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years

**NEW YORK STATE
EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT
BUILDING**

1912-2012

A GUIDE TO
THE EDUCATION BUILDING



The University of the State of New York • The State Education Department
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THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
Regents of The University

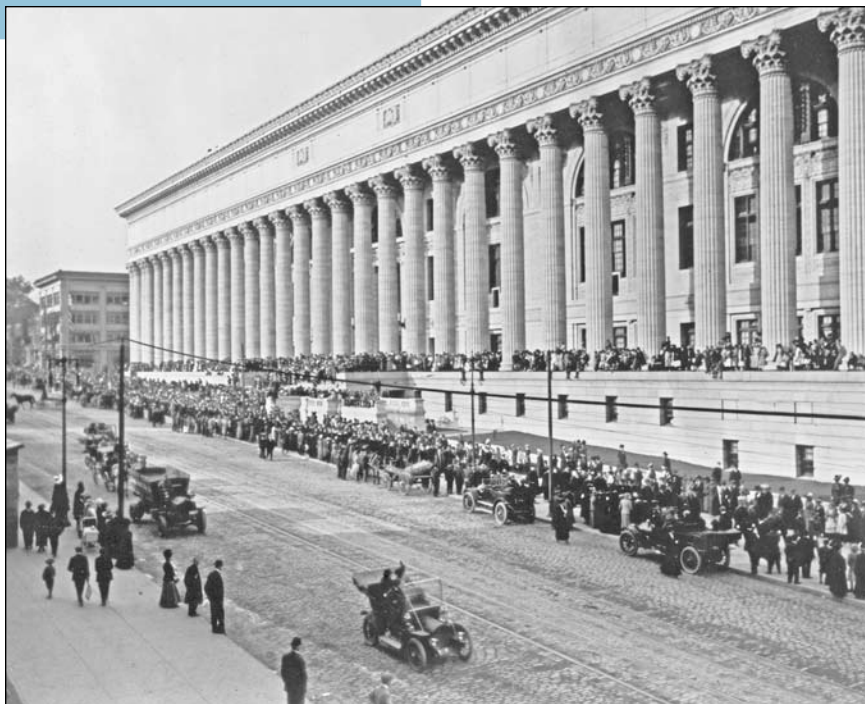
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Revised 2012



The interplay of sunlight and shadow was in the architect's mind when he planned the colonnade with a southern exposure. This view along the arcade behind the columns shows how well his idea worked. It also displays the elaborate tiled and terracotta ceiling. Detail of the modified Corinthian capitals may be seen at the top.

Three Dozen Columns

View it first, if you will, as a building — an uncommonly attractive one. Then come inside and explore at leisure what is there.

It stands in sharp contrast to its near neighbor, the New York State Capitol. This was the intention when it was erected. An Education Building, its planners felt, ought to radiate an aura of culture and spiritual values, as distinct from the affairs of government and politics. It should “generate intellectual energy.”

The State Education Building, then, is neoclassical in style, with the Grecian note dominant. Its most salient outward feature is the colonnade of 36 giant pillars — the longest colonnade in the United States and presumably in the world. These columns belong to the Corinthian order of architecture, somewhat modified.

Because of its many-pillared classicism upon a hillcrest, this structure of the 20th century readily brings to mind the Parthenon with which Pericles crowned the heights of ancient Athens. The parallel is not too far-fetched in yet another sense: It tends the flame of the quest for knowledge and wisdom which first glowed fleetingly during the Periclean Golden Age. It is a monumental symbol of the American ideal of education for all people. But this building is vastly more than a shrine, temple, or symbol. It is the working home of the New York State Education Department, of The University of the State of New York, and of the Board of Regents. Behind its serene columns throbs the heart of the educational system of

the Empire State. This means leadership of the total range of educational activities within the State's boundaries — grade schools, high schools, colleges, libraries, and museums — and the continuing education for adults nowadays so important.

Initially the State Library occupied the second floor in its entirety. The State Museum, with a profusion of natural history and anthropological displays occupied the fifth floor. In its hay day, the Museum tallied as many as 225,000 visitors in a year. Guided groups often were taken to admire the Regents Room and Chancellors Hall. Students who were subject to the Regents examinations would like to get a glimpse of the places where they were printed and shipped out to the schools. These rooms were protected by barred doors and windows, and kept under security restrictions against any possible advance “leak” of questions. Today the printing and shipping is housed in the Cultural Education Center. In 1976, the State Museum moved to the Cultural Education Center and in 1978, the State Library followed.

In 1980, the services of architects Quinlivan, Pierck and Krause were obtained to evaluate the Education Department's space needs and to provide a comprehensive, long-range program for the building's future use. In their five-volume report, QPK developed and recommended a program of 14 self-contained projects that could proceed sequentially to expand, fully use and upgrade the building to present-day standards.



The longest colonnade in history was a bold stroke on the part of the architect, Henry Hornbostel. He further flouted tradition by making the entablature above it abnormally thick. The doors at the basement end, in foreground, are entrances to Chancellors Hall.

In 1983, the services of Einhorn Yaffee Prescott, Architecture and Engineering, P.C., of Albany were obtained to design two of the main building projects — conversion of the fifth floor space formerly occupied by the State Museum to office use, and replacement of the electrical/mechanical systems throughout the building.

In subsequent years, other prominent architectural and engineering firms were engaged in various structural, mechanical, electrical and code projects to bring the National Historic Register building up to 21st century standards. Notable among these, in 1995, the architectural firm of Collins and Scoville took on the task to restore and redesign the massive second floor rotunda and former State Library spaces.

The Dream of Dr. Draper

Ground was broken in 1908, and the building was dedicated in October 1912. The cost, including purchase of site, approximated \$4 million. When opened it was lauded as “one of the 12 most beautiful buildings in the world.” Whatever the basis for that extravagant claim, it was undeniable the first major governmental building ever erected for exclusively educational purposes. Hence it was widely hailed as

marking the dawn of a new era in education. Its dedication brought to Albany a myriad of prominent educators, some from foreign countries. That occasion was a personal triumph for Dr. Andrew Sloan Draper, New York’s first Commissioner of Education. If one man could be said to have fathered the building, it was he. Although weakened by illness so that he came to the stage in a wheelchair, Dr. Draper gave the dedicatory address, in which he said: “This building recognizes the fact that the culture of the soul is a work which the State is not only to consent to and encourage, but which it is to aid and promote.”

The building was born of the unification of the State Education Department. Prior to then, the school affairs of New York State had been handicapped by an awkward split in authority. There existed a Department of Public Instruction, responsible for the elementary schools only. Wholly separate from that was the Board of Regents, holding jurisdiction over high schools, academies, colleges, and universities. For a long time educational leaders, including Dr. Draper, had preached an end to this schism. The Unification Act of 1904 at last merged the two agencies into the State Education Department, with the Board of Regents as its governing body and a Commissioner of Education as executive officer for the Regents.

Casting about for a first Commissioner, the Legislature chose Dr. Draper, who resigned as president of the University of Illinois to accept the position. For him it was a stimulating challenge.

Upon arriving, he found the administrative offices of the new Department and of the Board of Regents, as well as the collections of the State Library and parts of the collections of the State Museum, all occupying crowded quarters in a section of the State Capitol. Almost at once, Commissioner Draper launched a vigorous crusade for an education building. No State at that time had such a thing. Legislation authorizing it was passed in 1906.

Dr. Draper saw the building to



*The memorial to
Dr. Andrew Sloan Draper,
who fathered the building.
Its sculptor was Charles Keck.*

completion, but died 6 month after its dedication. He is memorialized by a distinctive piece of sculpture in the foyer.

Dr Draper had also served as Superintendent of the former Department of Public Instruction from 1886–1892.

The Architecture

They planned a building of sufficient majesty, beauty, and repose to speak its purpose to the world. They thought it should “impress the popular mind with the important place which education holds in the thought and policies of the Empire State.” It ought to be of an architectural style that would retain its charm through the shifting tastes of years to come.

A design competition was advertised, and 63 architects responded. The Board of Award singled out the 10 proposals it liked best, and invited the authors of these to submit fresh drawings for a final contest.

The choice then fell upon a design of Greek classical flavor from a New York firm, Palmer & Hornbostel. In actuality, its creator was Henry Hornbostel, the junior partner, a gifted young man with a trim golden beard and sparkling personality.



Henry Hornbostel, the architect.

Paris-trained, he was a daring innovator who liked to add his own ideas to classical architecture. He was noted for solving problems that stumped other architects, and for winning competitions.

The long colonnade was the bold stroke that clinched the Albany contract — a dramatic instance of Hornbostel’s flair for artistic perspective.

Never in history had so many columns been placed in a single row. Some rivals and critics protested its length as being monotonous and as violating the sacred tenets of architecture.

For another thing, the entablature upheld by the columns was abnormally high. The fault-finders pounced upon this, too, as being intolerable defiance of the rules. But Hornbostel’s feeling was that a narrow frieze would have looked weak on top of so long a colonnade.

The controversial colonnade was Hornbostel’s solution to another architectural problem. The building had to fill a long city block with a frontage of 660 feet. It was going to be faced across the street by a solid rank of business structures. Until these structures were demolished many years later, the only real view of the building must be from an oblique slant, looking from one end or the other. Under such circumstances, an irregular facade would have been objectionable. The straight perspective lines of the colonnade enticed the eye.

Moreover, the architect had something else in mind. The building would have a southern exposure, with the sun upon its face many hours of the day. The columns would produce a pleasing interplay of sunlight and shadow.

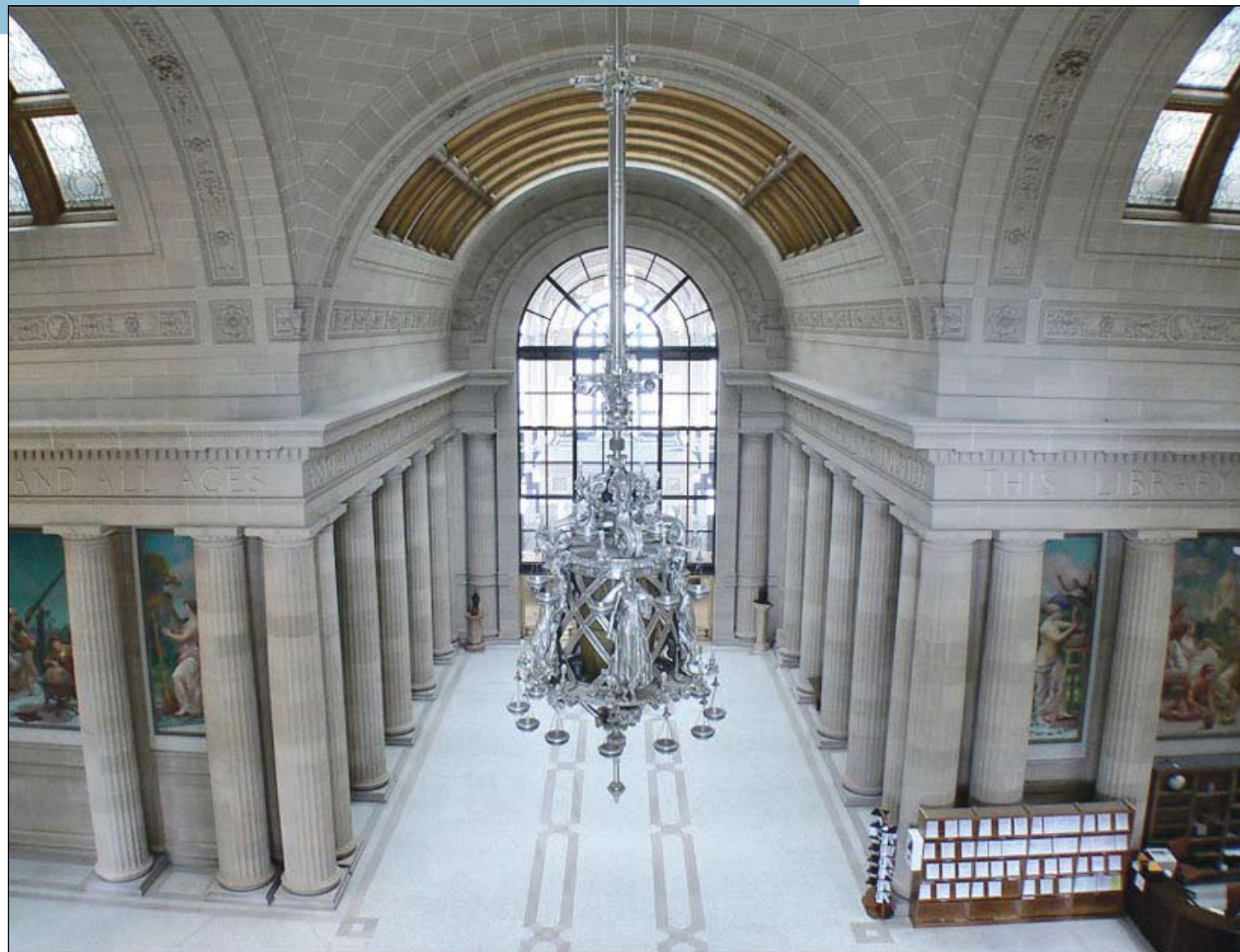
The 36 fluted pillars of Vermont Danby marble are 90 feet tall, and in diameter 6 1/2 feet, at base. Incidentally, they are not solid, but hollow inside. They are definitely Corinthian, even though Hornbostel took liberties with the classic Corinthian capital. For instance, he invented some reverse volutes unknown to the ancient Greeks.

Back of the columns is a long arcade which has a strikingly ornamental ceiling of blue and white tiles. The original intent was that this be lighted at night, throwing the columns in silhouette. At the third level in the wall of this arcade, the architect introduced a series of big semilunar windows that are audaciously nonclassical. Even hostile critics admitted that these windows made a happy contrast with the colonnade.

The building posed yet other problems for an architect. For example, it was based lengthwise on a slope. Hornbostel dealt with this by putting the auditorium, Chancellors Hall, in what amounts to a basement situation at the downhill end.

The construction contract went to R. T. Ford & Company, of Rochester, at a figure of \$3,622,282. The stipulated completion date was January 1, 1911. Unforeseen difficulties dragged out the work until October 1912, when it was speeded up for the dedication. Had it been finished on schedule, the State Library would have been spared tragic losses: the Capitol fire occurred in March 1911, in which the library was the chief victim.

A stonemason employed on the building had a pet cardinal, crippled by a broken wing. The bird died in winter when the ground was frozen so it could not be buried in the backyard. The mason chipped a hollow space in a block of



The architectural pivot of the building's interior is its noble rotunda. In another departure from convention, this rises from the second floor, not the first.



building stone, laid the cardinal's body in it for a sarcophagus, and mortared the stone into the Education Building directly above the front entrance.

The enormous expansion in the State's educational responsibilities finally made more office room essential. The Addition, as it is called, was erected within the angle at the northeast corner of the old building, tied into it by bridging corridors. This new wing was opened in 1960.

After the passage of a half-century, it would have been impractical,

The Addition, in a radically different style, adjoins the original building and contains nearly twice the office space.

as well as prohibitively costly, to imitate the original architecture in the Addition. It was designed by the State Architect's staff in a modern, functional kind of architecture that would clash as little as possible with the main building. Its cost was \$5 million. With 10 compact floors, it provides nearly twice as much working space as the much larger building of 1912.

The Sculpture

A sculptor in tune with architecture was rare. Hornbostel was on the watch for any who were, and was happy to discover Charles Keck. The Education Building was one of the earliest of several projects upon which he employed the upcoming young sculptor.

From study in Rome, Keck had picked up a deep understanding of architecture that gave him a special knack for making his sculpture harmonize with a building. The assignments given him on the Albany job were: two electroliers flanking the front entrance and two more at the west entrance; a large bronze medallion over the main entrance; a chandelier for the State Library rotunda; and four chandeliers for the auditorium.

Keck used his own nieces and nephews as models for the delightful clusters of children seated around the standards of the electroliers in front. They typify the two phases of a child's development — mental and physical. One group depicts youngsters at their studies; the other, relaxing after play. These are life-sized casts in bronze.

For the twin electroliers at the Swan Street portal, Keck employed round pillars studded with the signs of the zodiac, suggesting the origins of scientific inquiry.

The medallion above the front doorway is the most sensitive touch Keck left upon the building. Molded in bas-relief, it shows a mother (or a teacher) instructing

a girl and a boy from a folio outspread on her lap.

The chandeliers, all identical in their framework pattern, are 14 feet in height. The one in the rotunda is encircled by draped female figures and plated with silver foil. The four in Chancellors Hall are gilded, and their sculpture are nude cherubs. Travelers have noted a similarity between these and a medieval chandelier in the Cathedral of Pisa, Italy. The resemblance is strong, but not exact. It is conjectured that Keck, though never an imitative artist, drew his inspiration from that source while studying in Italy.



The theme here depicts youngsters at their studies. Charles Keck used his nieces and nephews as models for the groups around the electroliers.



This fine bronze medallion above the front entrance is also by Keck.

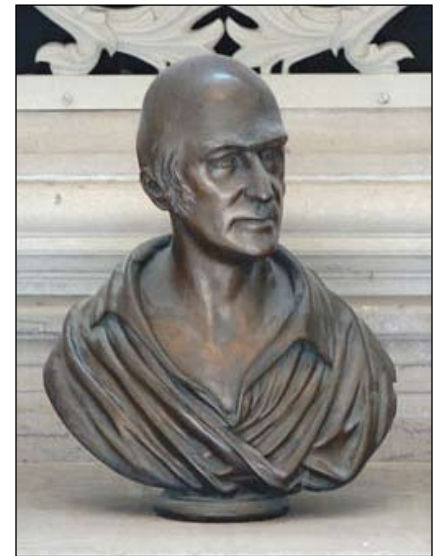
After Commissioner Draper's death, the New York State Teachers Association campaigned for a memorial to him in the building he had brought into being. With small contributions from teachers and pupils all over the State, a fund of \$10,000 was raised for this purpose. Because of his prior work on the building, Keck was engaged for a piece of sculpture. This is a full-length bronze figure of

Dr. Draper, in high relief, set into a semicrypt. Across its base moves an appealing procession of pupils. The memorial is affixed to the wall of the foyer at the foot of the grand staircase. When it was unveiled during a Regents Convocation in 1917, school children strewed flowers on the floor beneath.

On a marble standard to the right of the doors entering the old State Library's reading room is a bronze cast of the head of Dante, the immortal Italian poet. This was a gift to The University of the State of New York in 1921 during widespread observances of the 600th anniversary of Dante's death. The presentation was made in a Chancellors Hall ceremony by the Italian Ambassador to the United States, Vittorio Rolando-Ricci, on behalf of the Italian colony of Albany. The cast is a copy of the original by an unknown 15th century sculptor, in the Museum of Naples.

In the opposite niche may be seen a miniature duplicate of the once very popular statue, *The Hiker*, typifying a soldier of the Spanish-American War, made by Allen G. Newman in 1904.

Aligned on the marble ledge above the staircase in the foyer are several busts that were gifts to the State Library in a century gone. Reading from the head of the stairs, their subjects are: Francis Granger of Canandaigua, a prominent Whig politician of the pre-Civil War turmoil, sculptured by Chauncey B. Ives; Judge Amasa J. Parker, Albany jurist and Democratic bigwig of the same era, whose unspecified sculptor was perhaps Erastus Dow Palmer; Gideon Hawley, New York's first superintendent of common schools, 1812-21; the Rev. Sylvester L. Malone, a Brooklyn clergyman of Civil War time who was a member of the Board of Regents; Celestin Hippeau, a French author whose government sent him to the United States in 1867 to make a report on American education.



Dr. Draper told of finding a plaster cast of this bust gathering dust in a lumber room. He had it cleaned up and reproduced in bronze. The subject is Gideon Hawley, first State Superintendent of Public Instruction and known as "father of the common schools." The bust is one of several on the ledge over the main stairs.

Freedom Bells

*by Lona Flynn, Town of Cicero,
New York Historian*

Soon after Harry Truman began his second Term of Office as President of the United States, he started a Savings Bond Drive with the Liberty Bell as a logo. This bond drive, stressing both savings and independence, was to run from May 15 to July 4, 1950. As an incentive to residents of all the States, Truman conceived the idea of Freedom Bells.

Except for the crack, these Bells were made as exact replicas of our 1776 Liberty Bell according to size, weight, and manufacturing process of markings and tone. They were cast by the Paccard Freres Foundry in the village of Annecy-de-Vieux, France. The Bells are 12 feet in circumference around the lip, 7.5 feet around the crown and weigh about 2,000 pounds each. A wishboned shaped mounting support about 6 feet high added another ton of weight.

The Biblical inscription on the Bell, taken from Leviticus 25:10 is: "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants there-of."

Costing \$2,200.00 each, 53 bells were brought duty-free by ship to the United States, one for each of the 48 states, with bells also for Alaska, Hawaii, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and The Virgin Islands, not yet States. These Bells were given to the United States by the American Smelting and Refining Company,

Anaconda Copper Mining Company, Kennecott Copper Corporation, Miami Copper Company, Phelps-Dodge Corporation and the American Metal Company, Ltd.

Our New York State bell is located on the second floor of the Education Building.

In recent years the bell was rung on January 20, 1981 when Iran released the American hostages, the day President Carter left the White House and Ronald Reagan became President.

Five years later it was shipped to New York City and was used to start the parade commemorating the renovations of the Statue of Liberty, the weekend of July 4, 1986.

The Plaque in front of our New York Bell, which was donated by Revere Copper, says in part: "Dedicated to you, a free citizen in a free land, this reproduction of the Liberty Bell is presented as an inspirational symbol. In standing before this symbol, you have the opportunity to dedicate your self, as did our founding fathers to the principles of the individual freedom for which our Nation stands."



The Liberty Bell, given to the State in 1950, is one of 53 replicas that were cast in France. It is found at the landing of the main staircase.

The Paintings

Promenading the walls of the old State Library Rotunda are 32 mural panels whose message is “The Aspiration of Man for Intellectual Enlightenment and the Results of Its Attainment.” They were painted during a 5-year span in a private studio at Bronxville, N.Y., by an artist whose friends called him “Gentle Will.” His name was Will H. Low, and he liked to paint tender, lissome forms in gossamer raiment.

Like the sculptor, he strove to make his art harmonize with the architecture. To ornament a building with Grecian tone, Low picked themes out of Greek mythology, and then equated them with milestones of modern progress. For example, he portrayed the fall of Icarus while an airplane triumphantly rides the sky. In colors and composition, too, the murals were carefully schemed to blend with the stone and the architectural lines of their setting.

In total, they cover 2,038 square feet of canvas. The fee allowed was \$30,000. Dates ranging between 1913 and 1918 appear with Low’s signature in the bottom corners. During some of that period, he also was doing a set of murals for the Legislative Library in the State Capitol.

It is often glibly said that these murals are “dated” and unduly sentimental, but they have genuine merits to balance such critique. As architectural accompaniment, they were rated when done as being “near perfection.” To be sure, they deferred to popular taste of the World War I generation, but they did so without unqualified surrender. Low had learned his figure-painting well in Paris, and likewise the liberated use of colors as practiced then by the French “open-air school.” His murals possess a refined beauty, grace of line, and delicate sensuality.

Turning now to other paintings in the building:

Historically, if not artistically, the most noteworthy is a heroic sized portrait of George Washington that hangs in the old Law Library. It was painted in 1813 by Ezra Ames, an Albany portrait artist, whose paintings today bring high prices. The Legislature commissioned Ames to do the Washington portrait and also one of George Clinton, the State’s first Governor, in the same size. The two paintings were admired showpieces of the old Capitol, hanging in its legislative chambers. When the new Capitol was built, they became fixtures of the Executive



Chamber. Some years ago Washington was moved across the street, while Clinton remains in the Capitol.

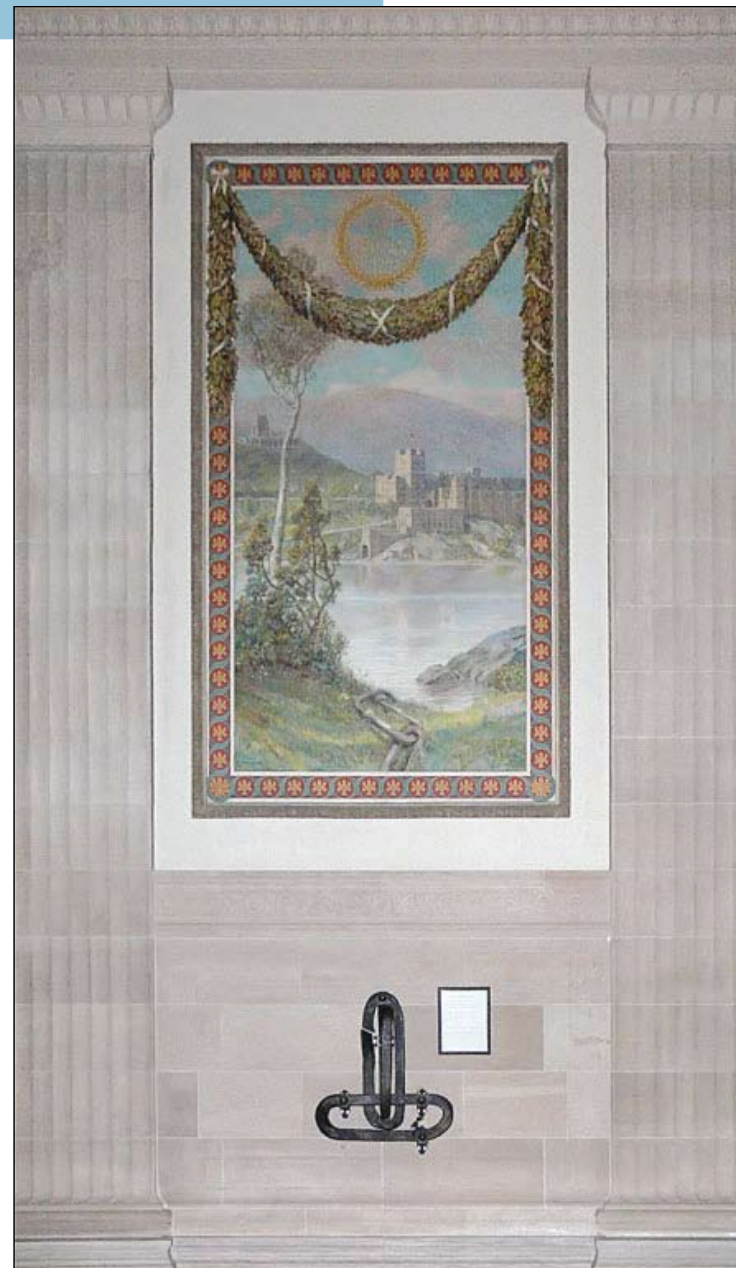
Four of the murals: Theseus, the Pathfinder; Icarus, the Sky-Soarer; Prometheus, the Power-Giver; and Fortuna, the Pacemaker.

A full-length portrait of Ezra Cornell, the founder of Cornell University, hangs in the microfilm room of the old State Library. This was commissioned by the Legislature in 1893, “as an evidence of the grateful appreciation of the people of the State of New York for his eminent services in behalf of the cause of higher education.” The artist was John Colin Forbes, a Canadian.

As each Commissioner of Education, in turn, retires, his portrait is added to a cumulative gallery along the main-floor corridor. In like manner, the past Chancellors of The University of the State of New York are enshrined in the Regents Room. John Laurance was not a Chancellor, but he was one of the original Regents appointed in 1784, and the likeness of his riddy countenance is the real heirloom of the Regents Room. Painted from life by an unidentified artist, it was presented to the Regents in 1914 by a descendant, McDougall Hawkes. John Laurance has a special claim to fame: as Judge Advocate-General for New York during the Revolution, he presided at the trial of Major John André, the British spy to whom Benedict Arnold attempted to betray West Point.



The Washington portrait by Ezra Ames, in the old Law Library, was painted on order of the Legislature in 1813. It is the most valuable painting in the building and is currently on loan and on display at the State Capitol.



Bolted to the wall are three huge links of the iron chain strung across the Hudson as a barrier to British warships in the Revolution. The links are currently on loan and on display at the State Capitol.

The mural above relates them to West Point as it looks today.

Regents Room

At the west end of the building, on the main floor, is a sanctum of particular import. This is the room in which the Board of Regents meets for monthly sessions.

Legislated into existence in 1784, the Board of Regents is the oldest policy-making educational body in the world. Indeed, it began functioning 5 years before the government of the United States. The very name of Regents carries a singular, rather awesome, prestige.

The Regents are 17 in number, citizens of outstanding caliber, elected by the Legislature for terms of 5 years, and they serve without compensation. The Education Department is their operating agency, and the Commissioner of Education their executive officer. They preside over The University of the State of New York, which embraces all schools, colleges, libraries, museums, and a multiplicity of other educational agencies.

Having taken occupancy of the new building, the Board of Regents in 1915 passed a resolution naming its place of meeting the Regents Room. At the same time it designated the auditorium as Chancellors' Hall — "in memory of the illustrious chancellors of The University of the State of New York." A Chancellor is the presiding officer of the Board of Regents.

Walled high with Indiana limestone, the Regents Room has an elaborately ornamental ceiling of carved oak, the design of which spills down on all sides into a handsome cornice. The walls are populous with the portraits of past Chancellors.

Interjoined with the Regents Room is the suite occupied by the Commissioner of Education and his staff. The Commissioner's private office, appropriately, is the finest in the building.



The carved oak ceiling is the most noteworthy feature of the Regents Room itself. The first portrait on the left is of Alexander Hamilton, copied from the original by John Trumbull in the National Gallery, Washington, D.C.



The Commissioner's Tudor Gothic office, finest in the building.

Its style is Tudor Gothic, expressed in paneled mahogany wainscoting, and there is a splendid tiled fireplace. The seals of colleges and universities of the State surround the walls. The architect was experienced in residential design, as well as in great public structures, and he brought this facet of his talent to bear in the Regents Room and the Commissioner's office.

Chancellors Hall is an alloy of Grecian and Renaissance ideas. With an upstairs gallery, this two-storied auditorium seats 800 people. Originally its stage was a curving loggia set off by four Corinthian columns. In course of time, the two inside pillars were removed to allow more platform space. Overhead, the four gleaming chandeliers, with their plump cupids so suggestive of Italian Renaissance art, are the crowning touch in an audience hall of tactful luxury.



Chancellors Hall is an alloy of Grecian and Renaissance ideas. With an upstairs gallery, this two-storied auditorium seats 800 people.

The Rotunda

The architectural pivot of the building's interior is its noble rotunda. In another departure from convention, this rises from the second floor, not the first.

Strictly speaking, the rotunda is the circular structure that soars to a height of 94 feet into the skylighted dome. In common usage, the term is applied to the entire complex of high, crossing corridors for which the rotunda is the hub.

This may best be likened to the cruciform design of a cathedral —

in which case the nave leads to the main reading room of the library (now office space), the two arms of the transept to the old Law Library and the old Periodical Library. These corridors are 46 feet high, barrel-vaulted, and roofed with arching skylights of patterned glass.

Where the rotunda proper passes up through the fifth level, it opens into a distinctive circular colonnade of double pillars. From the top of the dome hangs a 75-foot metal pendant for the silver-coated Keck chandelier, whose price tag was \$20,000.



Barrel-vaulted corridors intersect at the rotunda like the nave and transept of a cruciform cathedral. The chandelier, by Keck, is suspended from the rotunda proper.

Bordering the “nave” and the “transept” are 46 fluted columns of Indiana limestone, more Roman than Greek, and these frame the Low murals. Inset between the columns, below the murals, were the public catalog files of the library.

Carved in giant letters around the cornice are these words: “Here shall be gathered the best books of all lands and all ages. A system of free common schools wherein all the children of this State may be educated. This library aims to uplift the state and serve every citizen.”

Where the cornice jogs into the alcove next to the stairs, three meaningful dates appear: 1784 (creation of the Board of Regents); 1854 (birth of the Department of Public Instruction); 1904 (consolidation of the Education Department).



The dome of the rotunda is glimpsed through the twin columns of the circular colonnade.

Mural Paintings

The mural paintings decorating the corridor and Rotunda of the State Education Building were designed and executed by Will H. Low. The general theme of the panels in the Rotunda aims to depict education in its widest sense: the aspiration of man for intellectual attainment from the earliest time and the identity of this aspiration persisting through the ages to our day. As a theme demanding the widest latitude for even a partial and fragmentary development, the artist, throughout these subjects, has intentionally disregarded limitations of time, and voluntary anachronisms, or mixing up of time may be frequently noted. The panels in the corridor aim to be more purely decorative and in subject are more indicative of the purposes of the Education Building. Hence throughout the corridor ornamental borders, garlands and other decorative attributes are used which will be found repeated in other panels that by their restricted proportions or insufficient lighting are ill-suited to receive more developed figure compositions, though serving through their color and their design to join the series of panels into one comprehensive decorative scheme.

Aspiration

Facing the visitor at the western end of the corridor the panel is designed to represent Aspiration, which together with a panel typifying Achievement that occupies a like position at the eastern extremity of the corridor, may be taken as the keynote of the entire series of decorations. The

design of Aspiration essays a pictorial rendition of Ralph Waldo Emerson's axiomatic advice to youth: "Hitch your wagon to a star." In the youth with winged feet, soaring through space, accompanied by a maiden of like age, a suggestion of coeducation may be inferred, while the torch still unlighted, seeking illumination from the central star, may be considered to typify the period when our youths and maidens, newly issued from our high schools, aspire to use their newly acquired education to light their way through life and in the measure of their will and capacity to let their light "shine before men."

New York State Seal

Opposite the door of the old Legislative Reference Library, the panel embodies the various attributes which figure in the official seal of the State of New York, though here less heraldically represented than upon its shield. The three crested mountains with the sun rising, the full-rigged ship and the sloop upon the river are seen through an arcade with the supporting figures of Liberty and Justice guarding the portal on either side; the whole composition indicative of the purposes of the library which used to face it.

The University of the State

Above the elevators is a group of three panels forming one composition, conceived in a more formal manner than the panels of the Rotunda which follow, where greater significance is given to pictorial expression.



Aspiration



New York State Seal

In the larger of these three panels in the center is seated a figure garbed in a golden drapery of classic form, whose gesture indicates the distribution of scholastic honors by the wreath she proffers, typifying the administrative activities of The University of the State of New York.

Behind her, hanging from the upper corners of the ornamental border, swings a garland of oak leaves, above which appears the facade, or front, of the State Education Building. At regular intervals over the face of

the panel are placed formal wreaths enclosing the various dates indicative of the history of education in New York State: 1633, establishment of the first school in New York or in the country by the Dutch settlers of New Amsterdam; 1784, creation of the Board of Regents by Governor George Clinton; 1795, first grant of public moneys for the maintenance of elementary schools; 1812, foundation of the State system of public schools; 1854, institution of the State Department of Public Instruction;



Literature



The University of the State of New York



Mathematics

1904, union of the Board of Regents and Department of Public Instruction, under the control of the former, as The University of the State of New York.

Literature

In the smaller panels on either side of this central theme, that to the left typifies Literature by the figure of a young woman holding aloft an open book imprinted with the Greek letters, alpha and omega, indicating the all-embracing power, the beginning

and the end of the garnered wealth of the printed page, while the names of Homer and Shakespeare within encircling wreaths serve to accentuate the thought.

Mathematics

Mathematics occupies a similar panel to the right, where the names of Euclid and Newton appear in the wreaths repeating the decorative pattern, and the seated figure in virtually the same attitude as her sister Literature upholds the counting machine, the abacus, which comes down to us from remote antiquity to be used in our elementary schools today. Garlands of oak swing behind these figures in



Hope



Contrition



Minerva Guistiniana



Minerva Guistiniana

decorative consonance with the central motive and the whole may be taken to typify the purposes of this building and the departments, administrative and educational, of the University.

Permissive and Repressive Law

Turning to the left into the Rotunda, the spectator faces first the panels marking the entrance to the old Law Library. Law, as we know it, dates from the Christian Era and its codification by the Emperor Constantine (A. D. 306-57). Hence, Permissive and Repressive Law is here figured in the panels at the entrance to the Law Library, that to the left showing a young girl loosing a bird from her upraised hands — a prisoner released from the opened cage at her feet, who soaring upward seeks the regions spanned by the bow of Hope. On the opposite side of the doorway from this figure of Liberation its companion, Contrition, is shown with bowed head in an attitude of despondency in the midst of a desolate autumnal landscape, denoting that the way of the transgressor is hard.

Other panels of the more formal decorative character are placed at the right and left of the entrance. Two of these are adaptations showing the bust of the full length statue in the Vatican known as the Minerva Guistiniana. Two panels of ornament upon a mosaic background serve to give a note in the band of color joining the various panels, which fill all the spaces in a continuous pattern of form and color around the Rotunda and corridor. These are not pictured in this booklet.

Architecture

The standing figure, typifying Architecture, with compasses in hand, studies upon a scroll before her the proportions of the Corinthian capital in which order of architecture the Education Building is designed. Her left knee upraised rests lightly upon a slab covering a basket, recalling the legend by which Callimachus, an architect of Corinth, having lost his daughter, placed upon her grave a basket containing objects for her journey beyond the Styx, covering it with a tile to preserve it from the weather. (The Styx is the legendary river encircling Hades, the underworld of Death.) On visiting her grave he found an acanthus had grown up around the basket in so graceful a manner that it suggested to him the design of the Corinthian capital.



Architecture

Music

Standing erect before a harp over which her fingers stray, the figure of Music is shown upon a carpeted terrace, to denote the near proximity of a house, as music is essentially an art of indoors, while as the most modern manifestation of the arts, as music is now understood, her costume suggests a less classic form than the figures in the other panels.

Following the panels in the Rotunda, the four along the eastern wall of the passage leading to the old General Reading Room denote some of the material achievements of man, as a result of constant aspiration, in contradistinction to those of a more spiritual nature which are treated in the four panels placed upon the opposite wall.



Music

Astronomy and Geography

Minerva, goddess of wisdom, encircles with her arm a young child, while through the telescope she directs his gaze to the “clear night of stars” spread above him; at sight of which the child clasps his hands with a gesture of wonder. Near at hand a seated youth holding the symbolic lamp of research, is bent over a large globe following the path of man over the traveled earth. Above and behind the terrace on which these figures are seated rises the facade of the library of Columbia University, New York City.

Jason, the Precursor

Impelled by the love of adventure and the call of discovery, Jason, Prince of Thessaly, with his band of youths, the Argonauts, departed on the quest of the Golden Fleece. The fleece was that of the ram which, by intervention of the gods, had borne from impending danger another prince of Thessaly across the Hellespont, known today as the Dardanelles, from Europe to Asia. The ram had been sacrificed to Jupiter, and its fleece, emitting golden light, had been hung in a consecrated grove guarded by a dragon who never slept. Jason sought the aid of Medea, to whom he had plighted his troth, and by her magic the dragon was made to sleep while Jason carried away his trophy — the symbol of commercial supremacy, since much of the wealth of the early people was based upon the value of their flocks.

This ancient legend is brought near to us, even to the shore of Manhattan, since Jason’s ship, the Argo, was the prototype of the Santa Maria, the ship on which Columbus sought these shores. With the discovery of this continent, a new world was opened which should attain not only commercial supremacy but light the way of other nations to liberty and freedom, as symbolized by the Statue of Liberty.



Astronomy and Geography



Jason, the Precursor



Justitia, the Liberator

Justitia, the Liberator

Before a representation of our National Capitol, lifting its dome from the shadowed earth into the light of the upper air, Justice floats serene, her scales poised in nice balance and the sword by which she enforces her decrees grasped firmly. Before her kneels a figure typical of oppressed humanity, the arms lifted in a gesture of appeal, which the severed chains, hanging from the manacled hands, show to have been answered. This obvious allegory of man's consistent aspiration for freedom may be considered as based upon the action taken by the forefathers of the Republic, July 4, 1776, which found its logical confirmation 86 years later when Abraham Lincoln said, in his second message to Congress, December 1, 1862:

In giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free — honorable alike in what we give and what we preserve.



Veritas, the Eternal

Veritas, the Eternal

Seated amid the ruins of a transitory civilization Truth uplifts her symbolic mirror, from whose surface is reflected a ray of light illuminating a page of the volume upon which her eyes are fixed, and where may be read these words of Marcus Aurelius: "If thou workest at that which is before thee; following right reason, seriously, calmly, vigorously; keeping thy divine part pure, content with thy present activity, according to nature; with heroic truth in every word thou utterest, thou wilt live happily — and there is no man able to prevent this." Contrasting with the clarity of the printed page and its definite message, the Sphinx looms in the background; the enigmatic oracle forever questioned and forever dumb. The hourglass and the Medusa head, half emerging, half buried in the sand, connote the passage of time and the continuance of error, against which eternal Truth eternally combats.

Patria, the Inspirer

When nomadic man drew about him the units of his family and chose a portion of the earth as his abiding place, the love of country was born. Very soon his passion of attachment, his high resolve to defend his hearths and his altars, brought into being the poet to voice his patriotism and inspire his courage. In the stress of Civil War our Republic found such a voice — the voice of a woman — whose male accents gave us our battle hymn. Here an attempt is made to portray our young country, standing firmly, uplifting the palm of victory — or death — with eyes awakened to the “coming of the Lord,” holding a tablet whereon are inscribed verses of the noble hymn of Julia Ward Howe. In the background lies one of the “hundred circling camps” and in the clouds above appears Homer, blind epic poet of classical Greece, first inspired of those who have made patriotism articulate, while further aloft is seen a vision of battle — perhaps one of that defensive war by which an inspired maid freed an oppressed country.



Patria, the Inspirer

Theseus, the Pathfinder

Theseus, in the ancient myth, was guided through the labyrinth by a thread as he went to slay the Minotaur. Today our lineman threads his way through the labyrinth of the world, in places remote or near, in order that the electric current may fulfill essentially the same task as that of the Greek hero — the destruction of error by the diffusion of truth. Theseus is here shown in a landscape suggestive of our Adirondack region, the morning mist partially obscuring the mountains in the distance, as he pauses, his foot advanced, testing the solidity of the trunk of a fallen tree which bridges the chasm he desires to cross. Back and beyond him stretches a line of rude telegraph poles while he carries forward the wire to prolong their circuit — the wire which, when quickened by the electric current, now encircles the globe, transmitting intelligence to its most remote quarter.



Theseus, the Pathfinder

Icarus, the Sky-Soarer

Filled with a noble discontent of his plodding lot, man, from the birth of day, has tried to break through his natural limitations and take his flight through the upper airs. Icarus was imprisoned with his father, Daedalus, by King Minos of Crete, within walls from which escape was thought impossible. To secure their liberty the ingenious elder fashioned wings from feathers dropped by birds in their passage and, thus equipped, the prisoners boldly leaped from the castle walls. Ambitious Icarus, disregarding the advice of his father to steer a middle course, where the humidity of the sea would not weigh down his wings and to avoid flying too high where the ardor of the sun would melt the wax with which they were fastened, flew within the fatal circle of the sun's radiance and fell. Today upon his aeroplane our modern Icarus, made wise through centuries of effort, traverses the sky as a reward for his long aspiration.



Icarus, the Sky-Soarer

Prometheus, the Power-Giver

From high Olympus, Prometheus brought down fire "for the children of men, taught them how to build houses and till the earth, how to win for themselves food and clothing and raised them from the life of beasts to a life that was fit for speaking man." With his punishment by the jealous Jupiter, in fear lest instructed man should surpass the gods, the scene here depicted

has no concern but endeavors to show, in the anachronistic manner typical of this series of mural paintings, the beneficent results of man's mastery over fire in the factories that supply, the steamers and trains which distribute, over waters that are navigated and bridges which connect the headlands in all their varied service for the uses of man.



Prometheus, the Power-Giver

Fortuna, the Pacemaker

Fortune, who oft proves the careless wanderer's friend, is the great inciter of travel; travel by which the mind and body gains perhaps more than the purse. She long ago taught man to spurn the foot's slow progress and by the wheel's revolution to hasten his quest. As here depicted, the goddess pauses upon her wheel, near the disused chariot of classic form,

sunk in the mire with its wheels clogged by thorns and brambles, and discovers through a leafy screen the last device for man's displacement race across the scene. The pursuit is as old or older than the myth and as modern as the struggle for the betterment of conditions in spiritual and material life, which has gained in pace and directness through all the centuries that man has known.



Fortuna, the Pacemaker

Sculpture

An adaptation of the statue of the Venus of Milo, endowed with the color of life and with the arms of which the marble version is bereft as it stands in the Louvre, is engaged in modeling the statue of Victory, which forms part of the monument to General Sherman, designed by Augustus Saint-Gaudens and erected on the Plaza in New York. The Acropolis crowned by the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, forms the background.

Medicine and Chemistry

Aesculapius, the genius of medicine, sits beside the couch of a young girl-child and bending forward counts her pulse by the hourglass held in his left hand. The mother half supports the child in a seated posture in the bed and anxiously awaits the results of the diagnosis of the wise physician. A staff entwined by a serpent rests against the body of Aesculapius, the usual symbol of the physician as represented in ancient myth, where we are assured that the serpent was of a species harmless to man. In the foreground, a youth watches the result of a chemical distillation carried out by means of an alembic or retort, while beyond a group of trees in the distance rises the dome of St. Luke's Hospital in New York City.



Sculpture



Medicine and Chemistry



Painting

Painting

Robed in the color of gold and flower engirdled Painting, holding the painter's palette charged with colors, depicts upon the canvas placed upon an easel before her some design unseen by the spectator.

Over a field of flowers behind the figure rises the now vanished building of the National Academy of Design, the first building erected for the service of art in this country and until its destruction one of the notable monuments of New York City.

Current Events and Their Transcription

So modern a theme as our periodical literature finds direct symbolization in the classical myth of Echo, who running free and scattering to the four winds the rumors of the pulsating world, faces Clio, the muse of History, who equipped with a telephone of bygone days (as she undoubtedly would be in our day) listens to choose among these random rumors those worthy of preservation by transcription upon her tablet. These two panels are at the eastern end of the Rotunda near the entrance to the old Periodical Reference Library.



Echo



Clio

There also are two panels of a formal character, representing a terminal figure of Pan, the original of which, an archaic Greek figure, is in the collection of the British Museum. The marble is only half the size of life, but is so consistently sculptural that its

enlargement here to more than double its stature loses nothing of its quaint impressiveness. These are companion figures to those of Minerva at the entrance to the old Law Library, and the similarity of decoration is completed by two ornamental panels not pictured in this booklet.



Pan



Pan

The Standard

Continuing to the eastern end of the corridor the panel there placed, though aiming to typify Attainment or Achievement in the sequence of thought governing this entire series of decorations, may be more properly entitled *The Standard*. A moment's reflection will show that in education as in all other spheres of human activity no final attainment is ever reached, nor is indeed desirable, since a constantly progressive standard firmly established for the day leads on to continuous

effort and abiding hope for the morrow.

High above the sea level of the Atlantic the typical figure of our Nation, robed in white and crowned by the gold encircled cap of Liberty, pauses in raising the Star Spangled Banner and gathers its folds to her breast with a gesture of devotion. Before her against the sky flutters a scroll upon which are imprinted the words attributed to Washington: "Let us raise a standard to which the wise and honest may repair: the event is in the hands of God."



The Standard



Hygieia

At the left are found two panels facing the Medical Library designed to typify its purposes. In one is represented Hygieia, the goddess of health, a figure freely adapted from an antique statue, while the same theme is continued in the second panel by the representation of the life-giving fountain inscribed



Fountain

with an axiom of Martial, ancient Roman epigrammatist, to the effect that life is not merely living but the enjoyment of health.

Below the panels upon the southern wall of the corridor are placed three of the links of the heavily forged chain which in the days of the



United States Military Academy

American Revolution was stretched across the Hudson at West Point to bar the progress of enemy vessels. The presence of this relic has suggested in the panels, above and to the right, a view of the United States Military Academy, surrounded by the encircling hills as seen across the Hudson. In the foreground of the larger panel links of this antique chain are depicted, about as they may have been originally placed, while in the smaller of the two panels rises a column where, midway upon its slender shaft, is affixed an escutcheon emblazoned with the stripes and the 13 original stars of the Union, denoting the Federal reservation at West Point; the crest of the arms of New York State — an eagle with outstretched wings upon a globe — further indicates the geographical situation of the military academy. Ornamental borders and garlands of oak emphasize the continuity of the decorative scheme and above the garland in the larger panel may be read the words of George Washington, in his second inaugural address: “To be prepared for war is one of the most effectual means of preserving peace.”



Shaft of Union