson.

Recommendations from the Office of the Supervising Architect and Secretary Chase demonstrated Rogers, Mullett, and Chase's level of personal involvement and influence on the suite. On October 16, 1863, Isaiah Rogers, "enclosed . . . drawings of the Secretary's rooms," in a letter to Pottier & Stymus.[68] Later on December 3, 1863, Mullett wrote to Pottier & Stymus, "concerning a plan of the Secretary's Reception Room," thus confirming he was intimately involved with the proceedings.[69] In February 8, 1864, Mullett demonstrated Pottier & Stymus's level of influence on the actual furniture designs writing that he had, "adopted [Pottier& Stymus's] suggestion of making the Furniture of Mahogany relieved by Black Walnut."[70]

Mullett's star status and political machinations of circumventing Rogers' authority have complicated the issue of who was responsible for the actual design of the furniture in the Treasury suite. In a letter from Mullett to Rogers, however, Mullett, "enclose[d] . . . a design for the mantle for the Secretary's room which [Mullett] hope[ed] w[ould]

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[66] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 71.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Isaiah Rogers, Supervising Architect, to Pottier & Stymus, October 16, 1863, Letters of the Supervising Architect, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
[69] A.B. Mullett, Office of the Supervising Architect, to Pottier & Stymus, December 3, 1863, Letters of the Supervising Architect, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
[70] A.B. Mullett, Office of the Supervising Architect, to Pottier & Stymus, February 8, 1864, Letters of the Supervising Architect, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

meet [Rogers's] approval," showing that Rogers did have the final say on the designs.[71] Mullett concluded his letter with a thinly-veiled, impudent demand that highlighted the turmoil of the office during Mullett's Machiavellian takeover suggesting, "had you not better make arrangements for it at once?"[72] While the exact contribution of Rogers and Mullett is unknown, Rogers was the Supervising Architect and, as Lee explains, "the supervising architect was most often the only name publicly identified with federal . . . projects."[73]

Mullett's political savvy assisted him in his meteoric rise in the Office of the Supervising Architect. While letters to venders substantiate his contributions to the design of the Treasury suite, his trip to Cincinnati, St. Louis, Dubuque, Chicago, and Indianapolis in 1863 to inspect federal buildings and his subsequent supervision of construction at the Cincinnati Custom House in the spring of 1864, necessarily limited the influence he had on the designs.[74] Secretary Chase remarked upon Mullett's, "absence," when Chase, "visited the rooms in the West Wing, which [Mullett was] preparing for [Chase's] use."[75] Mullett informed Chase in a letter on March 31, 1864, that, "the new rooms prepared for the accommodation of [Chase's] Office are now entirely completed."[76] Mullett signed the letter as "The Acting Supervising Architect," a practice seen in his letters as early as February 25, 1864, to Pottier & Stymus even though

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[71] A.B. Mullett, Office of the Supervising Architect, to Isaiah Rogers Esq., June 11, 1863, Letters of the Supervising Architect, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 8.

[74] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 69.

[75] Salmon Chase, Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, to A.B. Mullett, February 1, 1864, Letters Received, 1843-1910, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[76] Alfred Mullett, Office of the Supervising Architect, to Secretary Chase, March 31, 1864, Letters of the Supervising Architect, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

Rogers was still the Official Supervising Architect at that time.[77] Rogers finally ceded defeat to Mullett's machinations on September 20, 1865, stating in a letter to Secretary McCulloch that due to, "circumstances of peculiar embarrassment beyond my control and preventing that usefulness as an architect to which I have always aspired during my long career of professional life, have rendered my further continuance in the Office impossible."[78]

Joseph Goldsborough Bruff

Given the prominence of the Treasury suite and the large design force in the Office of the Supervising Architects office, it is likely that a large number of players worked on this commission. In addition to Pottier & Stymus, Rogers, and Mullett, Joseph Goldsborough Bruff (1804-1889), a designer at the Treasury Department also influenced the furniture in the Treasury suite.

Bruff was born in Washington, D.C., in 1804. He attended West Point for one year and then worked as a topographical engineer at the Gosport Naval Yard in Norfolk, Virginia, from 1827 until 1836. He recorded his journey to California on an unsuccessful mining expedition from 1849 to 1851 by creating personal sketches that he later used as a design source for his work.[79] His "American" images of the West were incorporated into some of the details of the Treasury building such as the light fixtures seen in *Plate 57* from the National Park Service's *Gaslighting in America: A Guide for Historic Preservation* (see fig. 5).[80] In 1859, Bruff integrated Native Americans, buffalo,

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[77] Alfred Mullett, Office of the Supervising Architect, to Pottier & Stymus, February 25, 1864, Letters of the Supervising Architect, Record Group 121, U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[78] Isaiah Rogers, Office of the Supervising Architect, to Secretary McCulloch, September 20, 1865, Letters Sent, Chiefly by the Supervising Architect. Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 72.

[79] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 48; Denys Peter Myers, *Gaslighting in America: A Guide for Historic Preservation* (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1978), 121.

[80] Myers, *Gaslighting in America*, Plate 57.

neoclassical elements like anthemia, and the American eagle encircled with a ring of stars into the chandelier in the Treasury Department as seen in *Plate 57*. He joined the Office of the Supervising Architect 1853 as a, "draftsman and artist," where he was responsible for numerous designs.[81] In 1859, Bruff's title was changed from Ornamental Draughtsman to Designing Artist.[82]

Bruff was a likely source of artistic inspiration and could have designed or influenced the symbols on the furniture as he worked under Mullett and designed other emblems for architecture and furnishings such as the bronze railing in the Treasury Department Cash Room.[83] In 1860, Bruff designed the shield on the Treasury Department's exterior gates at 15th Street and an eagle on the principle gates at the Treasury Department. One of his 1860 elevation drawings for the North Wing of the Treasury building, which was not used, featured a large eagle and stars in the pediment.[84] Most importantly, Bruff designed the Secretary's fireplace mantel for the Treasury suite, which featured an amalgamation of emblems from the various government offices.

Conclusion

The confluence of the talents of the Supervising Office of the Architect and Pottier & Stymus created the Treasury suite, which was a patriotic statement. By working together they were able to create more than a mere office. Rogers, Mullett, Bruff, and Pottier & Stymus created a cohesive work that sent a subliminal message of

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[81] Lee, *Architects to the Nation,* 48.

[81] Lee, *Architects to the Nation,* 48.

[82] Bruff exhibited at Washington Art Association in 1869. Francis Pessolano-Filos, *The Venus Numismatics Dictionary of Artists, Designers, Modellers, Engravers, and Die-Sinkers Whose Works Were Commissioned by or Struck by The United States Mint 1792- 1977* (New York: Eros Publishing Co.,1983), 19.

[83] Myers, *Gaslighting in America*, 121.

power and unity to the public.

Ironically, while Secretary Chase demonstrated his desire for a suite more in keeping with the "Republican spirit," the Pottier & Stymus commission in the Treasury suite was an expensive, patriotic statement designed to impress visitors and demonstrate the power of the office. Following the Civil War, the majority of American citizens would not have been able to afford such furniture much less the entire room. Also, the Treasury suite was not originally intended to bolster the political strength of President Johnson at a pivotal point in the nation, but to serve as an office for the Secretary of the Treasury. The Treasury suite would have originally only been seen by other government officials and businessmen—not the public who had paid for it—except for the tragic assassination of President Lincoln.

Chapter 3: Pottier & Stymus and the Renaissance Revival Style Furniture

Introduction

Following the Civil War, America underwent a rebirth of its ideas and structure and drew strength and stability from visual affiliations with strong past governments like Rome and Greece. Americans idealized and emulated the democratic principles of these countries' political system. Political leaders appropriated these affiliations from antiquity and "American" images to bolster their political power. At a time of crisis within the United States these past affiliations with the definitive "model" governments sustained the public's convictions and righteousness. Benjamin Silliman Jr. and Charles Rush Goodrich observed in their published wood engravings of the *1853 New York Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations* that:

> The wealth, manners, the refinement, all that relates to the social condition of a people, may be deduced from the history of their furniture. The conditions in such a history, and the mutations of furniture are as important to be known as the changes of government.[84]

The Treasury suite furniture reinforced the United States democratic ideals. Renaissance Revival forms in the Treasury suite recalled the ancient world's illustrious past through the incorporation of Greek and Roman architectural and decorative elements on the furniture. The classical style of the Treasury furniture emphasized the endurance of the United States government though its historical ties to the republics of Greece and Rome. Furthermore, the neoclassical federal style was fashionable during the foundation of the government of the United States thereby further associating the Union with Rome's and Greece's history and democracy, which was demonstrated in Neo Grec elements,

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[84] B. Silliman, Jr., and C. R. Goodrich, Esq., *The World of Science, Art, and Industry Illustrated from Examples in the New York Exposition* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Co., 1854), U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

such as the shields and gilt incising, in the Renaissance Revival furniture in the Treasury Department. This evolutionary timeline of classical forms associated the furniture with a visually enduring government in the public's perception. The Union's political leaders in the early 1860s were visually affiliated with early American leaders such as George Washington.

Architecture's Relation to Furniture

In comparison to other elaborate high end furniture, the furniture forms in the Treasury suite have modest architectural carved details that frame and highlight the patriotic motifs. Both Rogers' and Mullett's primary vocation and training were in architecture and their architectural design background was highly influential in furniture designs originating from the Office of the Supervising Architect. The Treasury suite furniture was an extension of the architecture of the Treasury suite and consequently reflected the tone and architectural solemnity of the Treasury Department building. *Loudon's Encyclopedia*, published in 1833, indicated that it was, "most appropriat[e]" to furnish buildings in the same style in which the structures were built.[85] Thus, it was proper that the Treasury furniture suite, which was in the Renaissance Revival style, and the United States Treasury building both looked to antiquity even though the United States Treasury building had been constructed in 1839 prior to the Treasury suite furniture.

The Treasury building was a white, classical structure complete with columns and pediment (see fig. 7) that recalled the idealized forms of the temples of ancient Rome, such as the temple at Nîmes in France (see fig. 6). The Treasury Department building's

[85] American Life Foundation Study Institute, *Furniture for the Victorian Home: Comprising the Abridged Furniture Sections from A.J. Downing's Country Houses of 1850 and J.C. Loudon's Encyclopedia of 1833* (Watkins Glen, NY: American Life Foundation Study Institute, 1978., c.1968), 43.

stereotypical ancient Roman temple facade was historically inaccurate. Ancient Roman temples were painted brightly. Ironically, while the furniture suite was intended to reflect Republican simplicity and the starkness of the white ancient shrines, the actual Roman temples were colorfully ornamented with scenes reminiscent of the more elaborate high style furniture forms of the Victorian period. Robert Mills, the architect of the Treasury building, believed that, "the character of a nation is judged by the character of its public buildings."[86] This building with its furniture was a "temple" that inspired the public to have faith in the government just as the ancient temples encouraged belief in the gods. Lee agreed that, "the design of federal buildings," and by extension the furniture designed under the auspices of those architects, "represented democratic ideals, reflecting a growing sense of national identity."[87]

The Reception room in the Treasury, a patriotic shrine to nationalism, was replete with neoclassical motifs including pilasters along the wall topped with elaborate Corinthian capitals that invoked the powers of the illustrious republics of Rome and Greece. The molding that framed the walls and ceiling furthered this imagery by outlining the room in a row of anthemia. The anthemia, pilasters, fluting, and Corinthian capitals on the walls also adorned the furniture, as both the Treasury architecture and furniture drew on classical inspiration. The pilasters in the room directly corresponded to the vertical supports on the bookcase in the Reception room. Also, the fluting of the columns was repeated on the front legs of the sofa and chairs. This confluence of classical elements connected the architecture and furniture in the Treasury suite in a harmonious display of classicism.

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[86] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 33.
[87] Ibid., 7.

Furniture in the Treasury Suite Reception Room

Pottier & Stymus's contribution to the Secretary of the Treasury's suite is detailed in the, "Estimate of Furniture, Curtains, Carpets, Pier Mirrors & Cornices for the new rooms in the U.S. Treasury Building Washington, D.C. for the Hon. S.P. Chase (Accompanied by a floorplan)" of September 29, 1863, and extensive correspondence between Pottier & Stymus, Rogers, Mullett, and Chase.[88] Pottier & Stymus furnished three rooms for the Secretary of the Treasury's office suite. The Reception Room or "Drab and Green Room" was one of the three rooms and was Andrew Johnson's temporary office.[89] A bill from Pottier & Stymus to the Bureau of Construction on March 10, 1864, listed the furnishings of the Reception room in the Treasury suite as:

Drab and Green Room

"1 Walnut Medium Book Case Best Plate Glass		$300
1 " " Revolving desk chair in Drab reps		$28
2 " " Stuff back arm " " " "		$64
5 " " " " " " " " " "	@19	$95
1 " " " " Sofa " " " "		$90
1 " " [& Gilt] Pier Frame in two parts		$320
1 " " " " " Pedestal		$45"[90]
"1 Walnut library table with Cloth top Mr. C Reception Room		$85"[91]

In a letter to Pottier & Stymus on February 8, 1865, Mullett indicated that he

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[88] Pottier & Stymus, "Estimate of Furniture, Curtains, Carpets, Pier Mirrors & Cornices for the New Rooms in the U.S. Treasury Building Washington, D.C. for the Hon. S.P. Chase, September 29, 1863," U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

[89] The Treasury suite has been restored. After Michael Holloway, Preservation Specialist at the United States Department of the Treasury, "Realize[ing] that locating Pottier & Stymus pieces similar or identical to what was originally ordered [was] almost impossible," a, "search for 19th century pieces that might appropriately be used in the restored rooms," ensued. They did "use original pieces from the Treasury collection, supplementing them with new acquisitions." However the majority of the furniture is not original to the room. The sofa from Johnson's Treasury office is still in the collection at the United States Treasury Department. While not all of the furniture in the room survives, the published drawings and contemporary accounts provide comprehensive knowledge of the room and its influence. As this study encompasses the room in 1865 during Johnson's stay in the Treasury Department, the current room arrangement will not be used. Rather contemporary prints and the original furnishings will be analyzed to give an accurate portrayal. Michael Holloway, Preservation Specialist, Letter Mass Mailed. August 30, 1989, U.S. Treasury Department Archives, Washington, D.C.

[90] Pottier & Stymus, "Bill to Bureau of Construction of the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., March 10, 1864," U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

[91] Ibid.

wanted the furniture made of mahogany relieved by black walnut. As the bill lists the furniture as walnut with a mahogany finish there must have been a compromise as walnut was cheaper. At the same time it was a popular wood in the Renaissance Revival style since the predominant sixteenth-century material for French furniture that served as a design source for the Renaissance Revival was walnut.[92]

Renaissance Revival

The Renaissance Revival was one of the many historical interpretations that emerged during the Victorian period in the nineteenth century. The Victorian period was named for Queen Victoria of England who ruled Great Britain from 1837 until 1901.[93] London's 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition, the 1853 New York Exhibition, the 1855 Paris Exposition, and the 1862 London Exhibition all popularized the Renaissance Revival style.[94] Ulysses Dietz, curator of decorative arts at the Newark Museum, commented that this more intellectual style was more appropriate to serious rooms, such as the Treasury suite, than the flamboyant Rococo style, which was also used at the time of the Treasury commission.[95]

Noel Riley, author of *The Elements of Design*, said that the Renaissance Revival style had, "its roots in architecture and sculpture."[96] Characteristic features included broken pediments, gilt and ebonized surfaces, applied cartouches, geometric backs with astragal shaped crests on the sofas, turned and fluted legs, and incised lines.[97] The *Furniture for the Victorian Home* stated that, "the unbroken horizontal cornice, and the

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[92] Oscar Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture* (Radnor, PA: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1995), 229.
[93] Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture,* 209.
[94] Noel Riley, *The Elements of Design* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 222.
[95] Ulysses G. Dietz, *Century of Revivals: Nineteenth-Century American Furniture from the Collection of the Newark Museum* (Newark, NJ: The Newark Museum Association, 1983), 20.
[96] Riley, *The Elements of Design,* 218.
[97] Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture,* 229.

prevalence of straight lines, with a few bold classical mouldings, are what chiefly mark the style here."[98]

Oscar Fitzgerald remarked in his book, *Four Centuries of American Furniture,* that there were three influences on the Renaissance Revival. The furniture in the Treasury suite is an amalgamation of all three influences. The first influence on the Renaissance Revival style was sixteenth-century French furniture, as evidenced by the incorporation of Baroque ornamentation, including the flattened arches and scrolling *rinceaux*, which is seen on the bookcase in the Treasury suite. The second phase was influenced by the Louis XVI style, which is seen in the linear, simple furniture forms in the Treasury suite.[99] Empress Eugenie of France, a trendsetter, was fascinated with Marie Antoinette, started collecting her predecessor's possessions, and reintroduced a version of the Louis XVI style into fashion as the public followed her stylistic choices. The second phase of the Renaissance Revival was influenced by the Louis XVI style, which had originally been inspired by antiquity as Herculaneum and Pompeii were excavated during this period. The resulting reinterpretations of Louis XVI furniture started a vogue across Europe and America.[100] The second phase, which reinterpreted the Louis XVI style, and the third phase, the Neo Grec style had similarities. Furniture in the Neo Grec style was influenced by Greek, Roman and Egyptian forms and motifs. In the illustration, "The First Cabinet Meeting under the Administration of Andrew Johnson," in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (see fig.1), the Neo Grec stand features a carved urn mounted above the pedestal. The classical pedestal to the left of Johnson was a popular furniture form in "serious" spaces such as libraries and offices and

[98] American Life Foundation Study Institute, *Furniture for the Victorian Home,* 15.
[99] Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture,* 229-230.
[100] Ibid.

is a practical place to put a bust or some other object. Pedestals are also a typical symbol of political power from antiquity further highlighting the pedestal's classical associations. The shields ornamenting the furniture in the Treasury suite are classically-inspired Neo Grec motifs. The sofa in the Treasury department had gilt incising, another characteristic of Neo Grec furniture.[101] The gilt incising foreshadows the carved, angular lines of the Eastlake style.[102] As quoted in *Furniture for the Victorian Home,* "this style is almost too familiar to the eyes of our readers to need any explanation."[103] The furniture in this Treasury department office exhibits all three influences.

Furniture manuals advised their clientele on the furnishing of their space. Etiquette and symbolism, of paramount importance to the Victorians, played a role in the decisions of what furniture to use in what Fitzgerald noted was an, "era of specialization."[104] In analyzing contemporary furnishing guides and images, the office furniture in the Treasury suite is similar in style and form to the simpler Renaissance Revival furniture in libraries. Thus, the Treasury suite and libraries can be considered corresponding public and domestic spaces as both were rooms where intellectual and business activities took place.

Government Office

Renaissance Revival furniture was appropriate in the Treasury suite since it was symmetrically balanced as well as heavy and somber like the architecture that housed it. Lee commented that the architecture, and consequently the furniture, psychologically served, "as symbols of strength and stability," and, "inspired confidence in the federal

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[101] The sofa in the Virginia Museum's collection was ornamented with fire gilt mounts and brass stringing outlining.
[102] Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture,* 231.
[103] American Life Foundation Study Institute, *Furniture for the Victorian Home,* 15.
[104] Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture,* 210.

government."[105] *Furniture for the Victorian Home* concluded that this style, "addresses itself . . . to the reason or judgment."[106] Thus, the Treasury suite furniture conveyed a message of stability and strength of the United States government to those who viewed the suite. Lee further said that since, "architecture is a highly visible manifestation of American material culture, federal government buildings embody social proclivities at particular periods in a society's history."[107] These visually and physically solid furniture forms, a small scale version of architecture, psychologically stabilized and comforted the nation in a state of unrest. Lee believed that, "the appearance of federal buildings also mirrored the emotional needs of a society for unifying symbols that reflected authority and stability."[108] The furniture served as an extension of the architecture; both were designed during the same time period, in the same style, and therefore coexisted as a single statement of power. In her dissertation, *Reconstructing a National Image: The State, War and Navy Building and the Politics of Federal design, 1866-1890*, Jennifer Ossman wrote that, "'True principles' of design, expressed in permanent materials, would more aptly represent the Republicans' desired stability and perceived re-establishment of the 'true principles' of representative democracy in the post-Civil War America."[109]

Renaissance Revival furniture lent itself to displaying emblems as the blank reserves, which simulated cameos, provided a frame for polychrome plaques, metal reliefs, inlay and carving as shown in Treasury suite furniture. The symbolic ornamentation also invoked the power and longevity of Greece and Rome, the most illustrious, and romanticized governments in history. The Treasury suite also

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[105] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 12.
[106] American Life Foundation Study Institute, *Furniture for the Victorian Home*, 16.
[107] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 9.
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ossman, *Reconstructing a National Image*, 88.

incorporated eagles, flags, and shields in its decoration, which were common Union symbols at this time. National symbols, like the American eagle, were used on a variety of forms including the marble mantle in the Treasury suite. An ornately carved sofa with eagle heads carved on the front of the arm rests by David Gibson and Charles Seltman in 1860 was made for the South Wing of the Treasury.[110] The furniture in the Treasury suite was a monument to nationalism.

A popular print showing the furniture in the Reception room of the Treasury suite appeared in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* on April 20, 1865, entitled "The First Reception of Ambassadors by President Andrew Johnson, at His Rooms in the Treasury Building Reception" (see fig. 2).[111] From left to right in the print is a sofa, which is still in the Treasury collection, a chair, a low horizontal cabinet, a revolving desk chair, a desk, a mirror framed between two large windows, and finally the large bookcase on the far right wall surmounted with carved *rinceaux* that framed the Treasury shield.[112]

In *Leslie's* illustration, the Reception room and the furniture therein was replete with symbolism. In the center of the image is a classical column wrapped with mourning ribbon. President Johnson stands to the right of the column gesturing to both it and the ambassadors, thus acknowledging both the past and the future. While the column, a

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[110] Catalogue Data, F. 1984.061.01, Walnut with leather upholstery, H 36" x D 24.5", The United States to Charles Seltman, 1859; Abstract of Disbursements by S.M. Clark, November 1861, U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

[111] "The First Reception of Ambassadors by Andrew Johnson, at His Rooms in the Treasury Building Reception," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,* January 6, 1866.

[112] The bill from Pottier & Stymus indicated there was a walnut and gilded pier mirror in the reception room. However, it is worth noting that neither of the *Leslie's* prints fully shows this mirror as it was located in the very back of the room behind a column. There was a mirror in Treasury suite as noted in the bill, but it is not visible in the prints. Because the furniture in the Treasury suite was used every day in the course of working and was seen more as functional objects than art, much of the furniture did not survive and has been supplanted with other furniture. Many pier mirrors are in the Treasury Department; records for the frequent movement of furniture were not maintained; and the furniture forms are not marked in any way. Since there is no visual depiction of the mirror from 1865 or the surrounding period it will not be included in this analysis as the mirror would be a study in of itself.

memorial to Lincoln, is the center of the image, the two gatherings of men who are waiting to meet Johnson form diagonal perspective lines, both of which funnel the viewer's eye directly to Johnson. The mourning swags attached to the corner pilasters, forming additional diagonal perspectives, terminate at the central chandelier that creates a virtual arrow directing further attention to Johnson.

The furniture in the Reception room surrounded Johnson, sending a statement of power and unity to the public, thus bolstering his Presidency and the United States at this time of crisis. The sofa against the left wall of the office with a prominent "US," for United States, in a shield in its crest is the first thing one sees. The diagonal perspectives form imaginary lines that draw the public's eye from the sofa to Johnson whose strength is emphasized by the enduring, solid column behind him. The Treasury shield in the pediment of the bookcase is situated along the diagonal line of the mourning swag that leads to Johnson. The "US" shield and the Treasury shield flank Johnson in a diagonal line that traverses from the front left side of the room, past Johnson, to the right back side of the room. These diagonal perspectives formed an axis of nationalism that bolstered the power of Johnson's presidency by visually and psychologically aligning the emblem of the United States, Johnson, and the Treasury Department in a cohesive patriotic statement. The "US" shield on the sofa, the column, Johnson, and the ambassadors form a pyramidal composition that draws the public's attention to Johnson and gives an impression of stability. While the mourning swags acknowledge the death of Lincoln, the classical furniture reinforces Johnson's position as President and demonstrates the solidity of the government.

Pottier & Stymus were renowned furniture makers in the nineteenth century who

were noted for their high style, ornamented furniture. Their competition included other New York firms including the Herter Brothers, Alexander Roux, Leon Marcotte and Kimbel & Cabus. In comparison to other American furniture by Pottier & Stymus's competitors, the furniture in the Treasury suite is markedly plain, simple in form and relatively unadorned. Indeed, even in comparison to other furniture of Pottier & Stymus, the furniture in the Treasury suite is stark, lacking the variety of materials and abundance of inlay and carving that was a trademark of this high end furniture maker. Comparisons between the Treasury suite furniture and the furniture available to the general public illustrate the marked simplicity of the Treasury suite furniture.

Sofa

In comparison to other sofas of the period, the Treasury suite sofa was plain and simple. The six-foot sofa, which was in the Treasury suite during Johnson's occupancy, is walnut with a mahogany finish (see fig. 8).[113] It was made in 1864, following the commission of the Treasury suite in 1863, and is probably the, "1 walnut Stuff back Sofa," for, "$90" referenced in the bill from Pottier & Stymus on March 10, 1864.[114] Reilly illustrated in his book, *Elements of Style,* a sofa (see fig. 9) that is similar in form to the Treasury suite sofa.[115] The sofa in the Treasury suite was also similar in form to a sofa now in the Virginia Museum of Art, (see fig. 10) and both were influenced by Louis XVI style.[116] Reilly's book, *Elements of Style*, and Fitzgerald's book, *Four Centuries of Furniture,* illustrated the typical furniture forms of the period providing a standard upon

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[113] F. 984.62. Dimensions forty-three inches high and seventy-three inches long. Registrar's Files, U.S. Treasury Department, Washington, D.C.

[114] Pottier & Stymus, "Bill to Bureau of Construction of the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., March 10, 1864," U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

[115] Reilly, *The Elements of Design,* 219.

[116] Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture,* 230.

which to compare the Treasury suite sofa.

Either end of the crest of the three sofas features bulbous ears, a common characteristic of Renaissance Revival style. The ears on the Treasury suite sofa appear plain in comparison to the other two sofas. The ears in the Treasury suite are flattened semicircles while the ears on the sofa in the Virginia Museum form elegant acorn-shaped finials, and the ears on the sofa in Reilly's book terminates in pyramids. The ears on the Treasury suite sofa are much simpler than the typical Renaissance Revival style sofa ears of the period typified by the Virginia Museum's and Reilly's sofas.

In both the sofa in the Treasury suite and the sofa in Reilly's book there is similar ornamentation in positions such as the intersections of legs, arms, and back and the corresponding crest rail and pendent on the skirt of the sofa. However, the carved ornamentation is more elaborate and pronounced on the Reilly sofa than the sofa in the Treasury suite, particularly at the crest of the sofa. The crest rail of the sofa in the Treasury suite is flat except for the arched crest that holds the "US" shield. The middle of the Reilly's sofa and the Treasury sofa's skirt has a scalloped drop, a common characteristic of the Renaissance Revival style that features a carved, ebonized pyramid. The Virginia Museum sofa had refined, metal roundels at the intersections of the back frame of the sofa creating a more elegant, high end and consequently expensive statement than the individualized Treasury sofa. The ornamentation at the intersections of the sofas is grander on the Virginia Museum sofa than the Treasury suite sofa. The metal roundels on the sofa also required additional effort, other craftsmen, and probably additional expense, which the plain, but expensive Treasury sofa does not feature. In addition, the metal roundels on the Virginia Museum sofa, while simple in design, would have

attracted greater attention as they contrast in color to the dark wood frame of the sofa, and they reflect the light. As the Treasury department sofa does not have this metal element, the sofa blends more with the rest of the Treasury suite becoming a cohesive statement instead of reading as individual pieces of furniture. The overarching patriotic message was more important than each individual piece of furniture.

The Virginia Museum sofa and the Treasury suite sofa both featured ebonized surfaces, though the sofa in the Treasury suite only had ebonized reserves on the front and sides of the sofa that followed the frame's contour. Incised, gilded lines frame these reserves. While the furniture forms of the firm of Pottier & Stymus were prohibitively expensive, the furniture in the Treasury suite was uncommonly sparse. Inlay and metal mounts would have been more expected for the Treasury pieces than ebonized painting and incised gilding.

In comparison to other furniture of the period, the Pottier & Stymus furniture was expensive. George J. Henkels' *City Warehouse, Catalogue of Furniture In Every Style Comprising Louis XIV, Louis XV, Elizabethan, and Antique With Sculpture Carving and Modern Style In Rosewood, Walnut, Mahogany, Satinwood & Maple,* a price book of furniture from 1850, illustrates the average price of furniture around the time of the Treasury suite commission, only fourteen years after Henkel published his book. The walnut Renaissance Revival furniture listed in Henkel's book was much less expensive than the Pottier & Stymus furniture listed in the Treasury Department's bill. For example, in Henkel's price book "sofas, hair cloth covering, spring seat, handsomely tufted," were twenty-five to forty-eight dollars a piece while Pottier & Stymus's sofa cost

ninety dollars.[117] The comparison between Henkel's price list of typical nineteenth century furniture that was available to the public and Pottier & Stymus's bill to the Treasury Department demonstrates that the furniture in the Secretary of the Treasury's suite was unusually expensive even though it was very simple.

Chair

One day after Lincoln's assassination, President Johnson was presented to the world surrounded by his cabinet members and the furniture in the patriotic Treasury suite. *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, showed the interior of Johnson's temporary office on April 16, 1865, in "The First Cabinet Meeting under the Administration of Andrew Johnson, at the Treasury Building."[118] (see fig. 1) This print illustrates a smaller portion of the room than the one with the ambassadors several days later. Leslie's print illustrates the psychological message of the furniture to bolster the power of the United States government in a time of crisis. Johnson was immortalized and framed by a large solid Renaissance Revival chair, probably one of the "walnut Stuff back armchairs" listed in the Pottier & Stymus bill that was equivalent to a democratic throne.[119] Johnson's head is superimposed over the American shield at the crest of this somber, solid form emphasizing the dignity of the office and proclaiming Johnson and his decisions, as the embodiment of America. The entire chair symbolizes the power and authority of the American government that was vested in Johnson. The chair was placed in front of a

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[117] Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *Three Centuries of American Furniture: An Illustrated Survey of Furniture from Colonial Times to the Present Day* (New York: Gramercy Publishing Co., 1982), 300.

[118] Special Agent Albert Berghaur was the artist. "The First Reception of Ambassadors by Andrew Johnson, at His Rooms in the Treasury Building Reception," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper,* January 6, 1866.

[119] The Pottier & Stymus Walnut Stuffed Arm chairs cost sixty-four dollars while Henkels listed their plain style armchair at forty-five dollars. Pottier & Stymus, "Bill to Bureau of Construction of the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., March 10, 1864," U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.; Fitzgerald, *Three Centuries of American Furniture,* 300.

classical column swathed in black mourning ribbon. Another chair of similar form, but considerably smaller, is in the foreground of the picture. The back is to the public as one of the cabinet members stands to illustrate his point. The similar forms of all the chairs represent the cohesion of the cabinet, and by association the United States, as the cabinet members represent the different branches of the government. The smaller proportions of their chairs give prominence to President Johnson thus emphasizing his importance and stature. Johnson is seated in an armchair, which is more expensive, and usually afforded to the honored guest or most powerful person. The other chairs are without arms. His chair also shows the only American symbol in this print despite the proliferation of shields that actually were in the room. The American shield behind Johnson's head reinforced the power of the Presidency during the public transition of authority from Lincoln to Johnson.

A comparison of the Treasury suite's Pottier & Stymus chair to other contemporary chairs illustrates the starkness of the Treasury Department chair. The best of Herter furniture, such as the Renaissance Revival style armchair made for the Ruggles S. Morse residence in 1860 (see fig. 11), and the Treasury chair in which President Andrew Johnson sits is similar in form.[120] However, as with the rest of the furniture in the Treasury suite, the chair is less elaborate than the Herter Brother chair. Where the Herter Brothers chair's upholstery elegantly follows the arched crest rail before flattening into ears on either side, the Treasury suite chair's flat crest rail merely has a semicircle upon which an American shield is centered crowning the chair. Compared to the Herter Brothers chair, the chair in the Treasury suite seems almost primitive with a rectangular back and no discernable molding or carving save the described shield and pyramidal

[120] Howe, *Herter Brothers,* 130.

devices directly below the demilunes, at the intersection of the crest rail and side rails. These pyramidal devices are echoed in the Herter Brothers chair between the double-columned side rails, ornate molding and elaborate bouquet of carved foliage. A comparison of these two similar forms, which were created by two high end furniture makers within five years of each other, reinforces the extreme simplicity of the forms in the Treasury suite. However, the sparseness of the forms in the Treasury suite was a conscious decision. While the Treasury suite chair was plain it was still expensive in comparison to other chairs of the same period. For example, Henkels listed "Library chairs, stuffed backs," for ten dollars while the Treasury suite's Pottier & Stymus chair was thirty-two dollars.[121] The Supervising Architects office either could have chosen less expensive alternatives to furnish the Treasury suite and had the Treasury Cabinet Shop make the furniture as they did for other offices or they could have bought cheaper, stock furniture.

Conclusion

Even though the Pottier & Stymus furniture in the Treasury suite was plainer than other contemporary furniture of Pottier & Stymus's caliber, the furniture in the Treasury suite was expensive. The Treasury suite sofa cost two to three times more that the sofa listed in Henkel's price book. Furthermore, the Treasury suite chair was more than three times the cost of the chair in Henkel's price book. Given Pottier & Stymus's capabilities and the expense and prestige of their furniture, it can be concluded that the Treasury suite furniture was specifically designed to reflect the "republican simplicity" that Secretary

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[121] Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *Three Centuries of American Furniture: An Illustrated Survey of Furniture from Colonial times to the Present Day* (New York: Gramercy Publishing Co., 1982), 301; Pottier & Stymus, "Bill to Bureau of Construction of the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., March 10, 1864," U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

Chase desired, even though the final result was still too ornate in Chase's opinion. The furniture in the Treasury suite featured common Renaissance Revival ornaments and forms, but the sparseness of the ornamentation and carving were uncommon in expensive furniture. Simple furniture, like the Treasury suite, was probably much more commonly available to the general public since it was not as expensive. However, the Treasury suite furniture was simple by conscious determination. The furniture was expensive because the Treasury Department chose a high profile firm, Pottier & Stymus, showing that there was a cost for simple elegance and good craftsmanship. The Office of the Supervising Architects, Pottier & Stymus, and the Secretary of the Treasury's conscious design decisions in the furniture reveal the message of the stability and power of the United States that they were trying to send to the public.

While Pottier & Stymus had the knowledge, resources, and skills to make some of the best furniture in the United States the government did not want to pay for fancier work. Furthermore, while the Pottier & Stymus commission was expensive, Chase deliberately wanted the furniture to appear plain to appeal to the Republican desire for simplicity and to avoid criticism from Congress. Even the Treasury suite, which was plain by the high style standards of Pottier & Stymus, was too extravagant for Chase. While Chase wanted a patriotic statement to bolster the power of the Secretary of the Treasury, he did not want the office to appear too elite, but rather wanted the office to appeal to the Republican ideals of equality. However, this simple statement required the effort of many people to compose a visual message to the public of unity and power of the Union. As such, it was a one-off, which generally was expensive as was the custom design of the ornamentation using the Treasury seal and the unofficial “US” shield. Even

their most expensive furniture often used stock ornament, but the patriotic ornament on the Treasury suite furniture probably had to be created from scratch. Thus, as Pottier & Stymus, designed the Treasury suite, in an effort that went beyond merely making the Treasury suite look good, this simple Republican office was expensive.

Chapter 4: Shields on the Furniture in Treasury Suite

Introduction

Following the American Revolution a search for a national identity ensued. One of the manifestations of this search was a proliferation of shields and other American symbols on government objects, furniture and military paraphernalia.[122] Holger Cahill, author of *Emblems of Unity and Freedom,* said that these American symbols, "express the ideals, the aspirations, and the unity of the young republic."[123] James A. Leith, author of *Symbols in the French Revolution,* stated that, "In order to win the support of the new order, revolutionaries usually engage in propaganda."[124] With the rending of American identity, as the Southern states sought to secede, the symbols served as an affirmation of power and unity. Cahill, suggested that, "In war patriotic emblems have a double significance. They serve as symbols of the nation's might and of the traditions and ideals for which it is fighting."[125]

The emblems and style of the furniture in Andrew Johnson's temporary office in the Treasury Department enveloped the occupants in the power of the American government. The shields were psychological tools to reinforce the power of the United States and sway the viewer to embrace the Union position. The furniture in the Treasury suite marries the Treasury Department shield with the unofficial United States (or "US") shield that featured thirteen vertical stripes below the "US" in the chief, the topmost

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[122] U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, "Designs for Democracy: 200 Years of Drawings from the National Archives," http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/designs_for_democracy/symbols_and_substance/symbols_and_substance.html. (accessed March 24, 2006).

[123] Holger Cahill, *Emblems of Unity and Freedom: The Index of American Design* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1942), ii.

[124] James A. Leith, *Symbols in the French Revolution. Symbols in Life and Art* (Canada: McGill-Queens University Press, 1987),106.

[125] Cahill, *Emblems of Unity and Freedom*, i.

vertical reserve in the shield (see fig. 12). Particularly in a time of crisis the furniture in the Treasury suite lent dignity and strength to the office.

Emblems on furniture in the Treasury Suite

In 1873, Mary Cleaver Ames observed in her book, *10 Years in Washington*, that the 1863 Treasury suite commission had, "furniture oiled black walnut, upholstered in blue cloth, each chair and sofa bearing "US" in a medallion on its back, while carved window cornices each hold in their centers the gilded Scales of Justice above the Key of the Treasury."[126] The two main symbols, on the furniture in the Treasury suite, were the official Treasury shield and the "US" shield. The "US" shield was an artistic amalgamation of the official Great Seal of the United States, the American flag and other symbols.[127] Leith observed that American shields, "serve[d] to identify adherents to a mass movement," such as the Civil War, "and offer focal points around which they [could] rally," which was appropriate as the shield was a classical symbol of battle.[128]

History and Meaning of the Great Seal

An analysis of the Great Seal of the United States, which contributed to the design of the unofficial "US" shield on the Treasury sofa, imparts an understanding of the meaning of the "US" shield (see fig. 13). The U.S. State Department stated in a 1986 report that, "Symbolically, the seal reflects the beliefs and values the founding fathers attached to the new nation and wished to pass on to their descendents."[129] Antoinette Lee, author of *Architects to the Nation*, observed that the government, as one of its

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[126] Mary Cleaver Ames, *10 Years in Washington; Life and Scenes in the National Capitol, as a Woman Sees Them* (Hartford, CT: A.D. Worthington and Co., 1875), 345.

[127] Philip Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, Inc., 1983), 160.

[128] Leith, *Symbols in the French Revolution,* 107.

[129] United States State Department, "The Great Seal of the United States, February 1986," 6-9; U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

attempts to repair and strengthen the Union, incorporated, "Symbols drawn from Greece and Rome [that] provided a unified republican image," as seen in the Treasury suite furniture.[130]

Joseph Bruff's 1828 manuscript *Heraldry: With Explanations and Rules Illustrated by Drawings & Examples,* quoted Charles Thomson's "Remarks and Explanation," of the Great Seal which the Continental Congress adopted on June 20, 1782.[131] Charles Thomson, then Secretary of Congress, compiled previous American designs in a modified seal and had William Barton Esq. refine the design.[132] The number thirteen, in the Great Seal of the United States, was significant to the symbolic history of the United States as seen in the "paleways [vertical stripes] of thirteen pieces," the bundle of thirteen arrows, and thirteen stars. The number thirteen was incorporated into the "US" shield through its thirteen vertical stripes.[133]

Thompson commented that, "[t]he thirteen," vertical stripes such as those on the Great Seal and in the "US" shield on the sofa in the Treasury suite, "represent the several states in the union, all joined in one solid compact, entire, supporting a chief."[134] The motto on the Great Seal of the United States, *E Pluribus Unum*, which translated means "Out of Many, One," was adopted in 1782, and further supports this analysis. The chief is the reserve in the top third of the shield, which "unites the whole, and represents Congress."[135] Thompson further observed that:

> The pale [*sic*] in the arms are kept closely united by the chief, and the chief depends on that union, and the strength resulting from it, for its support, to denote

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[130] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 7.
[131] Joseph Goldsborough Bruff, "Heraldry: With Explanations and Rules Illustrated by Drawings & Examples, 1828," U.S. Treasury Department, Washington, D.C.
[132] United States Department of State, "The Great Seal of the United States," U.S. Treasury Department.
[133] Bruff, "Heraldry," 25.
[134] Ibid., 10.
[135] Ibid., 9.

> the Confederacy of the United States, and the presentation of the union through Congress.[136]

Of the thirteen arrows Thompson explained that, "The olive branch and arrows denote the power of peace and war, which is exclusively vested in Congress."[137] Commenting on the thirteen stars he said that, "The crest as constellation denotes a new state taking its place and rank among other sovereign powers."[138] Thompson's interpretations of the Great Shield of the United States of America, which were a resource for the artistic "US" shield on the sofa in the Treasury suite, are useful for understanding the contemporary message of unity that was conveyed to the public.

American Flag

The stripes on the Great Seal of the United States and the American flag are also found on the unofficial "US" shield on the sofa and chair in the Treasury suite. A brief analysis of the symbolism and importance of the official American flag is appropriate for understanding the "US" shield on the furniture in the Treasury suite (see fig. 14). Cahill observed that, "The Flag and the Great Seal . . . codified our official patriotic symbolism and provided artist, designers, and craftsmen with emblems which have been a feature of their work for more than a hundred and fifty years."[139] Men had died for America while following the flag as a physical manifestation of her ideals. The flag flew, for the most part, outdoors while the shields ornamented military objects such as the drums illustrated in *Uniform Regulations for the Army of the United States 1861* (see fig. 15), architecture, and interior furnishings, such as the furniture in the Treasury suite. Morris Schnapper,

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[136] "The colours of the pales are those used in the flag of the United States of America. White signifies purity and innocence; red, handiness and valor; and blue, the colour of the chief, signifies vigilance, perseverance, and justice." Ibid.

[137] Ibid., 10.

[138] Ibid.

[139] Cahill, *Emblems of Unity and Freedom*, iii.

author of *American Symbols*, said that the, "thirteen vertical stripes," such as those on the "US" shield adorning the sofa in the Treasury suite, "are derived from the flag authorized in 1777 by the Continental Congress."[140] These stripes, which represented the thirteen original colonies of America, are bound by the shield symbolizing the unity of the states.

The flag evolved with the formation of the United States becoming, in a sense, a symbolic map for the states. The stars corresponded to the number of states in the Union. Both the physical American territory and stars on the flag would have been lost if the Southern states had won. The United States flag was the ultimate "American" representation that demonstrated the "Americanness" of its owner.[141]

"US" Mark

The previous examination of two of the most important official American symbols, the Great Seal of the United States and the American flag, imparts a greater understanding of the symbolism of the thirteen vertical stripes on the unofficial artistic "US" shield on the sofa in the Treasury suite. The earlier drawings of furniture for the White House Oval Room in 1809 by the architect for the White House, Henry Latrobe, had featured a prominent painted "American" shield (see fig. 16). The lower two-thirds of the shields for both Latrobe's furniture in the White House and the sofa in the Treasury suite feature thirteen vertical stripes. However, in the upper reserve of Latrobe's "American" shield there is a centered "A" for America on the White House furniture instead of the "US," for United States, which is found in the chief of the shield on the sofa in the Treasury Department. These artistic shields corresponded to the evolution of

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[140] Morris Schnapper, *American Symbols: The Seals and Flags of the Fifty States* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1974), 8.

[141] The US flag also was praised and blessed in a variety of nationalistic poems, stories, songs, and dances like "The Old Thirteen."

the country. Emphasis shifted from American colonies freeing themselves from Britain's tyrannical rule, to instituting a government that consisted of separate but equal states, to an evolving cohesive country where the federal government had more power over the states. The Civil War confirmed the power of the federal government over the individual states, as the Southern states were not permitted to secede from the Union. Latrobe's 1809 furniture in the White House marked with an "A" and the sofa in the Treasury suite marked with the "US" more than fifty years later demonstrated the evolution of the shift of power from the states to the federal government.[142] The "US" was particularly significant as the Treasury suite was made in 1863 at the height of the Civil War when the Union was fighting to literally reunite the states.

Military

The "US" shield on the sofa in the Treasury suite is similar to the shield on the flag that the Eleventh Infantry Regiment carried during the War of 1812 (see fig. 17).[143] The shield on the flag was one example of the shields used in the military showing that the artistic "US" shield in the Treasury suite was closely associated with the military. Both shields featured the "US" prominently displayed on the chief over the thirteen vertical stripes.[144] By surrounding themselves with shields containing militaristic associations the occupants of the Treasury suite, including President Johnson, reinforced their Union affiliation and gave a visual demonstration of their support for the Union army during the Civil War. The "US" in the shield on the sofa uses a font also found on military paraphernalia as depicted through artist sketches and photographs in

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[142] White House Historical Association, "Benjamin Henry Latrobe," http://www.whitehousehistory.org/06/subs/06_d01.html (accessed September 8, 2007).

[143] William Rea Furlong and Byron McCandless, *So Proudly We Hail: The History of the United States Flag* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981), 177.

[144] Ibid.

contemporary newspapers. The "US" was written in the Two-line English Egyptian font, one of the first sans serif typefaces, that was developed by William Caslon IV in Great Britain in 1816.[145]

Union soldiers' regulation buttons, canteens, and, "the familiar oval US waist belt plate . . . specified in the *Ordinance Manual for 1861*" had a similar "US" to that on the Treasury sofa's shield.[146] The *Uniform Regulations for the Army of the United States 1861* also illustrates the cartridge box cover with the "US" in an oval.[147] As the 1861 *Revised Regulations for the Army of the United States* demonstrates, even, "Blanket[s]-woolen, gray," had, "letters U.S. in black, four inches long, in the centre."[148] The "US" logo on the soldiers' equipment served as an identifier for the soldiers on the battlefield. The "US" insignia also reinforced the Union cause when seen in black and white sketches and photographs in newspapers depicting images of the Civil War battles. Just as the "US" emblem on the soldiers identified them with the Union, the "US" in the shield on the furniture in the Treasury suite reinforced the Secretary of the Treasury and President Johnson's affiliation with the Union.

The "US" shield takes on the power of the objects it is typically associated with such as the Great Seal of the United States and the American Flag. The unofficial United States shield is a powerful reminder of the unity of the United States from its formation. As Cahill reminds his audience, "[The US shield is a] symbolic expression of

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[145] This sans-serif type was a typographic innovation, which grew in popularity during the mid-nineteenth century. During the beginning of the nineteenth century a multitude of fonts, of which the above was one, developed. William Calson also invented the Calson typeface. Meggs, *A History of Graphic Design*, 160.

[146] U.S. War Department, *Uniform Regulations for the Army of the United States 1861* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1961), 26.

[147] Ibid. 6.

[148] Ibid. 21.

fundamental ideals, charged with the meaning and experience of America—and America throughout her history has been a name for freedom."[149]

Currency

A new national paper currency issued in 1863 displayed the Treasury shield. Secretary Chase oversaw the creation of this national currency. In February of 1863, a national banking system was created under the National Banking Act. The national banking system was implemented the same year the Treasury suite was commissioned. The Treasury suite was not finished until 1864, so interim events could have influenced the design. The Currency Act of March 3, 1863, required the new "national banks" to issue a uniform national currency. Previously, states and individual banks printed their own money resulting in thousands of types of specie, each with its own design. The multitude of specie led to counterfeiting that contributed to the devaluation of the currency, which threatened the stability of the economy.

The introduction of the national currency was revolutionary, causing changes in government and personal operations and resulting in a proliferation of new U. S. government departments to create and regulate this new currency.[150] To design the new federal notes the government established the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. The introduction of a national currency affected every person in America. Given the instability in the country and the public finances, the change from a multitude of specie, backed by regional institutions, to a single national currency was of great importance.

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[149] Cahill, *Emblems of Unity and Freedom*, ii.

[150] Previously, the United States had issued a national currency, but by 1863 many different type of specie were in circulation. The United States government created the Secret Service to stop counterfeiters, and it also instituted the Bureau of Internal Revenue to collect the new income tax that financed the Union armies in the Civil War. Craughwell, *Stealing Lincoln's Body*, 44.

The currency designs featured symbols of the United States, some of which were also used on the furniture in the Treasury suite. The engravers and supervising architects were both housed in the Treasury Department as early as 1862. Furthermore, this newly created Bureau of Printing and Engraving first printed currency in 1863, which is the same year as the Treasury suite commission.[151] Thus, as Pottier & Stymus did not bill the government until 1864, the currency probably influenced the furniture commission.

Treasury Shield

In addition to the "US" shield, the Treasury Department shield was also prominently exhibited throughout the Treasury suite on its furniture. On September 25, 1778, the Continental Congress appointed a committee to design a Treasury seal.[152] The Treasury Seal was used on documents in 1782 during the Articles of Confederation that was ratified on March 1, 1781, which preceded the United States Constitution and the official formation of the United States of America in 1789.[153] The Treasury Seal has appeared on every piece of paper money issued by the Treasury Department since 1862. [154]

The balance or scale on the Treasury shield is the emblem of Justice. The balance hangs from the highest point of the shield and dangles over a chevron that spans the width of the reserve. The chevron contains thirteen stars, a direct counterpoint to the thirteen stripes in the "US" shield on the sofa symbolizing the thirteen American

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[151] Bureau of Engraving and Printing, "History of the BEP," http://www.bep.treas.gov/section.cfm/2/314. (accessed September 22, 2007).

[152] W. Knight, "Bureau of Printing and Engraving, The Treasury Seal, October 12, 1961," U.S. Treasury Department, Washington, D.C.

[153] The United States Constitution was adopted on March 4, 1789. The U.S. National Archives, "Charters of Freedom: The First Constitution ~ The Articles of Confederation," http://www.archives.gov/national-archives-experience/charters (accessed December 2007).

[154] Bureau of Engraving and Printing, "Document #1768, February, 1994," U.S. Treasury Department, Washington, D.C.

colonies. Below the chevron is a gilded key, which represents the official authority of the Treasury. The inscription reads, "Thesaur. Amer. Septent. Sigil," an abbreviation of "Thesauri Americae Septentrionalis Sigillum," which was Latin for "The Seal of the Treasury of North America."[155] The use of Latin in the Treasury Seal inscription was another association with antiquity.

Conclusion

Today, it is all too easy to overlook many of the symbols on the Treasury furniture, particularly the sofa, that were clearly recognized during the Civil War era as symbols of the Union. The symbols had greater importance during and immediately following the Civil War then they do now. It is appropriate that the shield, a classical representation of conflict, is at the apex of the sofa, the chair and the bookshelf in the Treasury suite. The shield at the crest of the Treasury furniture is similar to staking a claim of possession and victory; comparable to Joe Rosenthal's famous photograph depicting Marines raising the American flag atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima (see fig. 18).[156] In comparing the influence of that picture to the shields on the Treasury furniture, the distribution of Rosenthal's image was far more widespread while the shields on the Treasury furniture were illustrated only in a relatively few newspapers. However, the shield on the sofa in the Treasury Department still reached a large audience for that time period and would have been highly visible to the public while the country focused its attention on President Johnson in the Treasury suite.

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[155] The inscription was altered in 1968 with the removal of the laurel spray and replacement of Latin with English, "The Department of the Treasury 1789." "Executive Departments and Seals," *Harper's Bazaar*, February 1869, 319-330.

[156] The flag raising in Rosenthal's image signified the victorious taking of the mountain but not the outcome of the battle for the island, which was still uncertain at the time the flag was erected.

Chapter 5: Influence of the Commission on Other Government Furniture

Introduction

Having analyzed the Pottier & Stymus commission, the contributions of the Office of the Supervising Architect and Pottier & Stymus, the Renaissance Revival Style furniture, and the shields on the furniture in the Treasury suite, it is still important to consider the influence and contribution of the Treasury suite of furniture. The images of the Treasury reception room were widely disseminated while the nation was focused on the crisis unfolding in this room where President Andrew Johnson led the country for the first six weeks of his presidency in 1865.

Predecessors

In addition to early predecessors of emblematic government furniture such as Latrobe's furniture for the White House, other governmental offices of the United States had office furniture that featured American shields in the mid-nineteenth century. Thomas U. Walter designed desks and chairs for the hall of the House of Representatives in 1857. The desks and chairs in the House of Representatives (see fig. 19) featured an "American shield" that was an artistic amalgamation of thirteen vertical stripes, as seen in the shield on the Treasury suite sofa. Instead of the "US" in the chief on the sofa in the Treasury suite, however, the American shield on the crest of the desk and chairs in the House of Representatives featured three stars, which could have symbolized the three branches of government.[157]

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[157] Doe Hazelton Company of Boston made 262 carved oak desks. Capt. M.C. Meigs, "Voucher to Doe, Hazelton & Co., November 28, 1857," Records of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C. Half of the chairs were constructed by Bembe and Kimbel of New York. Capt. M.C. Meigs, "Voucher to A. Bembe & Kimbel, November 26, 1857," Records of the Architect to the Capitol, Washington, D.C. Hammitt Desk Company of Philadelphia made the other half. M.C. Meigs, letter to John T. Hammitt, August 27, 1857, Records of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.

Influence on the White House

General Ulysses Grant and other important visitors saw the Treasury suite, which influenced the Pottier & Stymus furniture in the Cabinet room in the White House in 1869.[158] Johnson's temporary office in the Treasury influenced the furnishings of the White House Cabinet room under President Grant's administration in 1869 since Pottier & Stymus made both the furniture in the Treasury suite and the White House Cabinet room. Pottier & Stymus redecorated the White House Cabinet room after completing the Secretary's office in the Treasury Department in 1865. These furnishings used under President Grant were still present in an 1879 drawing of President Hayes in a Cabinet meeting in what is now called the Treaty room (see fig. 20).[159]

There are similarities that further demonstrate the influence of the Treasury suite commission on the White House Cabinet room decorated by Pottier & Stymus. Both government offices were decorated in the Renaissance Revival style and also featured a comprehensive design scheme that reflected the same motifs through the furniture, furnishings and wall ornamentation. Both the Treasury and White House offices also contained large tables surrounded by a multitude of chairs and one armchair with additional ornamentation. The Cabinet room in the White House had a mirror over the fireplace that had an American shield at the apex of its crest. The chief was blank, but the bottom of the shield had thirteen vertical stripes similar to those in the Treasury suite. Although the Pottier & Stymus bill to the Treasury Department for the Treasury suite

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[158] Both Alfred Mullett and Pottier & Stymus, artistic contributors to the design of the Treasury suite, were commissioned to design elements of the White House under Grant's aegis. Mullett decorated the East Room. Betty C. Monkman, *The White House: Its Historic Furniture and First Families* (New York & London: Abbeville Press, 2000), 147.

[159] Artist unknown, White House Historical Collection, "President Hayes shown at a Cabinet meeting in 1879 in what is now the Treaty Room, with the Grant era furnishings in use," 1879, Washington, D.C., Monkman, *The White House,* 148.

lists, “1 [Walnut & Gilt] Pier Frame in two parts,” it cannot be conclusively established that an American shield ornamented its crest because the mirror was not depicted in *Frank Leslie's* illustrations.[160] The pier mirror was narrow and placed between the windows in the Secretary of the Treasury's office while the horizontal mirror in the White House was over the fireplace.

Betty Monkman, former curator of the White House, said that a sofa (see fig. 21) was included in the furniture suite. Furthermore, Pottier & Stymus's bill for the White House furniture listed a sofa additionally substantiating the sofa's connection to the White House Cabinet room furniture. However, while most of the Pottier & Stymus' White House furniture suite was depicted in the 1879 drawing of President Hayes in a Cabinet meeting in the current Treaty room (see fig. 20), the sofa was not portrayed.[161] But a visual analysis of the sofa, which is still in the White House collection, further substantiates the claim that it was by Pottier & Stymus because the crest of the sofa features the same style, ornamentation, and outline as the two window cornices and mirror in the sketch.

The Pottier & Stymus sofas from the White House suite and the Treasury Department reception room that Johnson occupied look similar indicating that the Treasury department furniture, which was commissioned in 1863 and completed in 1864, might have influenced the later furniture in the Cabinet room in the White House.[162] Both sofas are rectilinear, with an exposed, dark walnut, wood frame and an upholstered

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[160] Pottier & Stymus, “Bill to Bureau of Construction of the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., March 10, 1864,” U.S. Treasury Archives, Washington, D.C.

[161] Artist unknown, White House Historical Collection, “President Hayes shown at a Cabinet meeting in 1879 in what is now the Treaty Room, with the Grant era furnishings in use,” 1879, Washington, D.C., Monkman, *The White House,* 148.

[162] 1869.212.1, Sofa, Pottier & Stymus Manufacturing Co., New York, Walnut. White House Archives, Washington, D.C.

back, seat, and padded arm rests. The Treasury and White House sofas' dimensions are also similar. The Treasury sofa is forty-three inches high and seventy-three inches long while the White House sofa is forty-five inches high and seventy-eight inches long.[163] Both sofa backs have a linear crest with an elevated central portion with an American shield, and the backs feature bands of walnut wood that frame the upholstery. The Treasury and White House sofas also feature typical Renaissance Revival ears, which were standard on all Renaissance Revival furniture. The two sofas also incorporate a squashed ball for a hand rest at the end of the sofa's arm and have a long vertically oriented pyramid device in the skirt of the sofa with engraved ornamentation on either side of the pyramid. The pyramidal device on the White House sofa is framed by two large, incised Greek key forms while the Treasury sofa has a stylized lotus blossom centered beneath the pyramid form. Both sofas also feature turned legs in an inverted trumpet shape, which was common in the Renaissance Revival style.

Through a close comparison of these details one can see that the Pottier & Stymus commission for the Secretary of the Treasury's Office influenced the commission for the White House. The forms of both the White House and Treasury sofa are similar, but the White House sofa has more ornamentation, and different ornamentation, than the simple Treasury suite sofa. The Treasury suite furniture probably influenced the White House furniture because Pottier & Stymus made both suites of furniture in the same style.

Although there are fewer shields on the White House furniture suite than in the Secretary of the Treasury's office this may reflect the period in which the furniture suites were made. The Treasury suite was commissioned during a time of instability at the

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[163] F. 984.62. Registrar's Files, U.S. Treasury Department, Washington, D.C.; Monkman, *The White House*, 292.

height of the Civil War. The furniture suite in the Treasury Department formed a cohesive patriotic statement while the White House suite, with at least two American shields, one on the mirror and one on the sofa, was completed four years after the Civil War. As President Grant was a renowned war hero who played a key role in the unification of the United States of America, there was less need for him to visually associate himself with American symbols than Johnson, a Vice President who ascended to the Presidency at a moment of crisis. Also, perhaps there was not as strong a need to affiliate the furniture visually with the United States of America since the White House was already recognized by the public as the highest ranking American office in comparison to all other government positions.

Mullett's 1878 Book on Standardized Government Office Furniture

The Treasury suite had influence beyond just the White House furniture. In 1878, Alfred Mullett, the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department released his work, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings.*[164] This compilation of construction plans for standardized government office furniture featured simple, classical forms and elements similar to the furniture in the Treasury suite. Standardized government furniture contributed to the codification of the national design of furniture thus further unifying the appearance of government offices throughout the United States. Mullett compiled a collection of drawings in his book, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings.*[165] This work featured a series of furniture designs for government offices across the United States. The designs

[164] Alfred Mullett, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Supervising Architect, 1878), U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

[165] Mullett's book was dated with the stamp, "Office of the Supervising Architect. Feb 28 1878." However, no further date is found in the book to determine if it was created earlier.

for government furniture in Mullett's book were similar to the furniture in the reception room of Secretary of the Treasury's Office.

The similarities between the furniture in the Treasury suite and the furniture designs in Mullett's book are apparent. Designs for *Working Table Furniture Drawing No. 1* and *2*, (see figs. 22 and 23) for example, feature turned legs similar to those on the sofa in the Treasury suite complete with ring and trumpet turnings.[166] The top of the legs on the *Working Tables* are also similar to those on the front of the Treasury suite sofa both featuring, from top to bottom, a ring, inverted trumpet, and double ring.

The *Working Tables* also feature recessed multi-tiered horizontal panels on the skirt that are found in the vertical frame of the bookshelves in the Treasury suite as illustrated in "The First Cabinet Meeting under the Administration of Andrew Johnson," (see fig.1) and "The First Reception of Ambassadors by President Andrew Johnson, at His Rooms in the Treasury Building Reception" (see fig. 2) in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Both the bookshelf and *Working Tables* recall ancient Greek architecture. *Working Tables* had three incised vertical lines in the corners of the sides of the table reinterpreting the triglyphs in a standard Greek temples frieze. Mullett further developed the Neo Grec architectural scheme on the front and back of the tables' skirt alternating the triglyphs with blank recessed panels that simulated metopes. The tables' skirt had three blank panels on the front and back. The central panel was bracketed by two grooves as opposed to the three, which were standard for Greek triglyphs. While the bookcase in the Treasury suite did not feature triglyphs or metopes, it did feature classical Roman victory arches over the open shelves for the books. These victory arches were

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[166] Mullett, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings, Furniture Drawing No. 1 & 2.*

framed by vertical panels simulating pilasters that also ornamented the reception room in the Treasury suite. Furthermore, these vertical supports terminated in a Neo Grec combination of dentils, frieze and projecting cornice. All of these elements were topped by egg and dart molding followed by a wide frieze that traversed the top of the bookcase. This frieze featured large horizontal ornamented panels interspersed by recessed vertical panels above the vertical bookcase frames. This Neo Grec monument is surmounted with a large cornice completing the visual analogy to a temple of literature.

Mullett's designs were influential because he designed specific furniture that people used in some of the government buildings across the United States. The designs in his book were inspired from his past works in government buildings, including that of the Treasury suite, which consequently influenced furniture in many government offices across the United States. Mullett's standardized designs of furniture for government buildings, which were included in his book, featured similarities to the furniture in the Treasury suite, thus again illustrating its wide influence.

Perhaps one of the most important comparisons between the furniture in the Treasury suite and Mullett's design book is the armchair in *Furniture Drawing No. 20* (see fig. 24), and the Treasury armchair that President Andrew Johnson is sitting on in the sketch, "The First Cabinet Meeting under the Administration of Andrew Johnson at the Treasury."[167] (see fig. 1) The similarity of the two armchairs further suggests that the Treasury suite furniture influenced the furniture designs in Mullett's book. *Furniture Drawing No. 20*, a drawing of an armchair in Mullett's book, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings*, was replicated in government offices

[167] "The First Cabinet Meeting under the Administration of Andrew Johnson at the Treasury," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, January 6, 1866, 248, Issue 536, col A, New York.

across the country.[168] Both chairs are in the Renaissance Revival style and have an arching top, with a centered reserve that features ornamental carving. That the same designer, Mullett, created the similar forms further suggests that the earlier Treasury suite chair influenced the design of the armchair in *Furniture Drawing No. 20.*

The furniture created from the designs in Mullett's book was intended for use by the employees of the government who were not as high in stature as the Secretary of the Treasury. Also as the furniture was not intended for a high-ranking government official it would not have been as expensive or personalized. The furniture paralleled the government workers' hierarchical status. As a result, while the furniture designs in *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings* have more carving than the furniture in the Treasury suite, the furniture in Mullett's book had no incised gilding or ebonized panels that ornamented the simple furniture in the reception room used by President Johnson.

The furniture construction plans, which accompany the designs in Mullett's book, further illustrated the wide ranging influence of Mullett's designs as they would have been used either by the Treasury carpentry shop or by local cabinetmakers. As the designs in this folio were intended for government offices across the United States, the Treasury department would often take bids from local cabinetmakers. Because there were a number of cabinetmakers across the United States making furniture for the government offices, these designs in Mullett's book were important for maintaining the uniform design of government office furniture.

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[168] Mullett, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings, Furniture Drawing No. 20.*

The furniture in the Treasury suite was part of an overall patriotic statement, which was also manifested in the rest of the furnishings in the room including rugs and wall ornamentation. The furniture designs in Mullett's book were not intended for a specific space, but rather for a standard United States government office space anywhere in the United States. Yet, both Mullett's furniture designs and the furniture in the Treasury suite presented a unified national identity of the government. The classically inspired Neo Grec furniture designs in Mullett's book and the furniture in the Treasury suite paralleled the classical government buildings that heralded the democracy of the United States. The classic designs helped to unify the national identity by providing a cohesive visual statement of power and democracy in a number of government offices across the country. The furniture designs in Mullett's book were truly democratic as the Treasury Carpentry shop or local cabinetmakers would have made furniture for a multitude of employees in a number of the other governmental offices across the country from Mullett's detailed drawings. Conversely, the Treasury suite furniture was an expensive one-off for the government's elite.[169]

San Francisco Mint

A cohesive national identity was bolstered through similar Treasury Department field office furniture across the United States. One example is seen in the San Francisco Mint, which opened in 1874. Mullett supervised the design of the San Francisco Mint and its Neo Grec style furnishings.[170] Furniture in the San Francisco Mint was similar to the drawings in Mullett's book, which was a simplification of the furniture forms in the Secretary of the Treasury's office. The *Alta California* newspaper in San Francisco said

[169] Richard Cote, Curator of United States Treasury Department, *Interview*, March 22, 2007.
[170] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 86.

that this standardized, Neo Grec government furniture "proved a source of satisfaction to the state and the entire coast, implying as it did recognition of the fact that, although situated 3,000 miles or more from the seat of government, the people living on the Pacific slope were citizens of the Union."[171] Lee in *Architects to the Nation* commented that the, "unity of federal government architecture," and likewise the furniture from Mullett's book that completed the government buildings, "from one city to another appeared to contradict other national forces of the decade that led to disunion and the Civil War."[172] Thus, government furnishings psychologically and visually associated the local governing body with the federal government.

Conclusion

The symbolic furniture surrounding the president in the Treasury suite was important in emphasizing the national identity at a decisive moment in United States history. While the Supervising Architect's Office and Secretary Chase could have chosen Rococo Revival furniture, which was generally preferred for parlors in this time, they decided upon the Renaissance Revival style, which was more solemn and substantial, instead. Additionally, the Renaissance Revival style had masculine connotations befitting national leaders, like both Chase and Johnson, who wanted to appear strong.

The furniture in the Treasury suite, with all its American symbols, was important in the creation of the image of the American official. The symbols on the furniture in the Treasury suite aided in elevating Johnson to his new official position as President in the public perception. The public saw Johnson surrounded by American symbols and substantial furniture in the Treasury suite, which bolstered the power of his Presidency

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[171] *Daily Alta California*, 1874, California, San Francisco. Bradley L. Witherell and Brian L. Withrell, *California's Best Old West Art and Antiques* (Pennsylvania: Schiffers Publishing, Ltd., 1999), 243.

[172] Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 39.

and made him appear strong and solid, and lent credence to the new official position. Even without knowing who the person in the room was, the viewer could recognize the occupant's importance and affiliation with America from the furniture and environs in the Treasury suite.

By surrounding himself with patriotic symbols, Johnson was acting in the long tradition of Presidents, which continues today. Even in modern times, the President of the United States is surrounded with American symbols that are important in associating the President with his office. When the President addresses the public there is usually a multitude of American symbols like the Great Seal on the podium from which he speaks and swags of red, white and blue fabric that recall the American flag, which are often behind him. The President is surrounded by symbols that proclaim him as the figure head of the United States of America. These symbolic objects transform both the space he occupies and the people within that space. The symbols signify that the space is an American official government space, not just an area to conduct business. This transformation indicates to the public that the person within the space is acting in his official capacity and is analogous to setting the stage for a theatre production. The symbols serve to separate the government official from his status as a typical citizen and elevate him and his decisions in the public persona to that of his official persona as President of the United States. Also, the symbols act to bolster support for the President's actions and speeches, lending the official support of the government, such that when the President speaks, his actions and words are that of the government thereby commanding respect and obedience. Thus, just as the symbols in the Treasury suit that surrounded

Johnson at the end of the Civil War glorified him, the symbols surrounding the President glorify and magnify the importance of the present day President.

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Figure 3. Gilbert Stuart, *George Washington*, 1796.
Image taken from: National Portrait Gallery, "George Washington," http://www.npg.si.edu/exh/hall2/georges.htm (accessed December, 2007).

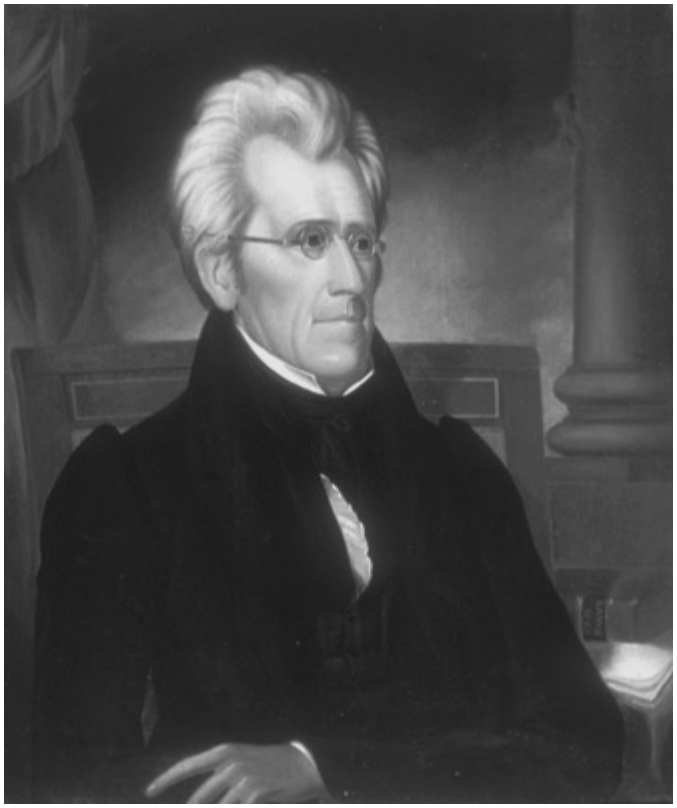

Figure 4. Ralph Earl, *Andrew Jackson*, 1830-1832.
Image taken from: North Carolina Museum of Art, "Focus Works of Art Andrew Jackson," http://ncartmuseum.org/artnc/object.php?themeid=5&objectid=39 (accessed December, 2007).

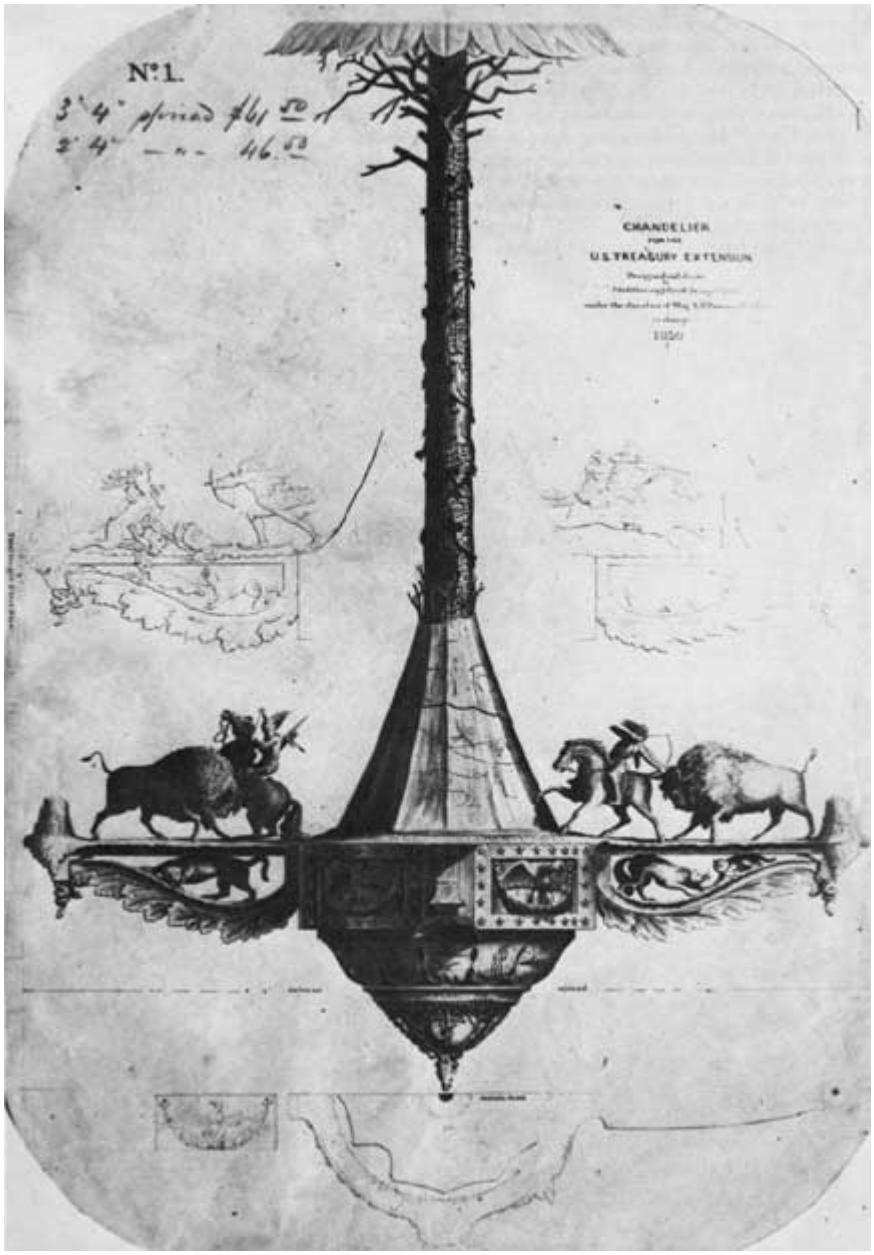

Figure 5. Joseph Goldsborough Bruff, *Cornelius and Baker Eagle Bracket in the Treasury Building,* 1859.
Image taken from: Denys Peter Myers, *Gaslighting in America: A Guide for Historic Preservation* (U.S. Department of the Interior, 1978), 121. U.S. National Archives, Record Group No. 121.
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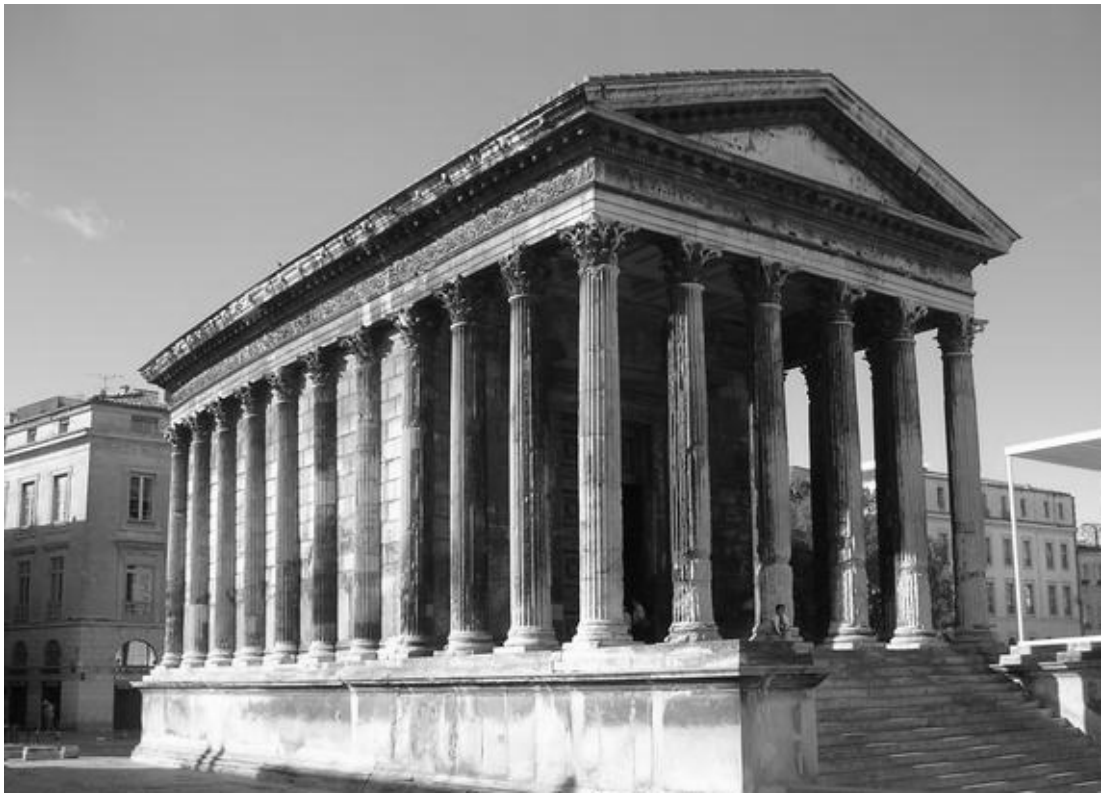

Figure 6. The Maison Carrée, a Temple in Nîmes, France, c. 20 B.C.
Image taken from: Marvin Trachtenberg, and Isabelle Hyman. *Architecture: From Prehistory to Post-Modernism*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), 132.

Figure 7. United States Treasury Department Building, Washington, D.C., 1836-1869. Image taken from: Library of Congress, "Treasury Department Building," http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ (accessed December 2007).

Figure 8. Pottier & Stymus, Sofa, United States Treasury Department, 1864. Image taken from: Author's Photograph.

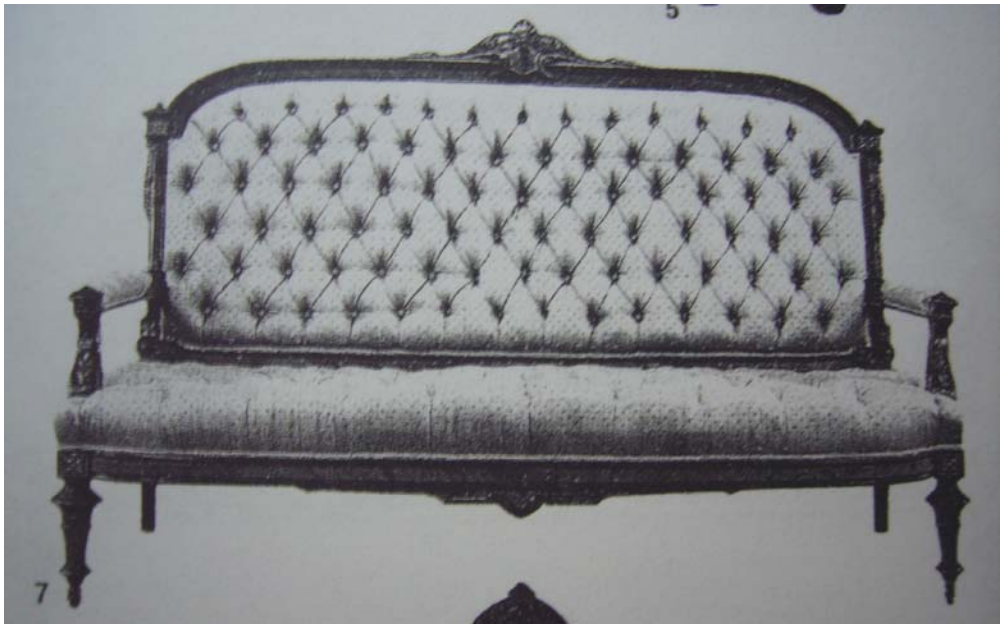

Figure 9. Unknown, Sofa, ca. 1860-1870.
Image taken from: Noel Riley, *The Elements of Design* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 219.

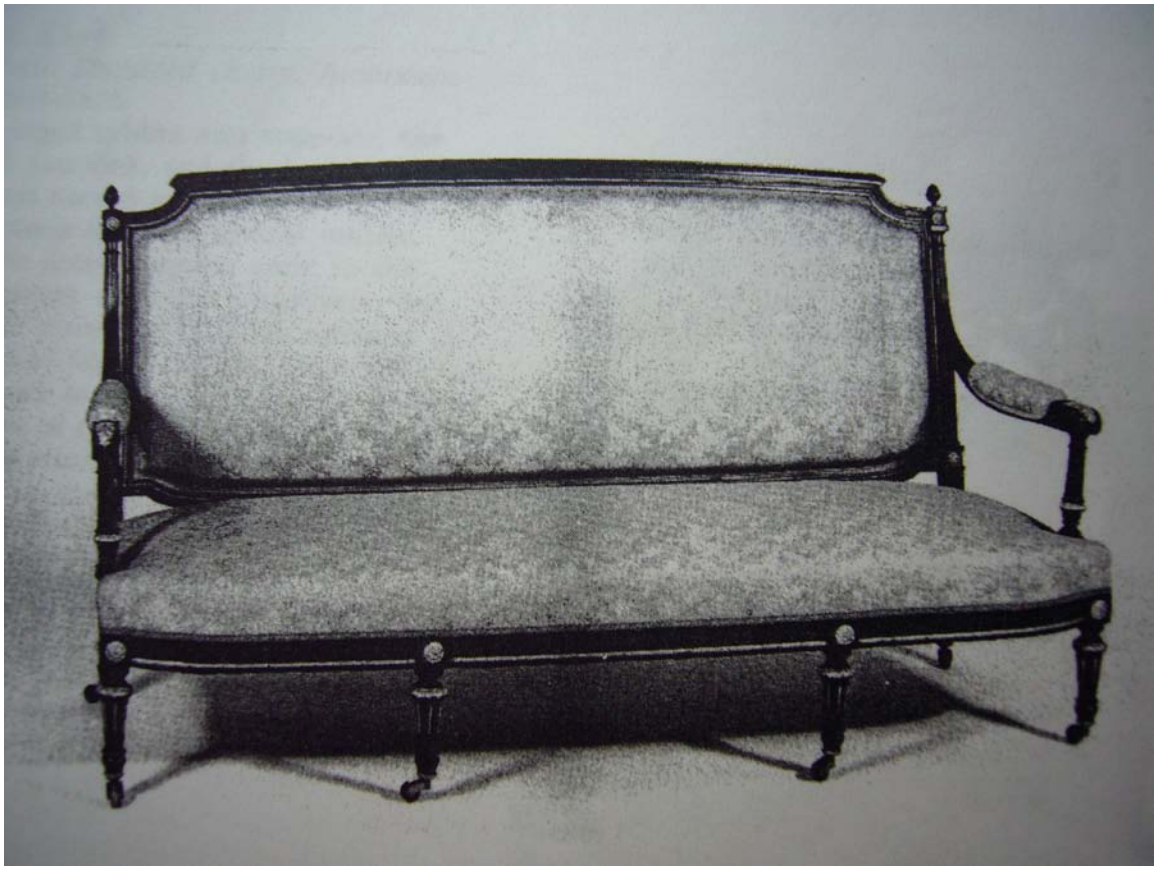

Figure 10. Unknown, Sofa, Virginia Museum of Art, ca. 1850-1875.
Image taken from: Oscar Fitzgerald, *Four Centuries of American Furniture* (Radnor, PA: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1995), 230.

Figure 11. Herter Brothers, Armchair, 1860.
Image taken from: Katherine S. Howe, Alice Cooney Frelinghuysen and Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, *Herter Brothers: Furniture and Interiors for a Gilded Age* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 130.

Figure 12. Pottier & Stymus, Unofficial United States (“US”) Shield on the Treasury Suite Sofa, 1864.
Image taken from: Author’s Photograph.

Figure 13. United States of America, *Great Seal of the United States,* 1782. Image taken from: United States Department of State, "The Great Seal of the United States, September 1996," http://www.state.gov/www/publications/great_seal.pdf. (accessed December 2007).

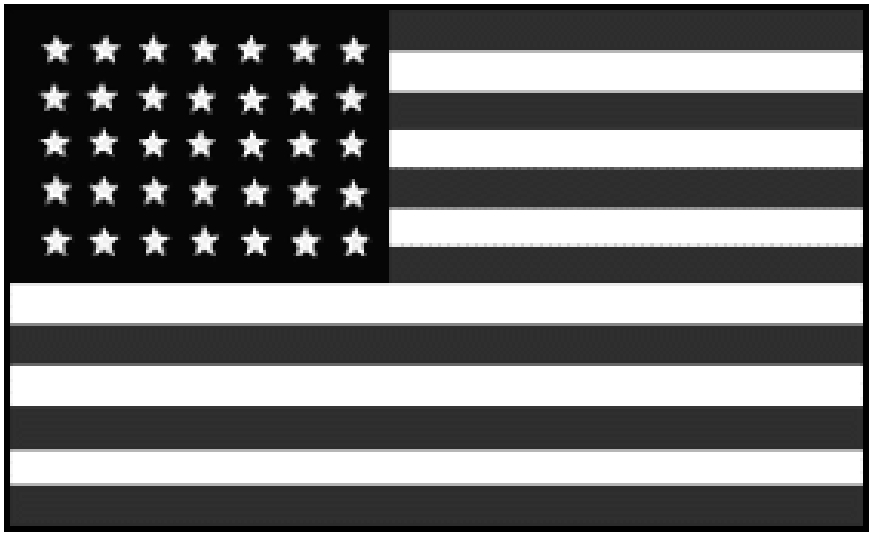

Figure 14. United States of America, *United States of America Flag,* 1863.
Image taken from: United States Embassy Stockholm, "The Flags of the United States, November 2001," http://stockholm.usembassy.gov/usflag/flaghist.html (accessed December 2007).

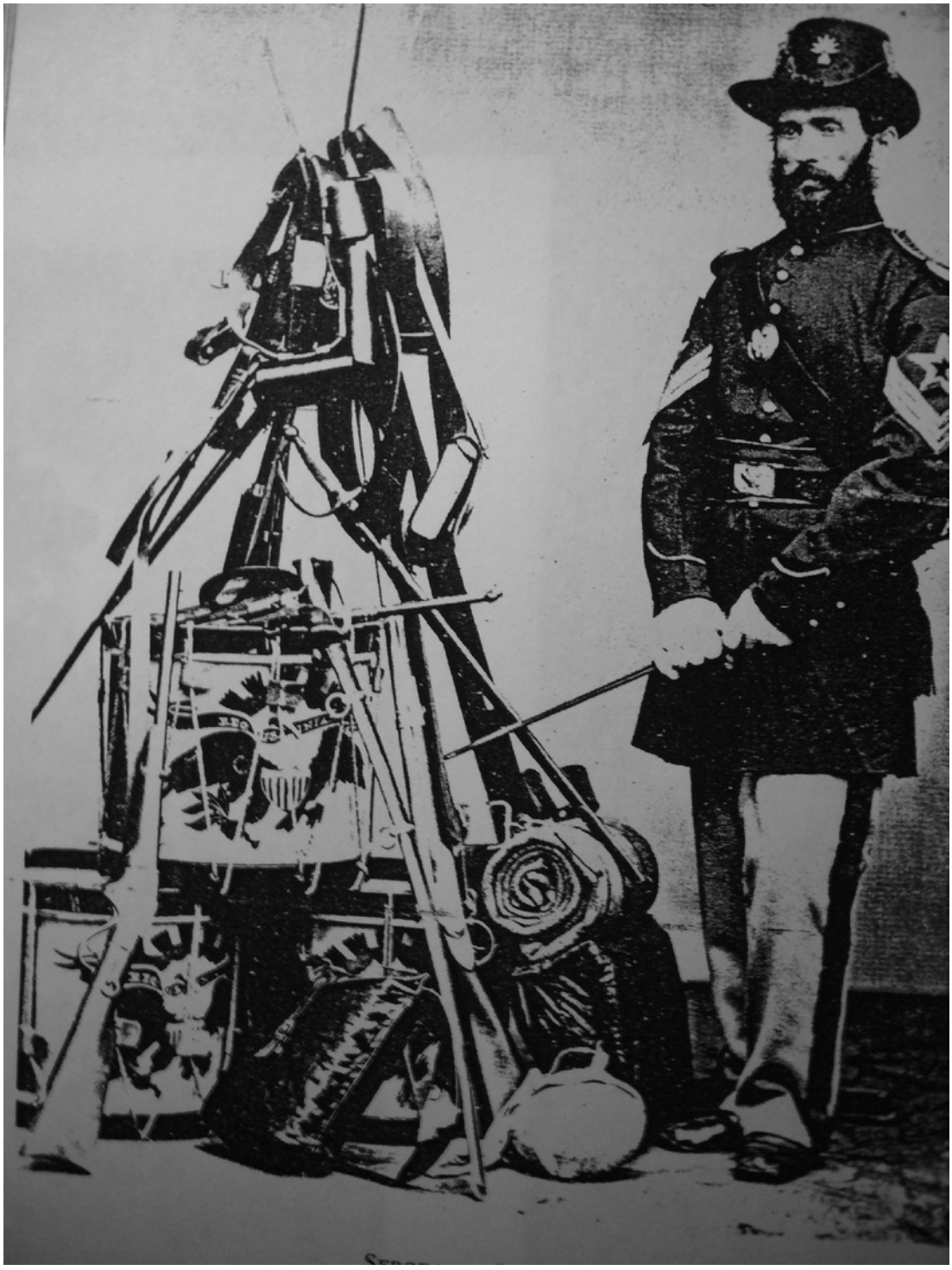

Figure 15. United States War Department, *Sergeant, Ordnance*, c. 1861.
Image taken from: United States War Department, *Uniform Regulations for the Army of the United States 1861* (Reprint, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1961), 58.

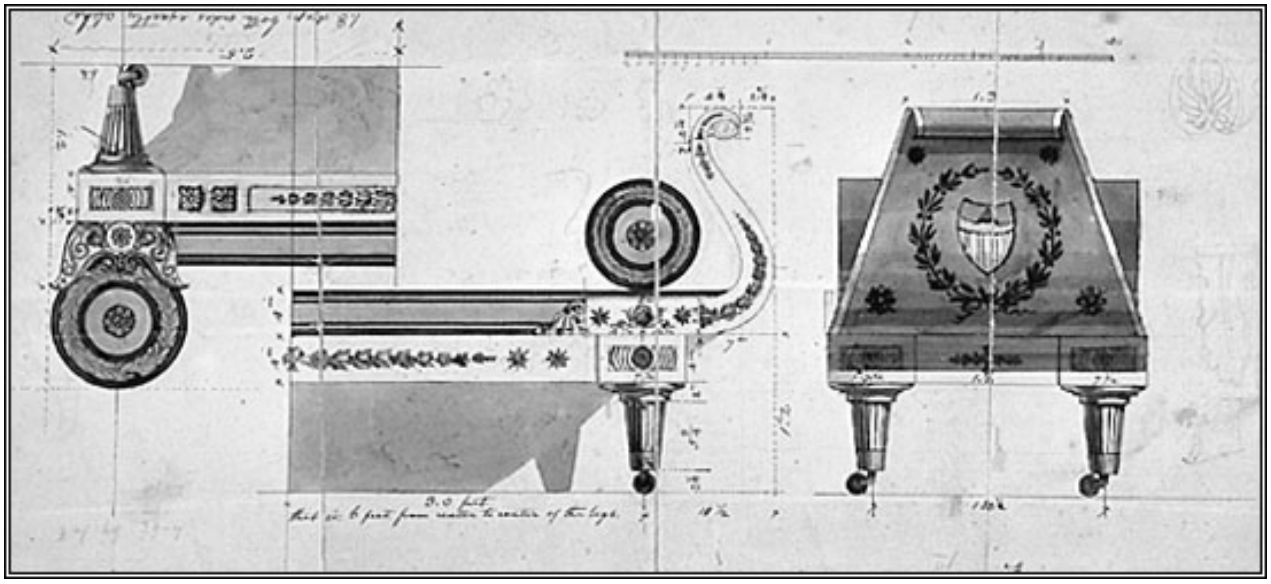

Figure 16. Henry Latrobe, *Drawing of Furniture for White House Oval Room*, 1809. Image taken from: White House Historical Association, "Benjamin Henry Latrobe," http://www.whitehousehistory.org/06/subs/06_d01.html (accessed September 8, 2007).

Figure 17. Unknown, Eleventh Infantry Regiment Flag, War of 1812.
Image taken from: William Furlong and Byron McCandless, *So Proudly We Hail: The History of the United States Flag* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1981), 177.

Figure 18. Joe Rosenthal, *Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima*, February 23, 1954. Image taken from: Iwo Jima, Inc., *Iwo Jima-The Picture*, http://www.iwojima.com/raising/raisingb.htm (accessed December, 2007).

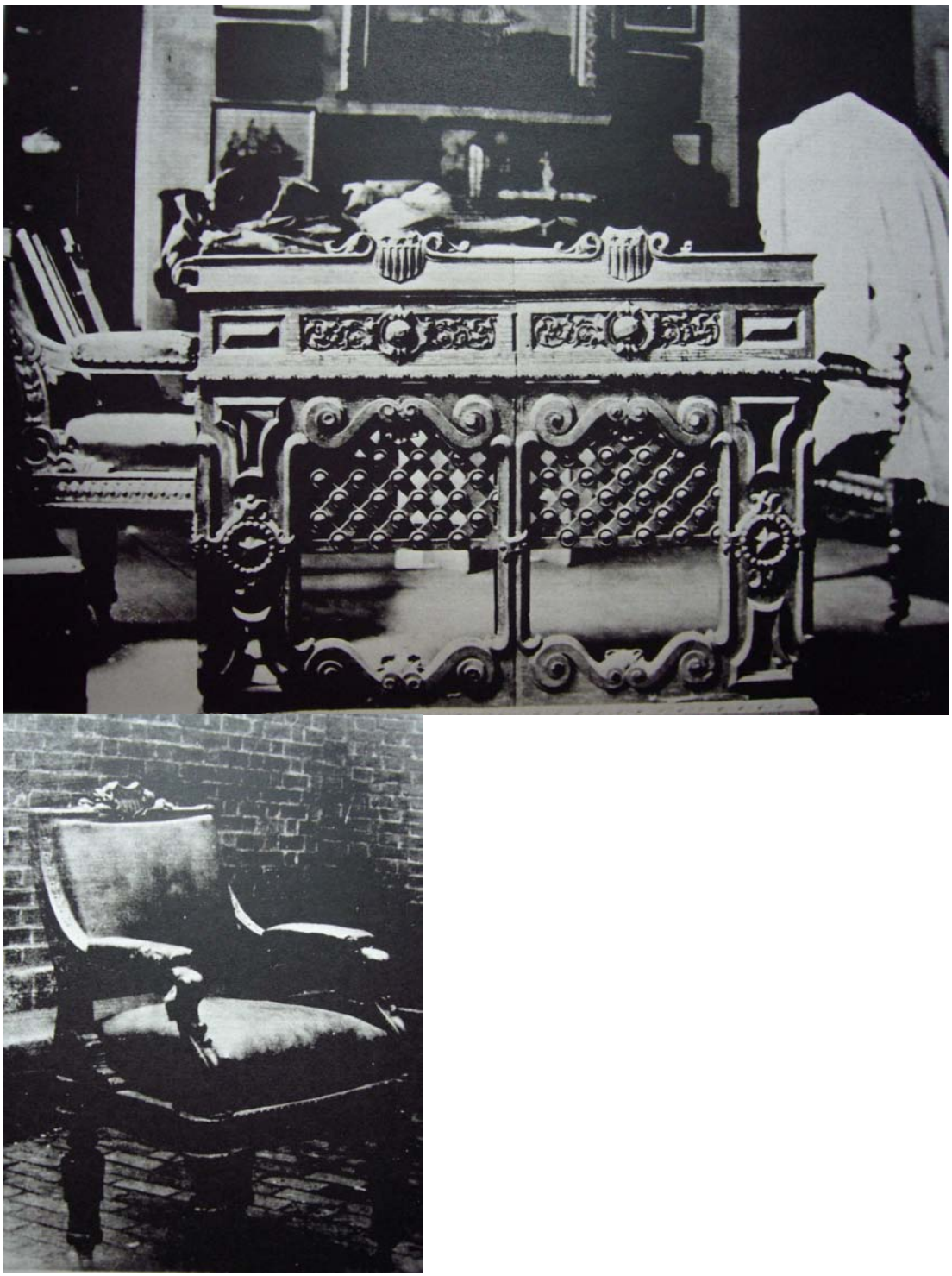

Figure 19. Thomas U. Walter, Desks and Chairs for the Hall of the House of Representatives, 1857.
Image taken from: Architect of the Capitol Archives, July 22, 1968.

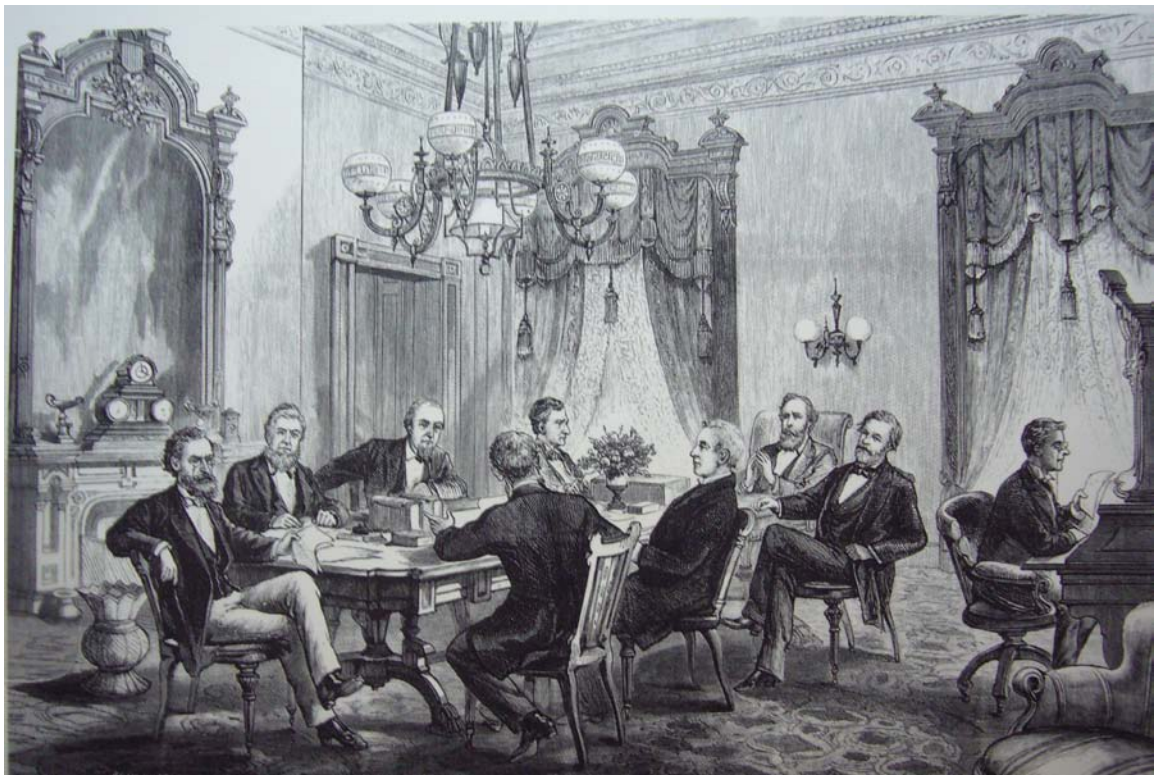

Figure 20. Unknown, *President Hayes in a Cabinet Meeting*, 1879.
Image taken from: Betty Monkman, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings & First Families* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2000), 148.

Figure 21. Pottier & Stymus, White House Cabinet Room Sofa, 1869.
Image taken from: Betty Monkman, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings & First Families* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2000), 146.

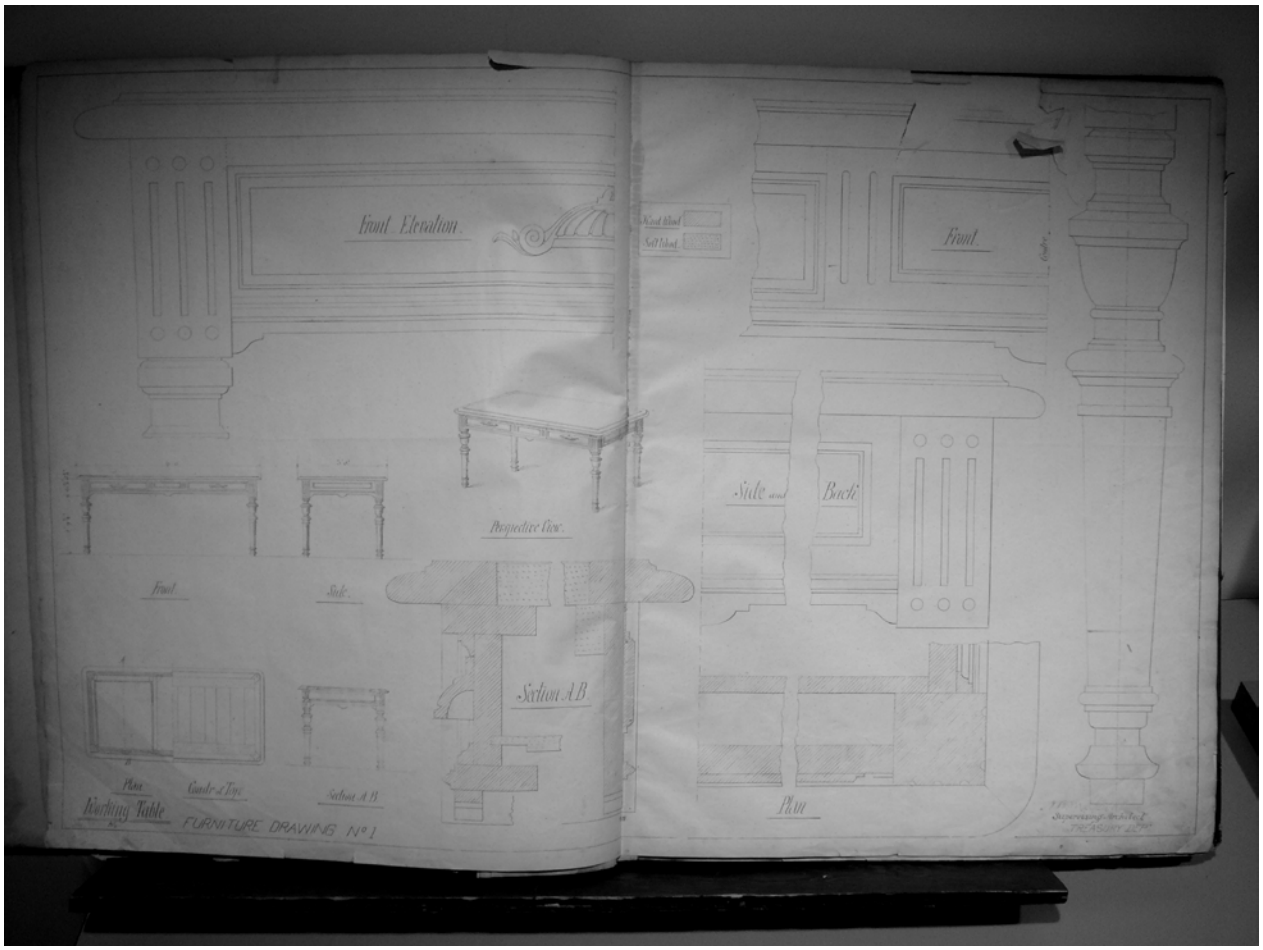

Figure 22. Alfred Mullett, *Designs for Working Table, Furniture Drawing No. 1*, ca. 1878.
Image taken from: Alfred Mullett, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Supervising Architect, 1878), U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

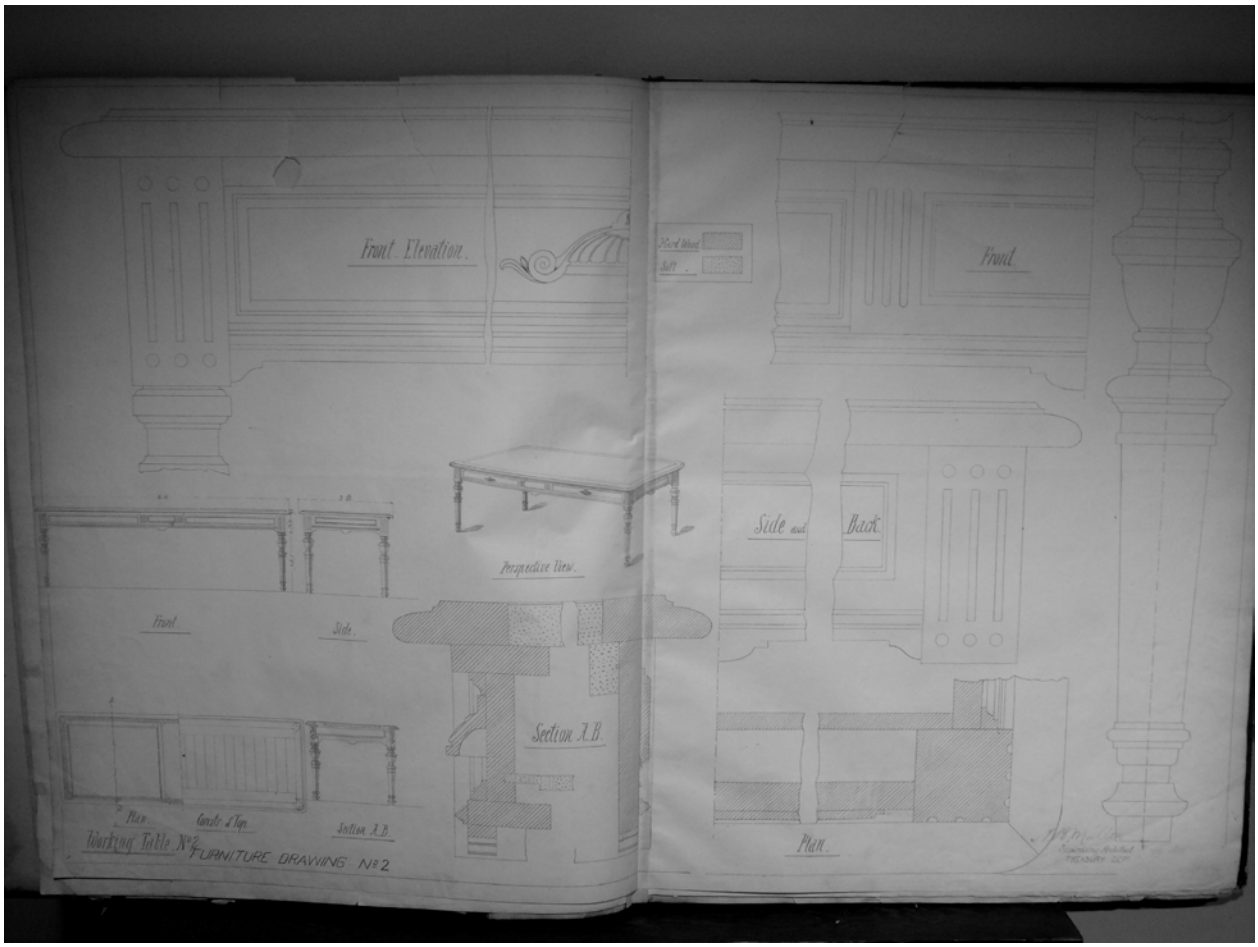

Figure 23. Alfred Mullett, *Designs for Working Table, Furniture Drawing No. 2*, ca. 1878.
Image taken from: Alfred Mullett, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Supervising Architect, 1878), U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

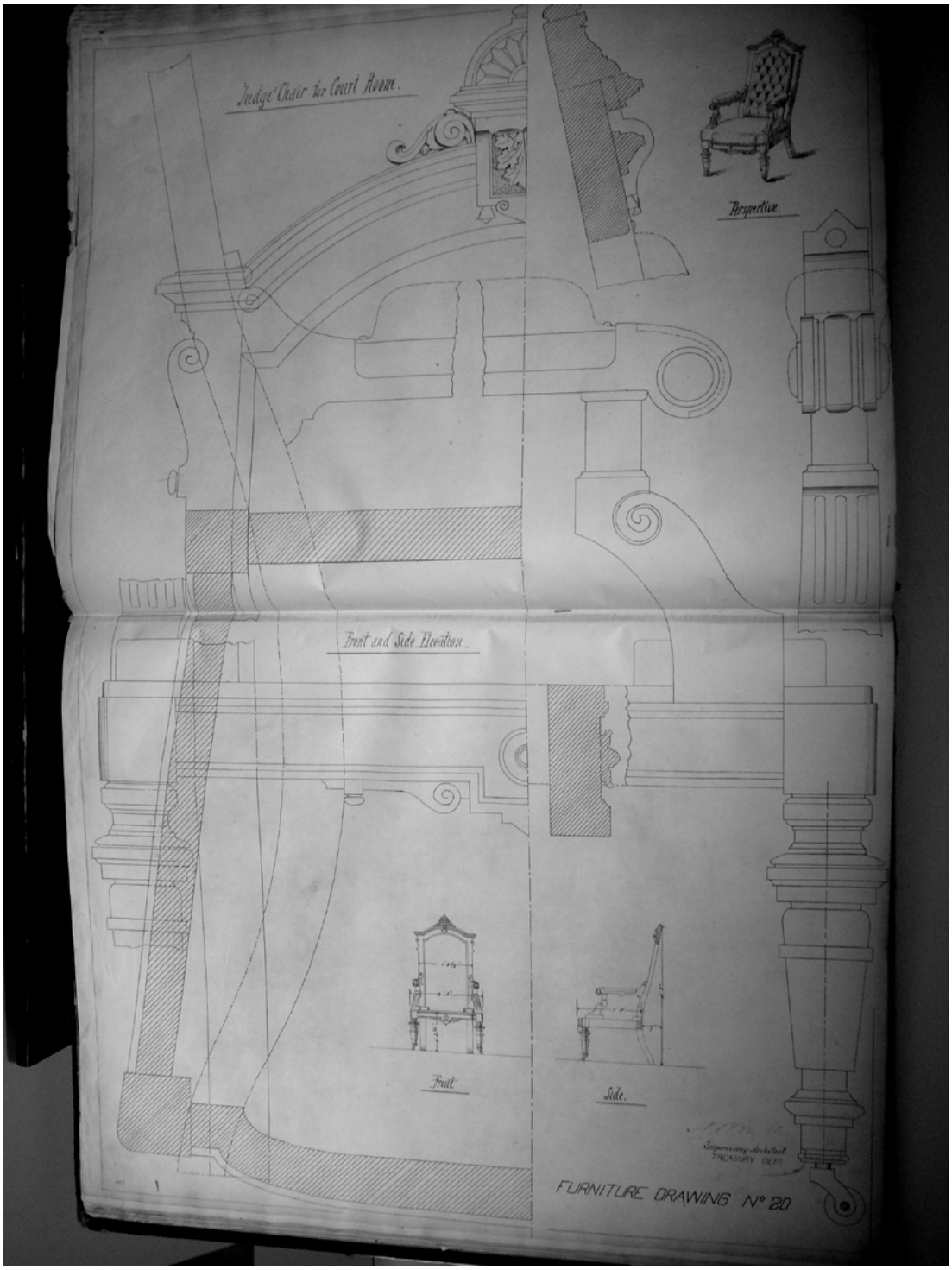

Figure 24. Alfred Mullett, *Design for Furniture Drawing No. 20*, ca. 1878. Image taken from: Alfred Mullett, *Drawings of Standard & Post Office Furniture for U.S. Public Buildings* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Supervising Architect, 1878), U.S. National Archives, Washington, D.C.