



April 2011

TREASURY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

Inside this Newsletter...

- **Treasury's "Tricky" Paint Treatment.** Unique decorative paint treatment created in the early 1860s in the Treasury Building's corridor added Old World elegance to the South wing upon its completion (see page 2).
- **Yesteryear's Transportation to and from the Treasury Building.** Additional vintage photographs of the Treasury Building found and given to the Department, show how money was shipped into and out of the Treasury (see page 3).

Did THA's 1998 Ornament Coincidentally Predict the Current Merger Mandate?

- Special Sale for THA Members -

THA's 1998 ornament depicted the Comptroller of the Currency's historic vault in the Treasury Building, along with the Comely Rich house which, in 1831, was the first private residence to be mortgaged through a thrift savings bank, over which the Office of Thrift Supervision and its predecessor had responsibility. THA (coincidentally) combined these two bureaus in one ornament due to similarities in their functions.



Recently, the Dodd Frank Act, in an effort of regulatory reform, required that the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency and the Office of Thrift Supervision be merged together by July 2011, with the exception of certain functions that will

be moved to the Federal Reserve System.

THA has a limited number of "remainder" 1998 ornaments with the OCC and OTS historic images. Current members may order ornaments at a significant discount below the standard member price of \$12. For one ornament, the special price through July 31, 2011 is as follows: 1 ornament, \$9; 2 ornaments, \$8 each; 3 or more ornaments, \$7 each, shipping included.

To order, send a check along with a note requesting ornaments and your address to THA (address on page 3); no order form is required.

Historic Treasury Building Restoration Featured in C-SPAN National Broadcast

The restored rooms and spaces of the historic Treasury Building have been visited by thousands of people over the past 25 years on the Saturday morning public tours. However, only this month have people all around the country been able to see the elegant interiors of the Treasury Building — restored to their high Victorian style through contributions from the Treasury Historical Association's members and donors.

The official television network of the U.S. Congress, C-SPAN, visited Treasury several weeks ago and filmed scenes throughout the Building for five hours. Treasury Curator, Richard Cote, Ph.D., served as the narrator and host for the filming. The five-hour "shoot" has been edited for two 30-minute presentations to the public.

The first installment was aired three times on Sunday, April 17, on the CSPAN-3 channel. The second half of the presentation will be aired next month, tentatively May 15. THA will send e-mail advisories to members to publicize the air time.

During the first installment of the show, Dr. Cote brought the viewers into the majestic two-story marble Cash Room of the North Wing, and the



suites of Salmon Chase, President Lincoln's first Treasury Secretary and Hugh McCulloch, his second. The latter suite includes a room used by Andrew Johnson as his Presidential Office for a period of six weeks immediately following the assassination of President Lincoln. President Johnson allowed Lincoln's widow to stay at the Executive Mansion to settle her personal affairs and to deal in private with her grief over the loss of her husband.

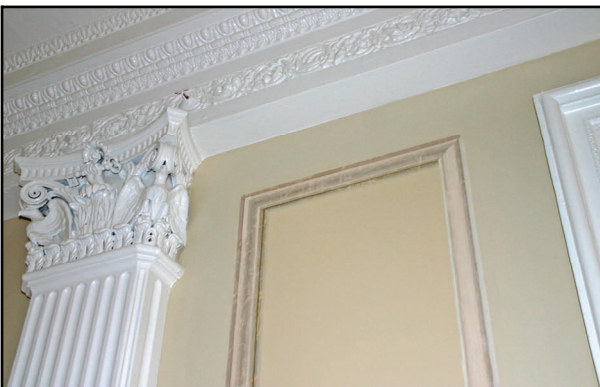
Members who were not able to view the April 17 airing of the first half-hour installment of the Treasury Building restoration program may view it on-line at www.cspan.org. In the Search box, enter Treasury Building Restoration, and you will be directed to a program summary page with an "additional information" line to click on, which will bring you to the options to select the full 30-minute program or a 5-minute YouTube preview.

Decorative Painting in Treasury's South Wing "Deceives the Eye"

Among the many mysteries surrounding the architectural history of the Treasury Building which remain unsolved, perhaps none is as prominent as the amount and quality of decorative painting throughout the South wing of the Building by the late 19th century.

Archival records and contractor invoices during the 1855 -1861 construction of the South wing include lists of decorative painting projects that were intended to be executed. In secondary period resources, there are comments about levels of decorative painting in the South wing of the Building that seems to have long since been removed or over-painted. As mentioned by author Pamela Scott in THA's new book about the Treasury Building, *Fortress of Finance*, "Extensive official records on the south wing's construction and ornamentation contain scant information on [Hubert] Schutter's decorative motifs or his allegorical content."

While documentation hinted at more decorative painting than what is currently on display in the South wing, what was lacking was an opportunity to try to uncover physical evidence in the locations cited in the disparate historic references. Over the years, the Department has uncovered many significant murals and decorative treatments within offices (the Johnson and Chase suites) and in distinct architectural spaces like the paint finishes and gold leaf in the domes above spiral staircases, the North Lobby and Cash Room ceilings. In these locations, archival evidence had



Original trompe l'oeil decorative painting which shows three-dimension-appearing molding (top and left are restoration of original treatment; right and bottom (not shown here) were infill-painted recently.

Provided a strong case for what to look for and the period these historic finishes originated.

Finally, during the recent repair and renovation project, there was an opportunity to do a paint analysis and take samples of wall finishes to be examined under a microscope. By chemically or mechanically removing paint layers, small exposure "windows" through modern paints were made in the public corridors of the South wing and those office spaces where archival records had established a possibility that there was decorative painting to be uncovered.

The three most impressive discoveries during these examinations were 19th century decorative painting on the ceilings in rooms 3314 and 3324 and a full wall panel exposure of *trompe l'oeil* (a French term for "fool the eye") decorative painting. This *trompe l'oeil* decoration simulated a framed panel wall trim that illustrated how the corridors on the third and fourth floors were decoratively painted. Between door frames and pilaster columns where there was enough wall space, decorative painters created the appearance of raised wood panels by adding painted strips that appear to be wood panel molding, complete with highlighted edges and cast shadows that give the appearance of three dimensions.

The physical integrity and paint materials used in the *trompe l'oeil* panels confirmed the archival information that the Schutter & Company painter had used an encaustic painting technique for the decoration of the corridor walls. This technique, which was prevalent in the United States in the 19th century, mixed pigment powders into a warmed wax ground. Once painted, the area was heat-set, fixing the coats of paint, although the materials still allowed a degree of flexibility. This flexibility, and the fact that the wax was providing an almost waterproof coating to the pigments, made encaustic painting one of the most durable of all mural and decorative painting techniques.

Once the decorative painting of one section of the South corridor was exposed during the examination, the original paints were cleaned and protected with a transparent coating. To demonstrate what a fully restored South corridor could look like, areas that were cracked or where small sections of the paint were lost were infill-painted with modern acrylic paints (for future conservators to easily distinguish them from the original, historic paints).

The single restored wall panel on the South side of the 3300 corridor is an excellent educational aid as part of the Treasury Building Saturday public tours. It is hoped that, in the near future, the rest of the corridor walls can be restored to complete the appearance of the South wing third and fourth floor corridors, as they would have appeared in the 1860's.

Editor's Note:

THA wishes to express its appreciation to Treasury's Office of the Curator, Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Headquarters Operations, Office of the Assistant Secretary (Management), for its assistance in providing the materials and obtaining the image for this article.

The restoration of the *trompe l'oeil* decorative painting is one of THA's projects described in its Capital Development Campaign brochure (page 4).



The THA Capital Development Campaign provides a means for all members and other donors to help the Association support the several priority projects identified for this effort, helping to preserve what has become one of Washington's favorite and most impressive classical buildings.

To date, THA has received donations from generous members and other contributors in an amount that is approaching \$200,000. Thus far, THA has given Treasury close to \$170,000 (in addition to other cash gifts separate from this Campaign). The remaining balance has been given by donors who have designated specific projects, and THA continues to solicit donations to fully-fund those projects. THA's Capital Development Campaign brochure and the donor's designation card may be obtained on THA's Internet website, www.treasuryhistoricalassn.org or by calling THA at (202) 298-0550 and leaving a message.

Treasury's Cash Transport in Vintage Images of its Reliance on Horse Power

In our past two issues, we presented a variety of historic images of the Treasury Building and vintage modes of Transportation. We are continuing this series as a result of a number of members' favorable reaction and continued interest.

Prior to the 1913 creation of the Federal Reserve System, under which coins and paper currency are distributed to regional



Federal Reserve Banks and eventually to local bank branches, Treasury had primary responsibility for distribution of the coins and currency produced by the United States Mint and the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, respectively. There were sub-Treasuries located around the Nation, which were supervised by Assistant Treasurers of the United States, all reporting to the Treasurer of the United States, who was housed in the Treasury Building. The Cash Room in the Treasury Building, also under the Treasurer's supervision, operated as a "banker's bank," where financial institutions would draw their stock-in-trade for their retail outlets (i.e. cash for their banks).

In the c. 1905 photograph above, horse-drawn money wagons of financial institutions are seen backed-up to the Treasury Building's East wing to receive shipments of money. Coin and currency were shuttled out of what is now known as the "bicycle door" as well as a door at the end of the ground-level of the North wing (now a window in a below-sidewalk-level grate.

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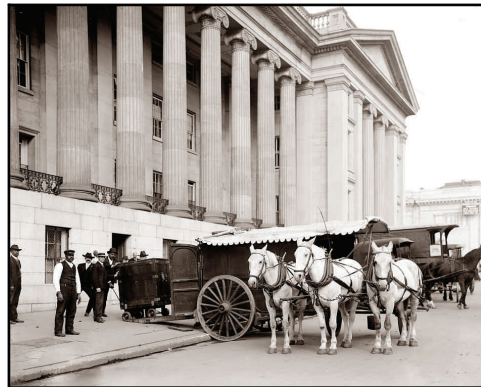
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A great number of the financial institutions were located close to Treasury — so many, that 15th Street, NW between F Street and K Street was known as "bankers' row."



A closer c. 1905 view below shows the sizeable and very heavy money container being rolled into the back of a three-horse-drawn money wagon. The more formally attired men are believed to be security guards.

Note in the photo above that the columns consist of "drums" of about four feet in height that are cemented together. These were sandstone columns that deteriorated and were replaced with single-piece granite columns in 1909-1910. Also, note the railing in both pictures, which served as a safety device when employees and visitors entered the building through the second story colonnade, after ascending a lateral staircase on 15th Street, where the five ground-level doors now stand. The railing was removed and lost in 1909-1910 until a recent restoration project brought replica railings to the colonnade last June, almost exactly 100 years after the originals had been removed.

The first national currency (known as "greenbacks") was produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing's (BEP) predecessor, the National Currency Bureau, in the attic and the basement of the Treasury Building, beginning in 1862. Extensive structural changes were made on a fast-track basis in the South wing of the Treasury Building, which had just been completed the year before, in order to accommodate the heavy production equipment and to ventilate the Building of the noxious fumes from the inks and other chemicals used in the manufacturing process. Additional changes were made to the engineering drawings for the West wing, which was under construction at the time, and completed in 1864.

In 1880, the BEP moved to a "home of its own" at the corner of 14th and B Streets, SW, a red brick building with a tower that still stands today. This relocation required a new approach for transporting paper money

from the BEP to the Treasury Building and to the Cash room and vaults, for distribution to financial institutions and the public.

In the photograph below, also c. 1905, we see what is believed to be a money wagon, heavily guarded by five police officers on the tailgate and presumably driven by another one or two, as it enters the new Hamilton Place entry to the Treasury "moat," leading to the basement of the Building. Previously, access to the moat was via an East Executive Avenue (then known as 15-1/2 Street) driveway that turned 90 degrees to access the area. Although the wagon is motorized, there was still reliance on horses for the lead security policeman.



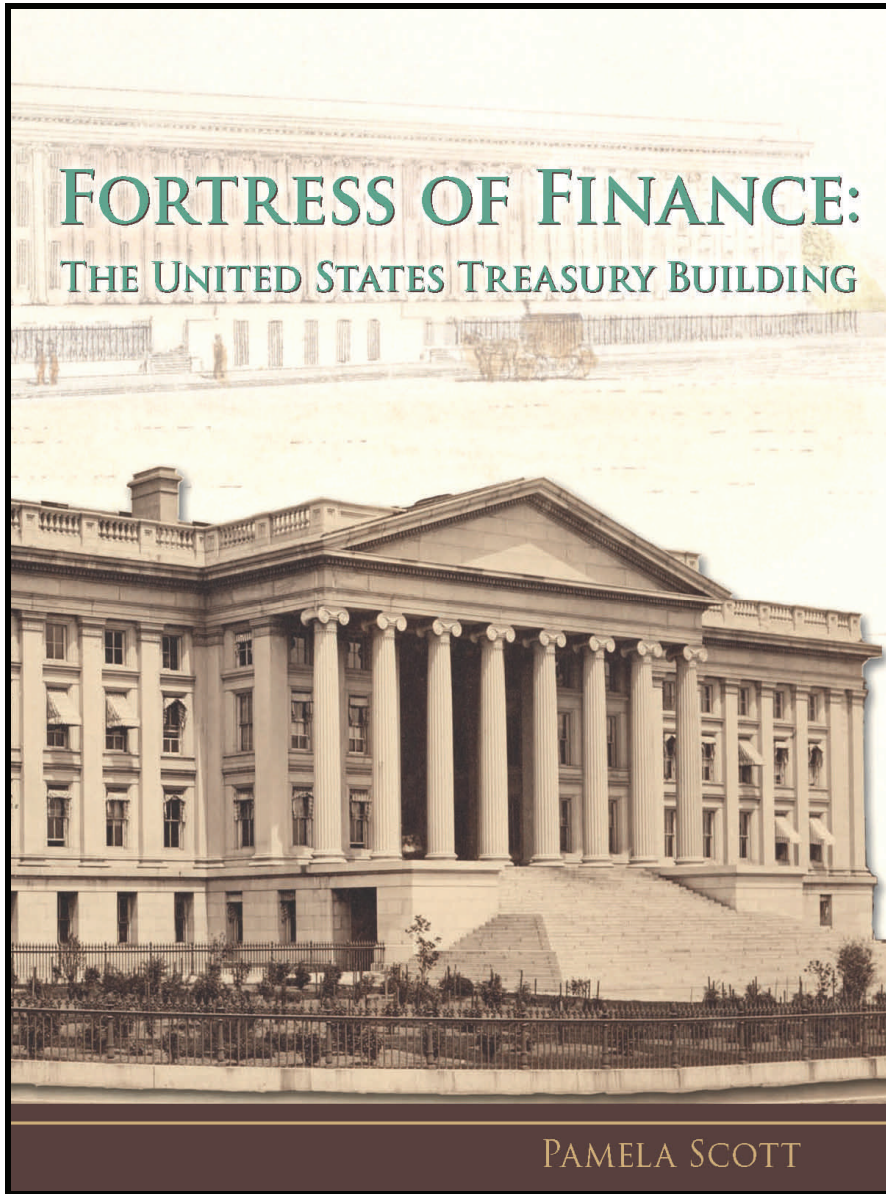
The above photograph is one of the two that has been "colorized" and inserted into one of the pair of glass coasters that THA offers as an appreciation gift for donors at the Supporting level and higher for 2011.

Moving or Changing Your E-mail Address?

Please keep THA posted if you move to another address or if you change your e-mail address, so we can continue to send you timely notification of our noon-time lectures, annual membership meeting and other special events.

If you received this newsletter in hard-copy format through the U.S. Mail, please take a moment to give us your e-mail address so we can reduce the postage expenses that THA incurs with each mailing. The simplest way to advise us of a physical address change or a start of or change in e-mail address, is to call THA at (202) 298-0550. (Do not be concerned that there does not appear to be an option in our announcement for this notification; just leave a message after the tone.)

THE FIRST COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE TREASURY BUILDING



*Published by the
Treasury Historical Association*

Fortress of Finance: The United States Treasury Building, the Treasury Historical Association's book on the history of the National Historic Landmark Treasury Building next to the White House and the predecessor Treasury Office is the result of over eight years of research by architectural historian Pamela Scott, author of *Temple of Liberty*, a history of the U.S. Capitol Building, and co-author of *Buildings of the District of Columbia*. She has developed a captivating account of the construction of the Building and its unique architectural features that have made it one of Washington, DC's most magnificent structures. The book includes an appendix with a summary of histories of the Treasury's current bureaus and those now in other departments and agencies.

The retail price for **Fortress of Finance** is \$55.00, plus shipping and handling.

Fortress of Finance:

- Is a substantial hardback book, over 3 pounds in weight, about 8-1/2 by 11 inches, with 336 pages, printed on high-quality matte coated paper, with wrap-around illustrated heavy paper dust-cover.
- Contains 185 images of historic drawings, blueprints, etchings, paintings and photo-graphs, ranging from sepia, black-and-white and color-tinted to 21st-century full-color digital images.

- Has an elegant "leather-effect" case wrap, gold-stamp title on front and spine, and "signatures" (i.e., sections of the book) stitched to the binding, not glued, for long lasting quality of the book.

To Order Fortress of Finance:

Please complete the form below and return it or a copy of this page, along with your check (payable to the Treasury Historical Association) to: **Treasury Historical Association, P.O. Box 28118, Washington, DC 20038-8118.**

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