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The United States Capitol: Its Architecture And Decoration



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Synopsis

This wonderfully illustrated volume traces the architectural antecedents and building history of the magnificent U.S. Capitol. The U.S. Capitol, the building that houses the legislative branch of our government and a landmark that attracts 3-5 million visitors each year, has its origins in an architectural competition devised by George Washington. The winning design, submitted by William Thornton, combined "grandeur, simplicity, and convenience." Construction began in August 1793, but progress made during the following decade was less than satisfactory. English architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe was brought in by Thomas Jefferson in 1803 to oversee the work, which was finally completed under Charles Bulfinch in 1829. The U.S. Capitol is regarded by many as the finest example of classical architecture in America. This profusely illustrated book offers a detailed description of the building’s exterior, its unsurpassed ornamentation, and the richness of its rooms. An illustrated glossary of architectural terms used and a section of brief biographies of persons associated with the Capitol are also provided as tools for the reader. 150 color plates.

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Customer Reviews

The founder of the nonprofit Classical America, author of The Golden City and former curator of the New York City parks, Reed is an eminence on classicism as taken up in the U.S. He offers an old school, detail-by-detail look at the Capitol’s exterior and room-by-room (including the closed ones) at its interior that will have readers searching for the acanthus leaves on every ancone (or cornice support), and the echinus (or convex molding) on every Doric column on their next visit. Reed

covers the major mural work, square-headed versus arched doorframes, the bust of Martin Luther King Jr., the Brumidi frieze, "giant consoles between the secondary attic and the cupola," precursor buildings in Europe and much more in a stately narrative enriched by well-diagrammed illustrations. There are 150 color photos in all, some of which are archival, others of which look stock. (Some of the exterior shots feature foregrounded cars.) The appendix of "Identifications" of architectural details is beautifully done, and the architectural history is clear and straightforward, making this a book for the serious amateur student of the legislative branch’s dwelling place. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Henry Hope Reed is founder and president of Classical America and is the author of numerous books, including The Golden City and The New York Public Library. He lives in New York City.

Beautifully illustrated and informative book. Has some great photos and history of some rarely seen spaces (by those of us who’ve never been there), as well as some period details. It also expounds on the impact the building has had (for instance, it’s influence on states’ capitol buildings). However, I do have one fault with it - although it has some historic floor plans from it’s very early days, a current floor plan would have been a nice addition.

Wonderful book of the architecture of the US Capitol building. Has many picture and history. I had the pleasure of being able to tour the complete building without limits back 25 years ago before the world became so dangerous. The book has pictures of rooms that I saw that are no longer available to the public.

I purchased this book mainly as a photographic resource for a project my firm is working on, and it performed that function admirably!

This is an amazing book with detailed history and wonderful pictures!It can be even useful for decoration...Thank you!

This building is the perfect imbodiment of the American Democracy, it is an iconic symbol of America the world over. This book does this great building justice, the images are crisp and vivid and the text is almost scholarly. Everytime i enter this building i get a shiver and feel the tingle of goose bumps, and am reminded of what a spectacularly beautiful building it is, and how the building

seems to hold the most awesome power. The history in its halls and the majesty of its presence makes the most incredible impression, if you are not moved by this building then frankly you need to check your pulse. If you have any interest in this iconic building or just appreciate beautiful books then i cant imagine you being disappointed in this book.

This is a wonderful book for a number of reasons: its beautiful illustrations, its wealth of detail delivered in a reverent and infectiously enthusiastic narrative, and (most of all) its unabashed defense of classical architecture and passionate call for a return to the style in our great buildings. One has merely to open this book to thank his lucky stars that most of monumental Washington, DC was built before the Marxist-inspired so-called "International Style" and its degenerate stylistic descendants inexplicably washed away centuries (nay, millenia) of Western art tradition. It’s appalling to read the sort of vindictives that were hurled against the last exponents of the classical style, men like Bacon, Russel, and Gilbert, by so-called "modernists" when they designed stunning masterpieces like the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, and the Supreme Court Building. And it’s galling to see what "modernists" offered the nation as an alternative to classical design: can anyone look at the Museum of American History on the National Mall and not shake his head in sadness? The place looks like an annex to a New Jersey shopping mall.Reed is a wonderfully able partisan of the classical style, and dismisses so-called "modern" architecture as the "Anorexic" style for its lack of decoration. That may be overly harsh; great architects can indeed produce great buildings even in non-classical styles - the Kennedy Center in Washington is a fine example of non-classical yet non-Anorexic design. But Reed has one undeniably true point: we as a civilization have allowed ourselves to be cheated our of our millenia old Western art tradition by so-called "artists" that have translated their lunatic fringe political views (the International Style was nothing but applied Marxism, designed to reflect the "means of production" to quote standard leftist gibberish) into drab design originally meant for "worker housing" and now applied (ironically) to US government and corporate structures. This "artistic" rabble still to a large degree indulges its proclivities towards lunatic fringe politics, and continues to so savagely attack the classical style (because they in fact hate Western culture and all it stands for) that it has become unthinkable to build a classical structure in the US today. Some are ignorant enough to claim that the classical style makes them "want to throw up," but the best they can come up with is the travesty of soulless design that is present day Houston or any number of Asian cities like Seoul.The closest we are allowed to claiming our Western heritage anymore is the so-called "Stripped Classical" applied to the new WW2 Memorial in Washington. I suppose we should thank our lucky stars that that we at least got

"Stripped Classical" instead of some appalling metal and glass gimmick that - like most "modern" structures - would rapidly deteriorate into a shabby pile of rusty metal, stained concrete, and peeling paint. But like Reed points out, "A building without decoration is like the heavens without stars." Why is "stripped" all we are allowed to enjoy anymore? Because leftist "artists" that can't stand the West, can't stand America, and most of all can't stand the culture from which it sprang browbeat us into standing glumly in "modern" museums looking at unintelligible and ugly "art" (a melting toilet at the Whitney comes to mind) and won't allow us to erect magnificent Corinthian or Ionic columns anymore. Really, it is sad. This magnificent book, at least, shows us what we once had, and what might have been. Let's hope future generations of Western civilization have more courage than we do, and spend their days recovering their own cultural heritage. Perhaps they will once more build for the sake of beauty rather than that of Marxist anti-Western hatred.

If your after a book on the Capitol Building, then go no further than this beautifully photographed and well layed out book. Full of rich detail and architectual illustrations.

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