



June 1997

TREASURY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

# NEWSLETTER

## **Inside this Newsletter...**

**Treasury Fire Damage Repairs Made Slowly.** Work in the Treasury Building's 1869 North wing proceeds very slowly, due to merging several programmed systems upgrade projects with fire damage repair.

**1997 Commemorative Ornament Unveiled.** The ninth in our series of bureau holiday ornaments, recognizing the earliest mission of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms on the occasion of ATF's 25th Anniversary as a bureau of the Department of the Treasury will soon be available. Please order early via form on reverse.

**Time to Submit Your 1997 Membership.** If you haven't responded to our recent renewal request letter, please do so today with a tax-deductible contribution to THA.

## **A New Deal for the Arts Exhibition at Archives**

The National Archives and Records Administration recently opened an exhibition on 1933-1943 New Deal Arts Projects that will extend until January 11, 1998. During that 11-year period, tax dollars from the U.S. Treasury employed artists, musicians, actors, writers, photographers and dancers. This special exhibition tells the story of the short-lived, but remarkable cultural endeavors to provide work for jobless artists and to promote American art and culture.

The National Archives exhibit hall is located on Constitution Avenue, between 7th and 9th Streets, NW, and is open 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. though Labor Day, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. during the Fall and Winter months.

## Treasury Building Notes—

### **Early Concerns for a Fireproof Treasury**

Did you know...??? Following the Treasury Building fire on March 31, 1833, the Secretary hired an architect who had earned a reputation for designing fireproof buildings in the South to conduct a study leading to a design for a new fireproof Treasury Building. The Secretary's interest at that time went beyond a concern for this one building, as he had responsibility for all U.S. Government buildings, nationwide.

Architect Robert Mills' plans were well received by the Secretary and the President, and they sought and received a Congressional appropriation of \$100,000 for the construction. The construction included very little flammable material — primarily the window sashes, doors and staircase railings were wood; all other elements were brick, stone, marble and a small amount of iron. The fireproof Mills building constitutes the 15th Street wing and center wing of today's Main Treasury Building.

Mills' design included the impressive colonnade on 15th Street, consisting of 30 pillars, each 36 feet tall and the unsupported interior cantilevered staircases, both bold for early Washington, D.C. The construction period from 1836-42 was lengthy due to several causes, not the least of which was the determination of the precise location for the Building. Mills wanted a deeper setback from the street; however, conflicting issues, including a desire to build New Treasury in line with the Old State Department Building to the North, resulted in its placement closer to 15th Street. This precluded a grand entry staircase into the building as the architect desired, so Mills designed lateral exterior staircases leading to an entry that was between the columns of the long colonnade into what is now the second floor of the Building. In 1909-10, the exterior staircases were removed during a major exterior renovation.

## THA's 1997 Ornament Notes ATF Mission

As the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms prepares to celebrate its 25th Anniversary as a Treasury bureau on July 1, 1997 (having "spun off" from IRS in 1972), THA announces its commemorative holiday ornament that notes this anniversary. ATF's functional history began with the first alcohol tax law passed in 1791, which authorized Treasury Department collectors — ancestors of today's ATF agents — to assess tax on the production of whiskey. Three years later, the farmers in western Pennsylvania led an uprising called the Whiskey Rebellion to protest this tax. President George Washington and Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, in an unprecedented and unrepeated event, went to the area to persuade the farmers to pay the tax. THA has portrayed this event in our 24-karat gold finished ornament.

(Continued, next column)

Please use the form below to order your 1997 ornament. No other advertisement will be sent to THA members. Cut out this column, including your mailing label, and mail it with your check to:

**Treasury Historical Association  
P.O. Box 28118  
Washington, DC 20038-8118**

### Order for 1997 Ornament

\_\_\_ 1997 Ornament on ATF 25th Anniversary @ \$10 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Less early order discount for orders postmarked by 8/15/97 @ \$1 less per each. - \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Less bulk order discount for orders of 30 or more (1 check, 1 destination) @ \$1 less each ornament: - \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total of order: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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[ Address Label ]  
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## Ornament, continued

The ornament measures approximately 2-3/4 by 3 inches, and is finished with colored enamel to complement the gold finish. As are all other THA ornaments, it is accompanied by an educational enclosure card and hanging ribbon, and is gift boxed.



Non-member price is \$12 for each ornament, which includes postage. Current (i.e., 1997) THA members' price is \$10 each. An early order discount is offered for orders that THA receives by August 15, 1997, as well as a discount for bulk orders of 30 or more units at any time. Delivery to our customers will start in October.

## Mark Your Calendar for Third "Salute the Square" Event

October 18, 1997 will be the date for the third annual "Salute the Square" event where the neighborhood buildings of Lafayette Square will host an open house of their respective facilities. The Treasury Building will be opened that Saturday, and the public will be able to visit the Andrew Johnson Suite, also known as the temporary White House of the Treasury. Further details will follow in the next quarterly THA newsletter.

## Speaker Suggestions ?

*If you have speakers to recommend for our noontime lecture series on topics that are related to Treasury history, general Federal history, or financial history, please let us know by either writing to us at our post office box address or by calling our information and message line at (202) 895-5250.*

## Treasury Repairs Go Slowly Due to System Upgrade Projects

While all of us are anxious to see last June's fire damage to the North wing of the Treasury Building be repaired as quickly as possible, the Department is moving forward in a coordinated manner to work concurrently on various major systems projects that had already been programmed for the Building. Long-standing planned projects include upgrading the electrical, the heating, venting and air conditioning, and the telecommunications systems throughout the entire Treasury Building. These projects would, under normal circumstances, have taken a number of years to plan and fully implement, on a phased basis.

In recognition of the full range of construction work that is needed, Treasury plans a phased approach for the major systems upgrades. The North wing will be done first, with fire damage repairs being done concurrently—rather than repairing the fire damage immediately and then later subjecting the North wing to further work related to needed electrical, HVAC and telecommunications system upgrades.

From information obtained by THA, we conclude that the fire damage repair work will begin in approximately one year — two years following the tragic rooftop fire.

## Are You an Up-to-Date Member of THA?

Recently, THA's membership committee chair sent renewal request letters to members whose status in the Association expired December 31, 1996, asking them to renew with a tax-deductible donation for 1997.

The first line of your mailing label; indicates the year of your membership (except for some recent renewals we are still processing). If you are not current, please renew your membership in THA today so we can continue our educational and historic preservation missions. Thanks!