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HENRY KIRKE BROWN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN PUBLIC
SCULPTURE IN NEW YORK CITY, 1846-1876

by

KAREN YVONNE LEMMEY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2005

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THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

Henry Kirke Brown and the Development of American Public Sculpture In New York City,
1846-1876

by

Karen Yvonne Lemmey

Adviser: Professor Sally Webster

This dissertation is the first extensive study of Henry Kirke Brown (1814-1886), an artist who revolutionized civic sculpture in the United States. Among the first professionally trained American sculptors, Brown studied sculpture in Italy yet questioned the relevance of European monuments as models for civic art in a democratic society. He set the standard for future decades by sculpting historically conscious, realist portraits in bronze in response to the neoclassical marble statues that dominated civic art from the American Revolution through the mid-nineteenth century. Brown's work methods and philosophy were of lasting influence on future generations of sculptors.

The five chapters of my dissertation chart the factors that led to both Brown's success as a professional sculptor and to increasing national interest in erecting public monuments in nineteenth-century America. Chapter I discusses Brown's training in Italy and his motives for returning to the United States and establishing a studio in New York City. Chapters II and III, respectively, look at Brown's commissions for *De Witt Clinton* (1853) in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn and *George Washington* (1856) in Union Square, Manhattan. Chapter IV considers Brown's time in Washington, D.C., where he served on the short-lived National Art Commission of 1859-1860 and helped to found National Statuary Hall. The last chapter examines Brown's monument *Abraham Lincoln* (1869) in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, and *Abraham Lincoln* (1870) in Union Square.

All of these monuments commemorate a statesman of national repute; the four commissions were mile markers in the history of American sculpture. Designed to serve simultaneously as secular shrines, didactic tools, and tourist attractions, these four commissions also exemplify how Brown keenly designed his monuments to play multiple roles in American society. This study also considers the shift in choice of medium in American monuments from marble to bronze, the role of private patrons in commissioning public monuments, and the general changes in the sculpture industry during Brown's lifetime.

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Figure 5.08: Richard Morris Hunt, pedestal for *Abraham Lincoln* Union Square, drawing and watercolor, Richard Morris Hunt Papers, American Institute of Architects Washington, D.C. Photo from Lewis I. Sharp, "Richard Morris Hunt and His Influence on American Beaux-Arts Sculpture," in *The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt*, ed. Susan R. Stein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

Figure 5.09: Pedestal by Richard Morris Hunt, enclosure by Jacob Wrey Mould, *Abraham Lincoln*, bronze, 1870. Photo courtesy of the Bush-Brown family.

Figure 5.10: *Abraham Lincoln*, bronze, entrance to Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York, circa 1880. Photo courtesy of the Bush-Brown family.

Figure 5.11: Olmsted, Vaux, and Co., map of Prospect Park, 1869. Department of Parks Annual Report, Courtesy of the City of New York/Parks & Recreation, Photo Archive.

Conclusion

Figure Conclusion.1: John Quincy Adams Ward, sketch of Henry Kirke Brown in Washington, D.C., 1859, collection of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Introduction

Henry Kirke Brown (1814-1886) was the first American sculptor who trained abroad and returned to this country permanently to establish a professional career. [Figure Intro.01]. In doing so, he questioned the relevance of European monuments as models for civic art in a democratic society and aimed to create a sculpture aesthetic unique to the United States. His public monuments—in a realist style and a bronze medium—became the model for monuments in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century onward. In the words of noted scholar of American sculpture, Wayne Craven, Brown's work became the "real prototype of the bronze portrait statue in America."¹ Brown's enduring influence can be seen across the United States in the nineteenth-century bronze outdoor monuments that echo the aesthetic he promoted. Most importantly, he was a pivotal figure who shaped the development of American civic sculpture through his choice of aesthetic, materials, work methods, and politics.

This dissertation is the first extended study of Brown's life and work. It focuses on his development as a professional sculptor of civic monuments in New York from 1846, when he returned to the United States from Europe, to 1876, the year of the Philadelphia Centennial International Exhibition, after which Brown's career declined. While this study is monographic, it also considers larger issues in the history of American sculpture including the establishment of local bronze art foundries, the professionalization of sculptors, and the private patronage of public art—all of which Brown helped to foster.

Significantly, Brown's career flourished at a time when many American artists and writers expressed a passionate interest in promoting a national culture. Like his

¹ Wayne Craven, "Henry Kirke Brown: His Search for an American Art in the 1840s," *American Art Journal* 4, no. 2 (November 1972): 58.

contemporaries, the painter Asher B. Durand (1796-1886) and the writer William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), Brown envisioned an America cultural identity that would rival those of European nations. In the early 1840s he wrote, "It seems to me that in the history of no country was there a better opportunity to found a truly poetic and grand school of Art."² Novelists, such as James Fennimore Cooper and Washington Irving, had been writing on American themes for decades. Painters, such as the Hudson River School master Thomas Cole, had distinguished themselves by depicting America's virgin forests and sublime landscapes. Brown's goal was to ensure that civic sculpture would become a pillar of this school. Throughout his career he worked to bring sculpture to the public eye and to have it taken seriously by his fellow countrymen.

Brown's life spanned decades of great transition for both his nation and his profession. What distinguishes Brown in the history of American sculpture is his active participation in effecting changes in his field. For example, before the mid-nineteenth century, American artists relied on European foundries and carvers to translate their designs and models for monuments into bronze or marble. By the end of the nineteenth century, in large part thanks to Brown's efforts, American sculptors could cast monuments at a number of bronze art foundries in this country. Brown had pioneered the American bronze art industry by experimenting with casting in the late 1840s in the rudimentary foundry in his studio in Brooklyn. In 1851 he convinced the Ames Manufacturing Company in Chicopee, Massachusetts, to expand its casting facilities, which until then only made firearms and utilitarian objects, to include bronze sculptures. Brown's success with casting monuments

² Henry Kirke Brown (hereafter HKB) to Mr. Spencer (no date, circa 1843), Library of Congress, Manuscript Collection, Henry Kirke Bush-Brown Papers (hereafter HKBB) 372.

on home soil imbued bronze with a patriotic appeal that made it fitting for civic sculptures; it was soon favored over marble, which was then still mostly quarried and carved in Europe.

Although today he is little known beyond American art specialists, in his day Brown was both an influential sculptor and a leading cultural figure. His contemporaries recognized his significance by appointing him to several powerful administrative positions in the arts. He was a judge at the 1853 Crystal Palace Exhibition in New York and on the selection committee for the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia. At the recommendation of American artists, President James Buchanan appointed Brown in 1859 to the National Art Commission, a review committee of three artists responsible for making suggestions to Congress for the completion of the decoration of the United States Capitol. An authority in his field, Brown was a pivotal figure in the history of American art and was instrumental in elevate the importance of sculpture in the United States.

A Brief History of Civic Sculpture in the United States Before 1846³

To appreciate how much the field of sculpture changed during Brown's lifetime, it is important to consider the dearth of statues in antebellum America. Colonial North America had boasted a handful of public monuments by European artists, most notably two statues in New York by the British court sculptor John Wilton (1722-1803): a stone figure, *William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham*, and a gilded lead equestrian statue, *King George III* [Figures Intro.02 and Intro.03]. Although both of these were badly damaged during the Revolution, their

³ In this dissertation civic art is defined as art that is commissioned or created with the public good in mind. To this end, such art often carried a moral message and was placed on a site that was understood to be public even if, as in the case of Green-Wood Cemetery, the site may be deemed private by today's definition.

empty pedestals stood for decades as physical reminders of the former presence of public sculpture in the city.

America before the Civil War was particularly inhospitable to aspiring sculptors. It is fair to say that, while painters and writers had spent the early decades of the nineteenth century establishing an American cultural voice, sculptors were still underrepresented and sculpture remained an art form largely unfamiliar to the general public. Several factors contributed to this dearth. Unlike budding American painters, who could rely on printed material—engravings, woodcuts, and copies of Europeans paintings—would-be sculptors in colonial America and the early republic could not learn to model and produce statues merely by looking at the few examples of sculptures in this country. Plaster casts of antique models were available, but they offered little information on how physically to build a sculpture, what materials to use, or how to structure an internal armature.⁴ Moreover, the lack of technology and resources in the United States—specifically, fine marble quarries and metal foundries—was a major obstacle. A scant few artists, including William Coffee (1774-1846), John Henri Issac Browere (1792-1834), and John Frazee (1790-1852), made careers early on by carving portrait busts and decorative objects. Until then, sculptural objects were utilitarian in nature, such as weathervanes, tombstones, and the like. They worked in plaster, terra cotta, and occasionally, the mediocre quality marble that was locally available.⁵ Many artisans carved wooden figureheads for ships and some artists, like William Rush (1756-

⁴ Such collection of plaster casts of European sculptures was owned by the National Academy of Design and the American Academy of the Fine Arts, Thayer Tolles, "Modeling a Reputation: The American Sculptor and New York City," in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*, ed. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 137.

⁵ For more on these and other early sculptors see *Ibid.*, 134-167.

1833) of Philadelphia, distinguished themselves by expertly carving high quality figures for civic sculptures in this humble, inexpensive medium.⁶ Overall America was a poor place to study sculpture. Moreover, the specialized industries necessary to build sculpture, specifically bronze casting and the quarrying and carving of marble, were undeveloped in the United States.

Nevertheless, the early republic was eager to erect monuments to revolutionary heroes of liberty. Early commissions for civic monuments were awarded exclusively to prominent European artists. Even the federal government, the single greatest patron of civic art in antebellum America, turned to European artists to create sculptures and murals for the new and expanding Capitol in Washington, D.C.⁷ In these first decades of the nineteenth century, American heroes, especially George Washington, were depicted according to contemporary European fashion and convention with references to classical portraiture. Standard devices included dressing the subject in a drape or toga and leaving the pupils of the sitter's eyes unincised.⁸ This so-called neoclassical style complemented the popular Federalist architecture that presented the United States as the modern-day successor to the democracy of ancient Athens and the republic of ancient Rome. The neoclassical idiom in American civic art endured for decades until the second half of the nineteenth century. In

⁶ For example, William Rush sculpted *Water Nymph and Bittern* (1809) in wood for Philadelphia's fountain in Center Square.

⁷ For further information on the federal government's early patronage of foreign and American artists see Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966; reprint, 1974).

⁸ For example, Jean-Antoine Houdon's sculpture *George Washington* (1788) for the State Capitol in Richmond, Virginia, depicts the first president with an air of French aristocracy while Italian artist Antonio Canova's *George Washington* (1821) for the State House in Raleigh, North Carolina, presents Washington in a Roman battle tunic. These monuments are discussed further in Chapter III.

1834, Italian sculptor Luigi Persico (1791-1860) created the marble statues *War*, a male allegorical figure wearing a Roman battle tunic, and *Peace*, a female allegorical figure wearing a peplos, for the Capitol façade in the same style that had been popular thirty years earlier.⁹

With the establishment of early art academies in New York, such as the American Academy of the Fine Arts in 1802 and the National Academy of Design in 1825, educational opportunities for artists in the United States improved.¹⁰ The study of painting, the heart of the academic curriculum, had been formalized by Sir Joshua Reynolds's hierarchy of subjects that placed the greatest importance on history painting, the least on portraiture. Sculpture had no place in this hierarchy and was a marginal subject.

Gradually, aspiring American sculptors began studying in Italy and eventually the pool of trained professionals qualified to compete with European sculptors for commissions for civic monuments widened. Italy offered American sculptors an abundance of antique sculpture, live models, high quality marble, talented professional carvers, and renowned master sculptors.¹¹ In 1825, Horatio Greenough (1805-1852) became the first American

⁹ For a more complete history of the sculpture associated with the federal Capitol see Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); Pamela Scott, *Temple of Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ The American Academy of the Fine Arts began as the New York Academy of the Arts in 1802, changed its name to the American Academy of the Arts in 1808 and became the American Academy of the Fine Arts in 1816, see Carrie Rebora Barratt, "Mapping the Venues: New York City Art Exhibitions," in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*, ed. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 66. John Frazee, who began his career as a decorative marble carver, was the only sculptor who was a founding member of the National Academy of Design.

¹¹ Albert TenEyck Gardner, *Yankee Stonecutters: The First American School of Sculpture 1800-1850* (New York: Columbia University Press for the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1945).

sculptor to study abroad. His colleagues Thomas Crawford (1813-1857) and Hiram Powers (1805-1873) followed him to Italy in the 1830s. Considered the finest American sculptors of their time, they collectively formed the first generation of professionally trained American sculptors, yet they lived abroad for most of their careers, adopting conventional European studio practices and perpetuating the neoclassical aesthetic of their role models Antonio Canova (1757-1822) and Bertel Thorvaldsen (1770-1844).

These early American sculptors faced an uninformed public when they sent their work to exhibitions in the United States where sculpture was just beginning to be admired. Greenough met harsh criticism when his marble, *Chanting Cherubs*, was exhibited at the American Academy of the Fine Arts in November 1831 [Figure Intro.04]. James Fenimore Cooper had commissioned *Chanting Cherubs* in Florence, “the first instance of one American commissioning another to make a statue group in marble.”¹² But when the sculpture was exhibited in New York, spectators in their ignorance expressed disappointment that the *Chanting Cherubs* did not actually sing.¹³ In addition, the nudity of the two cherubs proved problematic, and in some exhibition venues the figures were partially draped for modesty’s sake.

Brown was a contemporary of Greenough, Powers, and Crawford, but unlike his compatriots, he remained in Italy for only four years. Although he too initially favored the neoclassical aesthetic, he came to criticize his colleagues’ choice of European subjects and

¹² Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America*, New and Revised ed. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 103.

¹³ Peter Augustus James to James Fenimore Cooper, April 1, 1832 in *Correspondence of James Fenimore-Cooper*, 2 vols., edited by his grandson James Fenimore Cooper (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922), 1:264, cited in Tolles, “Modeling a Reputation: The American Sculptor and New York City,” 137.

style. In 1846 Brown returned to the United States, dedicated to the idea of fostering a distinctly American aesthetic in sculpture. To this end, he chose subjects perceived to be especially American, including prominent statesmen, Native Americans, and African American slaves. He was probably the first American artist to sculpt an African American figure on a public monument.¹⁴ He worked with bronze, a material that could be fabricated locally, and he recommended that American sculptors closely study the local, abundant wilderness that was unavailable to European artists. Brown challenged prevailing trends in civic sculpture by rendering his subjects in historically accurate dress rather than following the neoclassical convention of depicting modern-day statesmen in classical drapery.

Fortunately for Brown, by the time he returned to the United States in 1846, Americans were developing a taste for sculpture. Thomas Crawford had had a one-artist exhibition of his sculpture at the Boston Athenaeum in 1844. The National Academy of Design had included eighteen sculptures in its annual exhibition of 1841. Brown marked his return with an exhibition of his sculpture in November 1846 at the National Academy of Design. It was the first solo exhibition of a sculptor in New York City. At this time, New York was becoming the cultural capital of the United States. Brown quickly fell in with artists and writers like Asher B. Durand, William Cullen Bryant, and Walt Whitman who promoted American aesthetic. Brown hoped to give sculpture a leading role in this emerging material culture. Significantly, he advocated for civic sculpture that was publicly accessible and meaningful to a wide audience. While Brown understood the importance of private patronage of public monuments, he wanted most of all for society as a whole to support and

¹⁴ Brown sculpted a figure of an African American on the bas relief located on the front of the pedestal of his *De Witt Clinton*, which was installed in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, in 1853.

take pride in civic sculpture. His sculptures are characterized by an unpretentious naturalism that portrays heroic statesmen as human, accessible men of the people. His monuments served as secular shrines, physical touchstones for the commemoration of public figures, as well as didactic tools meant to educate the public in civic responsibility, history, and culture.

In the years following Brown's return to the United States, Americans increasingly celebrated civic sculpture produced entirely on home soil by local artists. The wider availability of bronze foundries beginning in the 1850s was spurred, following the Civil War, by a demand for commemorative sculpture as the nation turned to artists to create statues that honored generals and common soldiers alike in small town squares and large city parks. The decades following the war mark the first time that Americans had the impetus, the means, and the talent to create commemorative sculpture. The most consequential event in nineteenth-century America, the war loomed large over these decades of technological and social change and directly impacted Brown's career. While it distanced him from his southern clients, it also earned him several commissions, including two monuments to Lincoln.

The American sculpture industry at the end of the nineteenth century changed radically from the beginning of the century. Many more artists chose to become sculptors. Some, such as Brown's protégé, John Quincy Adams Ward, and the Albany-based sculptor Erastus Dow Palmer, trained in the United States, delaying a visit to Europe until late in their careers.¹⁵ This generation of sculptors enjoyed the boom in commissions following the Civil War and had more access to local bronze foundries. They formed a sophisticated professional network that culminated with the founding of the National Sculpture Society in

¹⁵ For more on Palmer see J. Carson Webster, *Erastus D. Palmer* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1983).

1893, just seven years after Brown's death. Brown set an early precedent for this new generation network by joining the private clubs of his day and connecting with patrons and fellow artists. He was a founding member of the Century Club in 1847 and also belonged to the Union League Club of New York and the Washington Arts Club, all of which provided him access to the patrons of monument commissions. The nascent industry that Brown helped establish at mid-century was the forerunner of this golden age of American sculpture. The means and methods sculptors used to produce the numerous civic monuments of the late nineteenth century were directly influenced by Brown and his contemporaries.

Historiography

While surveys of American art occasionally mention Brown and his contributions to sculpture, remarkably little close analysis of his works exists. There is no book-length monograph on Brown. Three excellent, ground-breaking articles devoted to him, two by Wayne Craven and one by David Dearing, were published in the *American Art Journal* in the 1970s and 1980s.¹⁶ These focus on Brown's years in Italy and his early years in New York. An unpublished master's thesis by Olivia Hughes, written in 1969, discusses his early ideal sculptures.¹⁷ Brown's venture with the Ames Manufacturing Company and his place in the

¹⁶ Wayne Craven, "Henry Kirke Brown in Italy, 1842-1846," *American Art Journal* 1, no. 1 (1969): 65-77; Craven, "Henry Kirke Brown: His Search for an American Art in the 1840s," 45-58; Craven, *Sculpture in America*; David Dearing, "Asher B. Durand and Henry Kirke Brown: An Artistic Friendship," *American Art Journal* 20, no. 3 (1988): 74-83.

¹⁷ Octavia Hughes, "The Early Work and Development of Henry Kirke Brown" (master's thesis, Columbia University, 1960).

history of casting in America is admirably documented and discussed by Michael Shapiro in *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*.¹⁸

The publication of several collection catalogues in the last decade, including those by the Chrysler Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art— both of which have holdings of Brown's work— and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, offers evidence that museums have taken a growing interest in their holdings of American sculpture.¹⁹

Significantly, some of the works in museum collections are reductions, sketches, or studies that relate to public monuments. In 2001, the Metropolitan Museum of Art also hosted the symposium, "Perspectives on American Sculpture before 1925."²⁰ These scholarly publications complement the growing commercial market for American sculpture. Indeed, several casts of Brown's early bronzes have appeared on the market in recent decades and most have been acquired by major museums.

In academia, scholars have been discussing monuments, the politics of erecting memorials, and public memory for some time.²¹ Kirk Savage addressed Brown's work in

¹⁸ Michael Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985).

¹⁹ H. Nicholas B. Clark, *A Marble Quarry, the James H. Ricau Collection of Sculpture at the Chrysler Museum of Art New York* (Hudson Hills Press in association with the Chrysler Museum of Art, 1997); Susan James-Gadzinski and Mary Mullen Cunningham, *American Sculpture in the Museum of American Art of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (Seattle: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in association with University of Washington Press, 1997); Thayer Tolles, ed., *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume I* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999).

²⁰ The eight papers presented at the symposium were published as essays in Thayer Tolles, ed., *Perspectives on American Sculpture before 1925* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2003).

²¹ See for example Harriet F. Senie and Sally Webster, eds., *Critical Issues in Public Art: Content, Context, and Controversy* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992; reprint 1998).

Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves, but mainly as it reflected the politics of depicting the African American body in monuments related to the Civil War.²² Vivien Green Fryd discussed Brown's designs for the pediment of the United States Capitol in her thought-provoking study, *Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* as did Thomas Somma in his essay for the recently published *American Pantheon: Sculptural and Artistic Decoration of the United States Capitol*.²³

Sources and Methodology

Brown's biological nephew and adopted son, Henry Kirke Bush-Brown (1857-1935) inherited the sculptor's papers and last studio and house in Balmville, New York. Perhaps because he too was a sculptor, Bush-Brown preserved his uncle's legacy by compiling a manuscript of eight loosely chronological volumes that contained typed copies of Brown's correspondence, especially letters to his wife Lydia Louise Brown, interspersed with photographs and clippings.²⁴ This extensive collection of letters was profoundly important to this dissertation because of their depth, wide scope of topics, and consistency over the span of his lifetime. Significantly, many of these letters offer Brown's own description of his

²² Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

²³ Fryd, *Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860*; Thomas P. Somma, "The Problem with Public Art: Henry Kirke Brown's *Thinking Negro* (1855) from His Pedimental Design for the United States Capitol," in *American Pantheon: Sculptural and Artistic Decoration of the United States Capitol*, ed. Donald R. Kennon and Thomas P. Somma (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004).

²⁴ In years when there was more correspondence, Bush-Brown grouped the letters by subject rather than by date. Bush-Brown also prepared a shorter, book-length, unpublished collection of some of the letters. The Bush-Brown Family Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, contains a copy of this short compilation.

work, his ambitions for American art, and the cultural and political climate of the United States at various moments in the nineteenth century.

Bush-Brown deposited sets of these volumes at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.; Yale University Art Library, New Haven, Connecticut; and Pocumtuck Memorial Association, Deerfield, Massachusetts. Although idiosyncratic, the pagination is identical in all sets.²⁵ Thus, my citations may be used to locate the same letter in any of the three sets. Citations of these letters include, when available: author, addressee, location at which the letter was written, date, and the typed manuscript page number on which the cited text appears. I have reviewed and compared all three sets, but I have worked from the one at Yale. The set in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress contains a few additional black-and-white photographs of Brown's works and ephemera that do not appear in the other two sets. When citing this unique additional matter, the Library of Congress is noted in the footnote. The collection at the Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, also contains seven pocket-size notebooks containing incidental notes written by Henry Kirke Brown. Sections of these notebooks pertain to specific years, such as Brown's time in Florence and Rome, and provide interesting details, like itemized costs of living abroad. Most of the recorded entries are in no particular order and sometimes notes written years apart are haphazardly located in the same book. Nevertheless, these randomly organized scraps of names and addresses, food recipes, and prices provide a glimpse of life in the nineteenth century and occasionally yield important information about the history of specific sculptures. Thirteen of Brown's sketchbooks (Letters A-M) are also in the Prints

²⁵ Bush-Brown used (+) signs, number-letter formats, and duplicate numbers to correct for errors in the original pagination, photographs, and additional material he inserted in the manuscript.

and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress; they vary in size and condition. Some of them are bound and inscribed with dates while others contain pasted-in sheets of sketches, watercolors, and washes, making the dating of some of the drawings difficult. The majority of the sketches and watercolors are by Brown, with a few by friends.

A large collection of Brown's original handwritten correspondence survives and is available on microfilm at the Archives of American Art.²⁶ These letters are arranged chronologically and their faded, cross-written pages make some of the writing difficult to decipher. These letters were probably the major source for Bush-Brown's typed manuscript compilation as their contents are similar. Although the manuscript omits some of these microfilmed letters and parts of letters, the compilation includes letters from sources other than those that constitute the collection in the Archives of American Art.

A large collection of Bush-Brown family papers was deposited in the Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts.²⁷ This collection contains original letters by Henry Kirke Brown, Lydia Louise Brown, Henry Kirke Bush-Brown, and his descendents. The Bush-Brown family owned and occasionally lived in Brown's house and studio, Little Brook (or Littlebrook), at Balmville, New York from 1886 until 1910. Some of the material in the Smith College Archives provides information about Brown's studio.²⁸

²⁶ Henry Kirke Brown Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

²⁷ Bush-Brown Family Papers, Smith College, Sophia Smith Collection, Northampton, Massachusetts.

²⁸ A noteworthy autobiographical essay by Henry Kirke Bush-Brown's daughter describes some of the contents of Brown's studio in Balmville that survived at least until the early twentieth century. See Lydia Bush-Brown Head, "Littlebrook Early Memories," (typescript 1976), in *Ibid.*

While completing the research, I was fortunate enough to meet the Mrs. Albert (Frances) Bush-Brown, who made available invaluable, original photographs of Brown's sculptures and various letters not found in the public depositories. These photographs, some of which are duplicated in the manuscript found at the Library of Congress and other sites, are the main source for my illustrations.

The papers of Brown's students, John Quincy Adams Ward and Larkin Mead provided additional first-hand accounts of Brown's studio, personality, and professional practices.²⁹ The commercial papers of the Ames Manufacturing Company, in the Archives of American Art, were also important to this study.³⁰ Material relating to specific monuments is in the collections of the Brooklyn Public Library, the Brooklyn Historical Society, the New-York Historical Society, and the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation. Archival papers in the office of the Architect of the Capitol in Washington, D.C., provided important information on Brown's projects there and on his tenure on the National Art Commission. The library at the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., particularly the vertical file collection of Colonel Merl Moore, provided many rare articles on monuments. The Gerds American Art Research Library also contained important articles and notes relating to Brown's life and works.

²⁹ John Quincy Adams Ward Papers, Albany Institute of History and Art, Manuscript Collection, Albany, NY; John Quincy Adams Ward Papers, New-York Historical Society, Manuscript Division, New York, NY.; Letters of Larkin Mead in William Rutherford Mead Papers (Ac 1867, Series a, Folder 14), Amherst College Library, Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, Massachusetts.

³⁰ Shapiro's *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture* provides further details about Ames Manufacturing from the company's papers in the private Bingham Collection.

Organization

Rather than superficially survey Brown's entire oeuvre, I have chosen instead to examine closely his career in greater New York, which is to say Manhattan and Brooklyn.³¹ Four of the dissertation's five chapters discuss Brown's relationship with the city where he enjoyed his greatest professional success. The exception, Chapter IV, considers Brown's activities with the federal government in Washington, D.C., where he suffered one of his greatest professional disappointments. Considering these particular facets of Brown's career allows a more detailed discussion of each commission in relation to local politics and circumstances.

There are several reasons why I chose to focus so closely on New York; these are largely the same reasons why Brown chose to develop his client base and set up his studio in New York after returning from Europe. The city's abundance of cultural institutions and well-established press during the nineteenth century made it the national locus for art criticism, exhibition, and patronage. As Edward Widmer observed in his book, *Young America, The Flowering of Democracy in New York City*, "The new American culture emanated from New York City. All American cities were growing quickly in the 1830s, but New York was truly different, outstripping all rivals in size and complexity."³² New York would provide a national model for art, culture, and public monuments. Since it was the main

³¹ Although New York (Manhattan) and Brooklyn were separate cities until the consolidation of the boroughs as Greater New York in 1898, this dissertation considers them as a continuum. Brooklyn, which was chartered as a city in 1834, grew to be the third largest municipality in the nation during the nineteenth century. However, it was geographically and culturally linked to Manhattan, as evidenced by the highest concentration of development along the waterfront near Manhattan and the large number of affluent residents who commuted to Manhattan via ferry.

³² Edward L. Widmer, *Young America, the Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 11.

trading port and was in constant contact with Europe, it won a reputation as a cosmopolitan city of aspiring connoisseurs and patrons of the arts. Following the opening of the Erie Canal in 1826, New York gained even greater national prominence as the point of dissemination of products and culture to states to the north and west. New York's financial and cultural position in relation to the rest of the nation became a source of local civic pride that fed efforts to erect public monuments.

Chapter I, "From the 'Grand Tour' to Brooklyn, New York," considers Brown's decision to establish himself in New York and closely examines the cultural scene that he joined upon returning from studies abroad in the autumn of 1846.³³ The chapter begins by summarizing the sculptor's years in Italy, from 1842 to 1846, where he met several Americans who took an interest in his work, promoted his reputation in the United States, and encouraged him to settle in New York. These individuals included William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *Evening Post*, Charles M. Leupp and Henry G. Marquand, leading businessmen, and Daniel Huntington, a painter active in the leadership of the National Academy of Design. These acquaintances were critical to Brown's developing career. Through them he gained entrée to cultural establishments including the National Academy of Design, the Century Club, and the American Art-Union. This chapter also considers Brown's experiments with bronze casting in his studio in Brooklyn, especially for his two commissions from the American Art-Union, *Choosing of the Arrow* (1849) and *Filatrice* (1850). These statuettes helped popularize American sculpture through widely publicized

³³ My understanding of the cultural scene in New York City during the 1840s is informed by the catalogue for the exhibit *Art and the Empire City* held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2000, Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, eds., *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000).

subscription lotteries. In essence, this chapter explores how Brown laid the foundation of his career by creating a network of private and institutional patronage that served his interest in promoting an American culture.

The subsequent three chapters examine the commission and production history of four monuments in New York City: *De Witt Clinton* (1853) in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn; *George Washington* (1856) in Union Square, Manhattan; *Abraham Lincoln* (1869) in Prospect Park, Brooklyn; and *Abraham Lincoln* (1870) in Union Square [Figures Intro.05, Intro.06, Intro.07, Intro.08]. I chose these monuments because they are the most important to Brown's career and represent broader currents in American sculpture. Although these monuments were the results of local campaigns, they all depict national statesmen and are milestones in the national history of civic sculpture.

Chapter II, "*De Witt Clinton* (1853) in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn," examines Brown's first monumental commission. The sculpture was one of the earliest bronze monuments successfully cast in the United States. It marked a turning point in the American bronze industry and was publicly displayed at New York's City Hall during the opening of the Crystal Palace Exhibition in the summer of 1853. I compare this sculpture to earlier, less successful casting efforts by Robert Ball Hughes in Boston and Clark Mills in Washington, D.C. I also place the commission in the context of the cemetery movement, a new feature in the suburban landscape that produced new opportunities for sculptors. I discuss the desire to build a monument that was simultaneously "sepulchral" and "civic" and look at how the sculpture satisfied the interests of its patron, the Board of Trustees of Green-Wood Cemetery, by attracting visitors to the cemetery, a combined public/private capitalist

venture.³⁴ I argue that Brown craftily challenged the conventional portrait format by depicting Clinton in contemporary dress and by including on the pedestal two bas-reliefs showing politically charged scenes that resonated with the volatile contemporary issues of race and labor.

Chapter III, “A Democratic Monument for the Empire City,” is a close study of *George Washington* (1856), located at Union Square, Manhattan. It was the second bronze equestrian statue cast in the United States and was celebrated as New York City’s first public monument. This chapter begins by considering the national fascination with George Washington and earlier failed attempts by other artists to erect a monument to Washington in New York. Funded by a group of civic-minded wealthy patrons who wanted to give the city a cosmopolitan monument that would rival those found in European cities, Brown’s monument straddled public and private domains. While the sculpture recalled its European models, especially the *Marcus Aurelius* equestrian monument in Rome, it won popular approval for its naturalistic presentation of Washington as an American historical figure. Using this work as a focus, this chapter considers the place of monuments in a democratic society and how Brown’s sculpture satisfied elite, high-art interests of its sponsors while creating popular appeal through its celebration of Washington as a man of the people.

Chapter IV, “Beyond New York,” addresses Brown’s ongoing interest in the federal Capitol. As it was Brown’s hope to help establish a national school of American sculpture, defined by national subjects and a realist style, he frequently visited Washington, D.C. throughout his life. Despite his success in New York, where groups of wealthy individuals

³⁴ The terms “sepulchral” and “civic” were used by the Clinton Albany Association, a monument committee incorporated in 1848 as a competitor to Green-Wood Cemetery’s Clinton monument project, *The Clinton Monument* (New York: Clinton Monument Association, 1848).

sponsored most of his monuments, he aspired to win a sculpture commission in Washington, D.C., where the primary patron was the federal government. Brown visited the Capitol in the 1850s and submitted proposals for a pediment for the House wing of the building, which were rejected. After the financial panic of 1857, he moved to Washington, D.C. in search of clients and commissions. Appalled by the number of foreign-born artists hired to decorate the Capitol, Brown became a leader in the movement that culminated in the founding of a National Art Commission. He served on the commission from 1859 to 1860, when it was dissolved. Undeterred, Brown continued to work to create opportunities for American sculptors and was instrumental in establishing the Capitol's National Statuary Hall in 1864, to which he later sent four sculptures. Overall, this chapter shows Brown's frustration and disappointment with the federal government's lack of support for American art.

Chapter V, "A Tale of Two Lincolns," compares Brown's two representations of Abraham Lincoln in Union Square, Manhattan (1870) and Prospect Park, Brooklyn (1869). These two bronze statues were among the first of countless monuments to Lincoln, who, in part due to his tragic assassination, inspired great public devotion. They also were among the earliest sculptures to be placed in the newly opened public parks in New York and Brooklyn. The private, exclusive Union League Club funded the Union Square *Lincoln* and the public Brooklyn War Fund Committee raised a public subscription for the Prospect Park *Lincoln*. This chapter considers how Brown changed his designs to accommodate the goals of his patrons. Soon after their unveilings, both sculptures were re-sited and carelessly modified in ways that took them out of their original context and diluted their local significance. This chapter suggests that their failure is symptomatic of the decline of

Brown's career as a new, younger generation of American sculptors overshadowed him with a new French-inspired Beaux Arts aesthetic in the 1870s.

These five chapters offer a window onto the development of American sculpture through the career of Henry Kirke Brown. Each chapter shows marked changes between the 1840s and the 1870s, especially the establishment of an American bronze industry, the growth of cemeteries and parks that were suitable sites for monuments, and the professionalization of American sculptors. Brown was a pivotal figure who shaped the American sculpture industry through these decades of change for his field and his country. He may have made only a few statues compared to other sculptors, but he worked against great odds in an environment that was rarely amenable. His career must be measured not only by the statues he sculpted or their popularity in subsequent decades but, rather, by the overall impact his life and work had on his profession. In the words of Christopher Wren, Jr., "*Si monumentum requires circumspice*."³⁵

³⁵ "If you would see his monument, look around," Christopher Wren, epitaph for his father, Sir Christopher Wren, Henry Davidoff, ed., *The Pocket Book of Quotations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1952), 233.

Biographical Note

This dissertation begins with Brown's studies in Italy where he moved in 1842 when he was twenty-eight years old. His interest in sculpture and his formal training as an artist began before that sojourn abroad. Brown was born on 24 February 1814, on a farm in Leyden, a rural village in Franklin County in northwest Massachusetts. As Henry Kirke Brown's childhood friend Catharine Brooks Yale described, Leyden was "a hill town of shrewd, intelligent, independent, hard-working farmers among whom art in any form was utterly unknown."³⁶ In these inauspicious surroundings, Brown dabbled in sketching portraits and cutting silhouettes. His parents, Rhoda Childs and Elijah Brown, who came from old stock New England families, were among his first portrait subjects. After attending a regional school in Pittsfield, Brown studied painting from 1835 to 1836 with Chester Harding, the noted Boston portraitist. Around this time, Brown also studied anatomy with Dr. Willard Parker at Woodstock Medical College in Vermont. In December 1836, he followed Dr. Parker to Cincinnati, hoping to continue his training in anatomy.

Though an outpost on what was then the western frontier, Cincinnati was a hub of artistic activity thanks in part to the resident patron of art, Nicholas Longworth.³⁷ Brown continued painting and befriended local artists including the sculptor Shobal Clevenger, whom he would meet again in Italy. Brown was mentioned in the local *Western Monthly Magazine*, which noted that his portraits of prominent men of Cincinnati were "all good

³⁶ Mary W. Fuller, "Three Early Artists of Franklin County," in *History and Proceedings of the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association 1921-1929* (Deerfield, MA: Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association, 1929), 181.

³⁷ On Longworth as an art patron see Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860*.

likenesses.”³⁸ An anecdotal account in *Sartain's Magazine* states that Brown first tried sculpting while living in Cincinnati.³⁹ The city was home to the German sculptor Frederick Eckstein who had trained Clevenger and Hiram Powers. It is very possible that Brown studied with or at least met Eckstein during his time in Cincinnati.

While experimenting as a young painter in Cincinnati, Brown supported himself in Ohio with seasonal work as a surveyor for the Illinois Central Railroad, a job that he probably obtained through his friend Christopher Arms, an engineer on the railroad who also came from Franklin County. A number of engineers from Franklin country were employed by the Illinois Central Railroad at this time.⁴⁰ Brown's several years in Cincinnati proved important not only as a place to study the art but also as a place to experience rugged life on the western frontier. In the company of Clevenger he visited Native American burial mounds outside of Cincinnati, while his work as a surveyor took him through wild passages of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois.⁴¹ These years were fodder for themes that Brown later explored in his art. Brown returned to New England in December 1838 and never went back to Cincinnati but he did send his work to two exhibitions there in the coming years at the Academy of Fine Arts (1841) and the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge (1842).⁴²

³⁸ *Western Monthly Magazine* (May 1837) as quoted in *Artists in Ohio, 1787-1900*, ed. Mary Sayre Haverstock, Jeannette Mahoney Vance, Brian L. Meggitt, and Jeffrey Weidman (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2000), 123.

³⁹ N. (Nehemiah) Cleaveland, "Henry Kirke Brown," *Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art* 8 (February 1851): 136.

⁴⁰ Fuller, "Three Early Artists of Franklin County," 181.

⁴¹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Cincinnati, 23 July 1837, HKBB 103.

⁴² *Artists in Ohio, 1787-1900*, 123.

Brown's main reason for leaving Cincinnati was probably his engagement to Lydia Louise Udall of Queechee, Vermont. They married on 28 October 1839, less than one year after his return. Lydia was a well-educated, outspoken, compassionate woman who had her husband's deepest confidence. She was even an amateur artist, a handful of her sketches survive in his notebooks in the Library of Congress.⁴³ Throughout their forty some years of marriage, during their period of separation, they consistently wrote long, meaningful letters as they often were forced to live apart, while Brown searched for commissions and the financial stability that eluded him most of his life. Their dialogue in these letters is intimate and intellectual as the two discussed everything from family matters to Brown's ambitions, patrons, and finances. As these letters served as the basis for Bush-Brown's manuscript and, consequently, this dissertation, it is important to remember that had there been no Lydia Louisa Udall, we would know almost nothing about Henry Kirke Brown.

In their first months of marriage, the Browns lived in Boston. In 1840 they moved to Albany, New York, where the artist rented a studio in the Stanwix Hall. Here he painted landscapes and sculpted portraits of prominent local civic leaders including, Dr. Eliphalet Nott, President of Union College, and William L. Marcy, governor of New York from 1833 to 1839. Brown modeled these busts in clay and cast them in plaster with help from Joseph Carrew and William Coffee.⁴⁴ Brown may have sculpted as many of forty busts between

⁴³ Notably, the surviving sketches are from the year when the Browns lived in Italy, suggesting that wives may have participated in the sketch club in Rome discussed in Chapter I, examples of sketches by Lydia Louise Brown are found in LC, Prints and Photographs, Sketchbook K.

⁴⁴ For references to Brown's work with Joseph Carrew see for example HKB to Lydia Brown, Albany, 29 May 1842, HKBB 295. For references to Brown's work with William Coffee see HKB to Lydia Brown, 10 May 1840, HKBB 202, and 22 May 1840, HKBB 210.

1840 and 1842 but, because of the lack of suitable marble in this country, most of these were cast in plaster.⁴⁵ Indeed, the desire to cut these sculptures in marble was one of the main factors that prompted Brown to move to Italy with his Lydia in the fall of 1842.

Brown's biography continues in a more or less linear trajectory in the subsequent chapters, which rely heavily on his letters to reconstruct the details of his life and the history of his commissions. His life always intertwined with contemporary events and his correspondence often reflect not just details of his work at a particular time, but also his opinion on the state of the nation, including topics like the outcome of presidential elections and the pros and cons of the Civil War. His letters also bring to light his personal interests. Like many of his contemporaries, he was passionate about the American wilderness and saw the woods of the Adirondacks and the Catskills as a place of spiritual respite.⁴⁶ He even wrote a morally instructive series about fishing that was published in *The Crayon*.⁴⁷ His letters discuss fly fishing trips in the company of fellow artists, such as John Quincy Adams Ward and William Stillman, almost as much as they discuss his sculptures.

Brown's career peaked in 1856 with the unveiling of his monument *George Washington* in Union Square Park, the subject of Chapter III. His frustration with his career and his

⁴⁵ Occasionally, while living in Albany, Brown cut busts in marble procured by Joseph Carrew, who also assisted with some of the carving. Brown finished these busts himself. The marble cost \$30 per block, Carrew was paid an additional \$30 for the carving, and Brown sold the finished busts for \$150 each. See HKB to Lydia Brown, Albany, 7 April 1841, HKBB 281-282.

⁴⁶ For more on the connection between American artists and fishing see William H. Gerds, "Before Winslow Homer: The Art of Fishing in the United States," in *Winslow Homer: Artist and Angler*, ed. Patricia Junker and Sarah Burns (Fort Worth, TX: Amon Carter Museum, 2002).

keen awareness of his failures comes to light more and more in his later letters. He continued to sculpt for twenty more years after the *Washington* but had greater difficulty finding commissions, suffered periodic bouts of poor health, and became distracted by his ongoing effort to lobby Congress to improve funding for a national arts program. After 1857, Brown made frequent extended visits to Washington, D.C. and continued to write to his wife, who remained at their permanent home in Balmville, New York.

Following Lydia Brown's death in 1878, Brown essentially stopped sculpting and became withdrawn. His nephew and adopted son, Henry Kirke Bush-Brown lived with him and oversaw the completion of his last work. A photograph shows the interior of Littlebrook after Bush-Brown inherited following Brown's death in 1886 [Figure Intro.09]. In the center of this photograph is Bush-Brown's wife Margaret Lesley, who was also an artist and is shown seated in front of an easel. Though the image dates from 1893, years after Brown's death, she is surrounded by plaster casts of Henry Kirke Brown's models and studies that spill from every corner of the room. Another photograph, taken decades later, shows the interior of Bush-Brown's house at 1729 G Street in Washington, D.C. [Figure Intro.10]. Though less cluttered, this studio still bears evidence of the survival of many of Brown's models, most notably a large plaster cast of the Brooklyn *Lincoln*, well into the twentieth century. Although none of the fragile plasters have survived, they show how even Brown's models continued to be important and valued enough to preserve.

⁴⁷ Henry Kirke Brown and [?] Sylvester, "Wilderness and Its Waters," *Crayon* 1 (January-June 1855): pp.163-165, 180-181, 194-195, 227-228, 242-243, 258-259, 275-276, 307-308, 324-325, 338-339, 355-356, 387-388.

Chapter I: From the 'Grand Tour' to Brooklyn, New York

The 1840s marked Henry Kirke Brown's transition from an art student to a professional sculptor. He left his work as a portrait sculptor in Albany in 1842 and traveled to Italy with his wife Lydia Louise Brown. Though he planned to stay for only one year, he remained abroad for four years, living in the American expatriate colonies in Florence and Rome. In 1846, he moved to New York City where his mature career in the United States officially began.

This chapter begins by looking at Brown's life in Italy and examining its importance to his development as a sculptor. Not only was Italy rich with antiquities and marble quarries—important resources for sculptors in the nineteenth century—it was also a place to network with artists and potential patrons. While abroad, Brown met prominent Americans on the Grand Tour, many of whom became professional contacts who influenced his decision to settle in New York in 1846. These contacts also helped him gain entrée into the city's art world, one that was undergoing rapid transformation.

The chapter follows Brown to New York and discusses his participation in the city's rise as importance of the city as America's cultural capital. In the 1840s a number of new institutions and organizations joined the ranks of the National Academy of Design (NAD), which Samuel F.B. Morse had founded in 1825 to promote American art.¹ These included

¹ The histories of the National Academy of Design, The Century Club, the American Art-Union and others are the subject of several monographs, dissertations, and studies: *The Century 1847-1946* (New York: Century Association, 1947); James T. Callow, *Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists, 1807-1855* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967); Thomas S. Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design* (Philadelphia: George W. Childs, 1865); John Durand, *Prehistoric Notes of the Century Club* (New York: Century Association, 1882); Arlene Katz Nichols, "Merchants and Artists: The Apollo Association and the American Art-Union" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York/Graduate Center, 2003).

the American Art-Union, an organization based in New York, in operation from 1839 to 1852 for the purpose of democratizing and popularizing American art; the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts, founded in 1844 to preserve the American art collection of the late Luman Reed (1787-1836); and the Century Club, a private association that succeeded the earlier artists's Sketch Club. Collectively, these organizations contributed to the institutionalization of art in the United States. Organized by charters, subscription lists, and by-laws, these establishments often grew out of informal gatherings in the homes of like-minded men. Their membership lists included authors, painters, sculptors, merchants, and politicians. This cultural world was characterized by its insularity and its conscientious interest in promoting pro-nationalist American art. It was insular in that all the organizations shared many of the same officers, as well as a vision of a codified American art. A handful of men, including Brown's friends and patrons William Cullen Bryant (1794-1878), Jonathan Sturges (1802-1874), Charles M. Leupp (1807-1859), and Abraham Martling Cozzens (1811-1868), wielded tremendous power over these new institutions.²

Arriving in New York just as some of these institutions were beginning to take shape, Brown played a leading role in this new cultural arena. He was a founding member of the Century Club; exhibited two sculptures in the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts exhibition at the New-York Rotunda in City Hall Park in 1848; sent several works to the American Art-Union's exhibitions and lottery distributions; and regularly participated in the

² Jonathan Sturges was a New York merchant who had made his fortune in a dry goods business. He was Luman Reed's junior business partner and shared Reed's interest in collecting American art. Sturges was also involved with the Illinois Central Railway, Mary Pemberton Cady Sturges, *Reminiscences of a Long Life* (New York: F.E. Parrish and Company, 1894). Charles M. Leupp got his start in the merchant house of Gideon Lee. After marrying Lee's daughter, he went on to inherit Lee's business and to become the director of the Tradesmen's Bank and the Erie Railroad, *The Century 1847-1946*, 6.

annual exhibitions at the National Academy of Design. He helped raise interest in sculpture not just by executing commissions and participating in exhibitions, but also by socializing and fostering friendships with his patrons through these and other art organizations. He quickly cultivated a network of conscientious patrons, many of whom would eventually work together to raise the subscriptions to commission Brown to produce monumental civic sculpture.

Encouraged by the success that he experienced in his first two years in New York, Brown left lower Manhattan for larger studio and living spaces and built a home and studio in Brooklyn Heights in 1848. The chapter looks at how his studio became an informal American salon or forum for ideas on national culture that attracted such local luminaries as Walt Whitman and William Stillman, an editor of the art journal *The Crayon*. Brown's apprentices, John Quincy Adams Ward and Larkin Mead, were part of this "salon" and would promote and further Brown's philosophies later in the century. Significantly, it was in this environment that Brown successfully experimented with casting small bronze sculptures in the rudimentary foundry he built in his studio. For Brown, casting bronze was not just a process by which he rendered his designs in a permanent material, it was part of his greater goal to foster an American sculpture school. He firmly believed that American sculptors needed local access to a durable, finished material like bronze, so that they could work independently from European foundries and execute their sculptures entirely within the United States.

This chapter closes by placing Brown's experiments in casting within the context of the growing interest in science and progress as manifested in the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations held at the Crystal Palace in New York in 1853. Brown's interest in developing casting technology and his connection to New York's art and cultural institutions

left him well-poised to accomplish his highest goal of winning and sculpting civic monuments in the United States.

Italian Hours:
Florence

Henry Kirke and Lydia Louise Brown arrived in Florence, Italy, in November 1842. They had embarked from New York in mid-July on a ship bound for Liverpool, England.³ By August 17, they had landed and were enroute to Tuscany via London, Paris, and Marseilles.⁴ Like American sculptors before him, Brown went to Italy to refine his studies, look at ancient art, and take advantage of the unparalleled Italian marble industry.⁵ In upstate New York, Brown had sculpted mainly portrait busts, as that was what most interested his clients. It was from these portrait commissions, which he had fashioned in Troy and Albany, New York, that he earned the money to travel to Europe with his wife.⁶ Brown's patron and friend in Albany, Ezra Parmalee Prentice (1797-1876), also helped sponsor this trip.⁷

³ Lydia Brown to Adoline Taft, 19 July 1842, HKBB 298.

⁴ Brown made detailed notes of his visit to Saint Paul's Cathedral, the National Gallery, and Hampton Court in his first days in Europe, "London Note Book," HKBB 312-319.

⁵ Edward Everett made a persuasive argument for why American sculptors lived in Florence and Rome, Edward Everett, "American Sculptors in Italy," *New World* 3 (4 December 1841): 360-361.

⁶ Brown wrote to Lydia's sister Elizabeth before leaving for Europe, "I have now my number of commissions nearly made up...I shall go with orders second to no artist who has yet gone from America," Albany, 12 March 1841, HKBB 264.

⁷ Ezra Parmalee Prentice was Brown's most important patron in his early career. He commissioned from Brown several sculptures for his home, Mount Hope, which was located south of Albany. The Prentice family history is documented in three unpublished volumes: E. Parmalee Prentice, *Prentice Memoirs*, 1954, New York Public Library, Genealogy

As inhospitable as America may have been for the aspiring sculptor, Brown planned to leave his homeland behind for just one year.⁸ But the unsurpassed quality of Italian marble and new commissions compelled Brown to remain in Italy for four years. At the close of each year abroad, he wrote letters to family and friends defending his reasons for remaining yet another year. For example, in 1844 he wrote to Prentice, his patron and sponsor, "I have pretty much made up my mind to stay another year, for there is so much profit by here, that I feel it would be wrong not to stay."⁹ In January 1845, he again wrote to Prentice, "I can only say what I said last Spring. We have decided to stay another year, not from choice but because circumstances seem to indicate the course."¹⁰

In the first months away, Brown questioned, "what influence a long residence [abroad] might have upon my mind."¹¹ As it turned out, his time away only boosted his patriotism for America. After witnessing poverty in England and France, he wrote, "I picture to my mind America like the Redeemer of mankind, stretching out its arms to save the wretched and the homeless. I never felt the blessing of such a country until I came abroad."¹² In their correspondence with family friends and patrons in these first months abroad, the Browns often compared life, art, and technology between America and Europe.

Division, New York. It is unclear how much financial support Prentice gave Brown, but he alludes to sustained support in a letter to Brown in which he expresses a desire to purchase more sculptures, Albany, 27 March 1843, HKBB 363-366.

⁸ Brown stated his decision to visit Italy for one year in a letter to Caroline, Albany, 7 May 1842, HKBB 294.

⁹ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 422.

¹⁰ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 13 January 1845, HKBB 458.

¹¹ HKB to Joseph [Carrew?], Marseilles, 11 September, 1842, HKBB 323.

¹² Ibid, 325.

The Catholicism and classism that they witnessed in European society revolted them, but European art intrigued and impressed them.¹³ Brown's letters from abroad show him in constant conflict as he tried to absorb knowledge while reconciling what he observed with his firm desire to help establish an American sculpture tradition. He explicitly stated his goal, "It seems to me that in the history of no country was there a better opportunity to found a truly poetic and grand school of Art, and though I may accomplish but little in this noble work yet, that little shall all go for that purpose and to that end."¹⁴ This goal directed his studies and prompted him to write, "[I] shall make plans and drawings of all the fine fountains and monuments I can find [in Florence] ... I hope I may receive a commission from the state of New York for a monument."¹⁵

After settling in Florence in November 1842, Brown wrote to Prentice that he and Lydia "don't entirely dislike the place," but at the same time he criticized the Italian climate and the people as indolent and could not "see in what respect this city possesses one charm above a dozen American cities, excepting that of antiquity."¹⁶ Like most Americans abroad, the Browns were closer to the other expatriate Americans than they were to Italians. On their first day in Florence they "met ten or twelve [Americans] ... and almost felt as if we had got home."¹⁷ Five months later, Lydia reiterated that she and her husband "have but little to

¹³ People with whom Henry and Lydia Brown corresponded the most in this period were Rhoda Brown (Henry Kirke Brown's mother); Caroline Brown (Henry Kirke Brown's sister); Adoline and Owen Taft (Lydia Brown's sister and her husband); and Mr. and Mrs. Ezra Parmalee Prentice of Albany.

¹⁴ HKB to Mr. Spencer, (no date, circa 1843), HKBB 372.

¹⁵ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Florence, 3 May 1843, HKBB 370.

¹⁶ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Florence, 10 November 1842, HKBB 330.

¹⁷ Lydia Brown to Adoline Taft, Florence, 6 January 1843, HKBB 342.

do with [the Italians]; the few American friends we have here constitute all our society.”¹⁸ By the 1840s, American sculptors, painters, and writers had been visiting and living in Florence for several decades and collectively created an expatriate colony that was a sister to the larger and older British expatriate colony.¹⁹ Horatio Greenough, who was a pillar of this expatriate community, was traveling in France and the United States during the year and a half that Brown lived in Florence. However, the two had met in Paris while Brown was en route to Florence. Greenough asked Brown to carry a personal letter to the American sculptor Hiram Powers, who had been in Florence since the fall of 1837. In the letter, Greenough called Brown “a brother-sculptor... who from his appearance seems to promise an agreeable addition to our society.”²⁰ The Browns were initially close with Powers and his wife, Elizabeth, and regarded them “among our best friends here.”²¹ But their friendship later dissolved, probably due to professional rivalry, leading Lydia Brown to write, “Mr. Powers has treated Henry in a most ungentlemanly, underhanded and intrieguing [sic]... and would let no opportunity escape to injure him so far as he thinks he can do with impunity.”²² Another American sculptor in the expatriate community was Shobal Vail Clevenger, who

¹⁸ Lydia Brown to “Mother” [either Mrs. Udall or Rhoda Brown], Florence, 19 February 1843, HKBB 335.

¹⁹ For an excellent general history of American sculptors in Italy see William H. Gerds, “Celebrities of the Grand Tour: The American Sculptors in Florence and Rome,” in *The Lure of Italy: American Artists and the Italian Experience, 1760-1914*, ed. Theodore Stebbins, Jr. (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, in association with Harry N. Abrams, 1992), 66-93.

²⁰ Horatio Greenough to Hiram Powers, between 25 August and 28 September 1842, Paris, reprinted in Nathalia Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1972), 317.

²¹ Lydia Brown to Adoline (Udall), Florence, 6 January 1843, HKBB 348.

²² Lydia Brown to Adoline Taft, Rome, 9 January 1845, HKBB 462.

had studied with Frederick Eckstein in Cincinnati and who had met Brown there. Clevenger and his wife arrived in Florence in 1840 and were close to both the Browns and the Powers.²³

In addition to these sculptors, several American painters lived in Florence from 1842 to 1843, including Daniel Huntington (1816-1906), Henry Peters Gray (1819-1877), Miner Kilbourne Kellogg (1814-1889), Thomas Prichard Rossiter (1818-1871), Albert Gallatin Hoyt (also spelled Hoyt) (1809-1856), and George Baker (1821-1880). Of these artists, Brown was most familiar with Hoyt, a portrait and landscape painter whom the Browns and the Clevengers had met on several occasions before moving to Europe.²⁴ Oddly, Brown's correspondence from Florence only fleetingly mentions any of these artists.²⁵

Americans on the grand tour of Europe occasionally joined the American expatriate artists in Florence. In the summer of 1843, John Adams Dix, a politician and the editor of the Albany-based journal *The Northern Light*, who had met Brown in Albany several years

²³ Clevenger died en route back to the United States in 1843. Several letters in the HKBB manuscript mention Clevenger: 1 December 1836, HKBB 71; 18 June 1838, HKBB 130.3; no date (circa April 1839), HKBB 144.1; 22 November 1839, HKBB 149; 3 March 1840, HKBB 158; 20 March 1840, HKBB 164; 23 April 1840, HKBB 189; 6 May 1840, HKBB 199; 21 June 1840, HKBB 220.

²⁴ Several letters in the HKBB manuscript mention Hoyt: 22 November 1839, 149; 7 December 1839, 151; 6 May 1840, 199; 16 May 1840, 20; 21 June 1840, 220.

²⁵ The Browns traveled to Fiesole with the Huntingtons, Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Fiesole, 8 October 1843, HKBB 385. The Huntingtons, Grays, and Browns all became close friends after moving to Rome together in 1845. While there is no correspondence between Miner Kellogg and Brown, one of Brown's sketchbooks in the LC contains a small (16" x 12") oil-on-board painting of a woman in a landscape that is signed in the lower left corner, "M.K. Kellogg. 1869," LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook B.

prior, joined the expatriate community with his wife for a few months.²⁶ Another couple to arrive that summer were Mr. and Mrs. Griffin of New York. Mrs. Griffin died shortly after their arrival and her burial in the Protestant cemetery drew the American expatriates together in mourning.²⁷ While several Americans, including Hiram Powers, are buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Florence, according to Lydia Brown, Americans had little to do with either the English Church or the Protestant Cemetery. By and large, the Americans felt equal disdain for the Anglican English church (which Lydia Brown described as a theater, because it charged an entrance tithe), and the Italian Catholic church.²⁸ On one occasion, Lydia attended religious services in the hotel room of a clergyman from Ohio and was “thankful once more to hear the voice of prayer from an American minister of the gospel.”²⁹

²⁶ John Dix recorded his impressions of Florence in John A. Dix, *A Winter in Madeira and a Summer in Spain and Florence*, 2nd ed. (New York: William Holdredge, 1851). Dix was active in politics in Albany and later became a U.S. senator from New York, governor of New York, and a founder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was during his term as governor that Brown’s sculpture *George Clinton* was given by the state of New York to the National Statuary Hall.

²⁷ Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Florence, 10 September 1843, HKBB 384. In October 2004, Julia Bolton Holloway, Director of the Biblioteca e Bottega Fioretta Mazzei in the Protestant Cemetery in Florence, confirmed that the cemetery’s alphabetical register of 1877 documents that Mary Lawrence Griffin, wife of Lieutenant William Preston Griffin, who was born in America and died in Florence on September 3, 1843 and was buried in the Protestant Cemetery in tomb number 267 / GL 23774 N° 53. The present location of the Griffin tomb or burial plot is presently unidentified or may have been destroyed. Julia Bolton Holloway, *Florence in Sepia: A Guide to Victorian Florence* [compact disc] (Biblioteca e Bottega Fioretta Mazzei, Protestant Cemetery, 2004, accessed).

²⁸ For Lydia Brown’s comments comparing the church to a theater see her letter to Adoline Udall Taft, Florence, 10 September 1843, HKBB 384.

²⁹ Ibid.

Most of the Americans clustered together on the south side of the Arno, near the Porta Romana, on a street then called via dei Fornaci and now known as via Serraglie.³⁰ The Browns lived in an apartment in Casa del Bello, 2578 via dei Fornaci, overlooking the Boboli Gardens [Figure 1.01].³¹ The building was a renovated palazzo that held several apartments rented by American and British expatriates. Their annual rent was \$160 for a partially furnished apartment and \$50 for the studio that was close by, perhaps even in the same building as their home.³² Their immediate neighbors were the Powers, who lived across the street at 2539 via dei Fornaci, the Clevengers, and Miner K. Kellogg, an accomplished portrait painter, also from Cincinnati, who had been sent to Florence by the Department of State as a diplomatic courier.³³

Brown's study of art while in Florence was largely self-directed. While Greenough had formally studied under the Italian sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini, Brown did not enroll at the Academia, as he was "convinced of the folly of studying the works of others," and

³⁰ For more on Americans in Florence see Clara Louise Dentler, *Famous Americans in Florence* (Florence: Giunti Marzocco, 1976); Alta Macadam, *Americans in Florence: A Complete Guide to the City and the Places Associated with Americans Past and Present* (Florence: Giunti: 2004).

³¹ HKB to Rhoda Brown, Florence, 8 December 1842, HKBB 333; Lydia Brown wrote that they live on "Via Della Fornaca" [sic] near the Porta Romana with a terrace overlooking the Boboli Gardens, Mrs. Willard, Florence, 10 March 1843, HKBB 351-352. For more on Casa del Bello see, Richard P. Wunder, *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805-1873*, 2 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 117-118.

³² HKB to E.P. Prentice, Florence, 10 November 1842, HKBB 331; HKB to Rhoda Brown, Florence, 8 December 1842, HKBB 333.

³³ The building's present address is 111 via Serraglie, Wunder, *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805-1873*, 124, 128. For Kellogg's arrival in Florence see Wunder, *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805-1873*, 128-129. Kellogg went on to manage the United States tour of Power's *Greek Slave*.

preferred to direct his own studies of art and nature.³⁴ However, Brown may have taken anatomy lessons later in Rome with an Italian artist Gio. Franc. Ferrero.³⁵ One page in Brown's sketchbooks from Florence includes a page titled "the proporsions [sic] of Apollo by Ferrero" and shows a diagram of an ideal male body divided into measured sections that are labeled in Italian.³⁶ Brown, together with his friends, Clevenger and Hoit, also drew from live models.³⁷

Brown produced relatively few sculptures while in Florence. He brought with him from Albany only two plaster busts, *J.M. McConihe* and *George Tibbets*, which he had been commissioned to cut in marble, although he had hoped to bring more.³⁸ Portraits were the bread and butter of most sculptors. It was common for American sculptors, including Clevenger and Powers, to follow the standard European practice of modeling an initial design in clay or wax, having a plaster mold made of the composition, and casting a plaster

³⁴ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Florence, 10 November 1842, HKBB 330. For more on Greenough's study with Bartolini see Douglas K.S. Hyland, *Lorenzo Bartolini and Italian Influences on American Sculptors in Florence 1825-50* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1985).

³⁵ Henry Kirke Bush-Brown states this in a note, HKBB 66. Among Brown's sketchbooks at the Library of Congress is a publication, *Album 12*, containing engravings of the sculptures of the Parthenon with the inscription "Gio. Franc. Ferrero dis. ed. inc. 1827."

³⁶ LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook H, page 12.

³⁷ Lydia Brown to Rhoda Brown, Florence, 19 February 1843, HKBB 336.

³⁸ J.M. McConihe wrote to HKB from Troy, New York, commissioning his bust in marble for the amount of \$150 plus shipping, 15 July 1842, Henry Kirke Brown Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., microfilm roll 2770, frame number obscured. An article in *Morning Times*, Albany, 3 November 1840, included as a typescript in HKBB 253, extensively reviewed Brown's portrait busts in Albany and said, "[Brown] will sail for Italy in the spring where he will have them all executed in marble." For more on Brown's portrait busts of McConihe, Tibbets, and others see: Octavia Hughes, "The Early Work and Development of Henry Kirke Brown" (master's thesis, Columbia University, 1960), 14-23.

positive from this mold. Typically, the artist would then chose a suitable block of marble and hire expert carvers to translate the design from plaster to marble. On very rare occasions, usually at the beginning of one's career, a sculptor would carve the marble himself to hone his skills or to avoid the expense of hiring carvers. Brown boasted that he cut and carved his own marble in Florence, a skill which he learned in the United States from Joseph or Thomas A. Carrew, two brothers who were stone cutters active in Boston and Albany.³⁹ He wrote to Prentice, "I am very thankful for the knowledge I acquired in working marble before I left home; it will be of immense assistance to me in executing orders here."⁴⁰ In cutting these busts, Brown used a special kind of pointing machine, a tool used by carvers to take simultaneous measurements from the plaster model and the marble block being carved. Although carvers commonly employed pointing machines for this purpose, Brown prided his particular pointing machine as a unique tool that his fellow sculptors in Florence admired and replicated.⁴¹ While in Florence, Brown modeled in clay and cut in marble additional busts including one of his friend Albert Gallatin Hoit⁴² [Figure 1.02]. A fourth marble bust that Brown may have cut while in Florence was that of *Judge Ambrose Spencer*.⁴³ Brown had

³⁹ Brown's training in marble cutting under Carrew is mentioned in HKB to Lydia Brown, Albany, 7 April 1841, 281-283.

⁴⁰ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Albany, 3 May 1843, HKBB 370.

⁴¹ Lydia Brown to her sisters, Florence, 20 March 1843, HKBB 360; Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Florence, 6 January 1843, 348.

⁴² Lydia Brown to her sisters, Florence, 20 March 1843, HKBB 360. Brown exhibited this bust at the Boston Athenaeum in 1844, Robert F. Perkins, Jr. and William J. Gavin, III, eds., *The Boston Athenaeum Art Exhibition Index 1827-1874* (Boston: Library of the Boston Athenaeum, 1980), 28.

⁴³ Brown sent the marble busts of McConhie, Tibbets, and Spencer back to the United States when he left Florence, HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 15 November 1843, HKBB 396.

modeled the bust of Ambrose Spencer (1765-1848), a former Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court, in 1841 and left a plaster cast of it in Boston in the care of Joseph Carrew. It was probably Spencer's son, William Ambrose Spencer, who commissioned Brown for a marble replica.⁴⁴ Besides cutting these four marble busts in Florence, Brown also painted copies of works in the museums and modeled a few compositions, including a bas-relief, a flower girl, and a nude figure, none of which exists today.⁴⁵ Brown hoped to tempt Prentice to purchase the latter figure for the Mount Hope estate in Albany but anticipated that his patron would have some misgivings about its nudity, and, in fact, Prentice did not buy the piece.⁴⁶ The most significant work that Brown sculpted in Florence, and one that he continued to work on in Rome, was a figure of a young Native American titled *Young Indian* or *Indian Boy*.

⁴⁴ Brown asked Prentice to send him the plaster of Spencer so that he could cut the marble, E.P. Prentice to HKB, Albany, 27 March 1843, HKBB 365. It is unclear if the plaster arrived from Prentice and Carrew because Brown later wrote to Edward Udall asking him to send the plaster bust from Carrew, Rome, 25 December 1844, HKBB 459. This also seems to contradict Brown's letter to Prentice, 15 November 1843, when he stated that he sent the marble bust of Spencer to the United States. There are a plaster and a marble version of *Ambrose Spencer* in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art (reference numbers U1979.209 and U1979.208).

⁴⁵ Lydia Brown mentioned a figure of a flower girl and the bas-relief which HKB intended to submit to an exhibit, HKB to Adoline Udall Taft, Florence, 10 September 1843, HKBB 382.

⁴⁶ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Florence, 3 May 1843, HKBB 368.

American Apollos⁴⁷

In his first critical months in Florence, Brown looked at Italian and Roman art and contemplated a subject that was geographically unique to America. While he ultimately abandoned his statue *Young Indian*—not even a drawing of it remains—it did lead to his subsequent exploration of the theme of Native Americans after his return to the United States in such works as *Choosing of the Arrow*. Brown's writings on the *Young Indian* also show how he tried to position himself and his art in response to the work he saw in Florence and Rome. Brown proudly pronounced, "so far as I know, [it is] the first attempt that has been made to render classical objects of our own country."⁴⁸

In truth, American artists had been doing just this since the eighteenth century, when the American painter Benjamin West was said to have compared the *Apollo Belvedere* to a Mohawk warrior. Indeed, West himself included a figures of Native Americans in his epic painting *Death of General Wolf* (1770) and *William Penn's Treaty with the Indians* (1771). In his book *America's Rome*, William Vance notes that West's "famous comparison of the *Apollo Belvedere* to a Mohawk warrior seems to have haunted—and helped—American efforts to body forth an idea of the American Indian in sculpture."⁴⁹ Brown was one of several American artists in Europe in the 1840s to explore the subject of Native Americans. During this time, the painter George Catlin was in England exhibiting his portraits of the Mandan and other peoples of the Plains, in fact Brown wrote to the painter for advice on how

⁴⁷ A version of this section was presented at the Fellows Colloquium on 13 April 2004, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

⁴⁸ HKB to Mr. Spencer, (no date, circa 1843), HKBB 372.

⁴⁹ William Vance, *America's Rome*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 1:303.

accurately depict an Indian.⁵⁰ Greenough's sculpture *The Rescue*, a marble composition for the steps of the federal Capitol that showed a pioneer saving a woman from being scalped by a Native American, was being cut into marble in Florence in the early 1840s [Figure 1.03].⁵¹ Clevenger was also sculpting a figure titled *Indian Chief* in a studio neighboring Brown's. The work is now lost but an image of it, printed in *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, shows that Clevenger sculpted a standing nude man holding an archer's bow. [Figure 1.04].⁵² Brown and Clevenger had carried to Italy their fascination with Native America, which they shared as early as 1837, when they had visited an Indian burial mound in Ohio together and illegally exhumed bones as souvenirs.⁵³ Brown's *Young Indian* and Clevenger's *Indian Chief* were overt attempts to represent the Native American as an American Apollo.

⁵⁰ Catlin was well known for his exhibitions of painting of Native Americans and collection of Native American objects. Lydia Brown wrote to Mrs. Willard that Henry Kirke Brown had contacted Catlin, Florence, 10 March 1843, HKBB 352. Brown may also have borrowed paintings of Native Americans by Charles Bird King in the collection of Horatio Greenough, Horatio Greenough to James Kirke Paulding, 14 December 1839, in Sylvia E. Crane, *White Silence: Greenough, Powers, and Crawford, American Sculptors in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1972), 31; Brian W. Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 462; Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor*, 271-73.

⁵¹ Nathalia Wright, *Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), 165-166. The sculpture was removed from the steps of the Capitol and has been in storage since the 1950s. See Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 232-233 note 30.

⁵² "Clevenger," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 14 (February 1844): 202-206. Clevenger's *Indian Warrior* and Brown's *Young Indian* are mentioned in "American Sculptors in Italy," *Godeys* 27 (July 1843): 90.

⁵³ HKB to Lydia Brown, Cincinnati, 23 July 1837, HKBB 103.

Young Indian is now lost and no images of it survive, but Brown described its general appearance in his correspondence.⁵⁴ In a letter to his client Spencer, Brown stated that the composition consisted of a standing young male figure resting one hand on a bow and holding an arrow with the other. A stump covered with drapery supported the figure's weight. The plinth below the sculpture contained one bas-relief on each of its four sides depicting a bow and quiver, a sun, a deer hunt, and a group of Indians in various dress. Crowning the corners of the plinth were a horned buck's head and corn cobs. Brown compared this iconography to acanthus, ivy leaves, and lions, "ornaments the ancients used," and proudly asserted, "my design has been to admit nothing but what was Indian and, of course, American."⁵⁵ Similarly, Lydia Brown described her husband's choice of subject as "susceptible of expressing all the beauty of which the human form is capable, and that to an American, at least, it possesses as much of historical interest and poetry as an Apollo or Bacchas [sic]."⁵⁶ She defended it as "an American subject...that... has more interest for me than anything of Mythology or the classics" and was happy that American artists could "find enough of poetry and of interest in the early history of their own country for the employment of their imaginations without returning to the oft-repeated stories of Grecian and Roman mythology."⁵⁷

⁵⁴ HKB to [William Ambrose ?] Spencer, (no date, circa 1843), HKBB 372.

⁵⁵ Brown described the *Young Indian* in Ibid.

⁵⁶ Lydia Brown to Mrs. Willard, Florence, 10 March 1843, HKBB 352.

⁵⁷ Lydia Brown to [Adoline Taft ?], Florence, 20 March, 1843, HKBB 360, 361-A.

Brown finished sculpting the *Young Indian* in clay in 1843 and almost sold it to a Mr. Parrish of New York.⁵⁸ According to John Adams Dix, Hiram Powers had said of the piece, “it would do credit to any sculptor in Florence.”⁵⁹ But the sketch of the sculpture that Brown sent to his patron Ezra Prentice, elicited some criticism. Prentice suggested that Brown sculpt a more stereotypical depiction of the Indian, with long straight hair and a more angular face that was wider under the eyes, narrower at the mouth, and thinner in the lips. Prentice, who had built his wealth in the fur trade, also thought the figure could benefit from “a drapery... an otter skin, for instance.”⁶⁰ He reminded Brown that Americans had “squeamish notions” of nudity.⁶¹

Brown took Prentice’s “opinion [as representative] of what others would say at home” and replied, “for this reason [I] have changed the statue to an Apollino... hence the Indian boy is, like so many others of his race, no more.”⁶² This essentially instant transformation demonstrates that, for Brown, the Native American was not so far from Apollo, the Greco-Roman god of the sun, beauty, music, poetry, and oracles. To change the *Young Indian*, which at this point Brown had already begun to carve in marble, to an *Apollino*, he merely modified the figure’s accessories. In his words, he “arranged his hair in a classic form, given the face a different character, and he now stands nearly completed.”⁶³ In fact, as

⁵⁸ Lydia Brown to Rhoda Brown, Florence, 21 July 1843, HKBB 382.

⁵⁹ John A. Dix to E.P. Prentice, Florence, 17 July 1843, HKBB 373.

⁶⁰ E.P. Prentice to HKB, Albany, 14 March 1844, HKBB 427.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 15 June 1844, HKBB 437.

⁶³ Ibid.

suggested by Lydia and Henry Kirke Brown's writings cited above, the *Young Indian* had always been a hybrid, a classicized nude body, extracted from Brown's studies in Italy, overlaid with a generic Native American iconography. Brown saw both the Native American and Apollo subjects as an opportunity for "the careful study of grace, and the human figure."⁶⁴ As William Vance states in *America's Rome*, depictions by artists like Brown "idealize ... the youth of the race: the Greek and the American Arcadias of the imagination."⁶⁵ These artists presented an imagined, generic, pan-Indian history as the pre-history of the United States, minimizing the bitter wars the government was then fighting against the Indians in the name of expansion. The Native American was seen as a noble savage, doomed to extinction but admired for his unique relationship with nature.⁶⁶

The most likely model for Brown's *Young Indian* and *Apollino* is the ancient sculpture *Apollino* in the Uffizi Galleries collection [Figure 1.05]. Brown's sketchbooks show several drawings of this marble [Figure 1.06].⁶⁷ These sketches also illustrate how Brown experimented with a variety of classical and Native American references to construct ahistorical, fantastical Indian-Apollo hybrids. In one drawing, a classical idealized male figure draws an arrow from his quiver and holds a bow, while wearing a headdress, an animal

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Vance, *America's Rome*, 303.

⁶⁶ The body of literature on the depiction of Native Americans in the nineteenth century grows steadily. Some works that informed my research are Dippie, *Catlin and His Contemporaries: The Politics of Patronage*; Susan Scheckel, *The Insistence of the Indian: Race and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁶⁷ The drawings of the *Apollino* statue in the Uffizi are in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook F, plates 12, 28 and Sketchbook B, plate 4.

pelt, and animal skin boots [Figure 1.07].⁶⁸ At his feet lie a sword and two heads, one of whose profile recalls the idealized head found in classical sculpture. In another drawing, Brown shows a young nude man drawing a bow under the instruction of an older man who wears a floor-length classical drape [Figure 1.08].⁶⁹ In each of these sketches, Brown fused classical sources with Native American trimmings to invent a landscape filled with the unlikely encounter of ancient European and Native American worlds.

Brown hoped to reconsider the subject of the Native American Indian after his return to the United States, where he could once more study the theme first hand. Although he had written to George Catlin in London for advice on Indian headdresses and artifacts while still sculpting the *Young Indian*, he blamed its failure on the fact that “The statue was commenced under too unfavorable circumstances, for, though I have often seen Indians, yet it were a thing impossible to give faithful the character without having other material than what was around me to study.”⁷⁰ Brown ultimately decided that only in America could he “gather together the proper material for the story.”⁷¹ He did, in fact, realize this goal in his statuette *Choosing of the Arrow*, commissioned by the American Art-Union in 1848, addressed later in this chapter.

⁶⁸ The inscription on the inside of the rear cover of this sketchbook reads “Commenced Oct. 28, 1845- and finished – Nov. 28 1845 – H.K. Brown 61 drawings.” LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook F, plate 40.

⁶⁹ LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook F, plate 42.

⁷⁰ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 15 June 1844, HKBB 437.

⁷¹ Ibid.

Rome

Brown's decision to transform the *Young Indian* to *Apollino* illustrates his struggle to sculpt a uniquely American subject during his first few months abroad. But it also shows how he gradually became increasingly interested in classical subjects. Florence was best known for its Renaissance art. Though there were some excellent collections of antique Greco Roman sculptures found in the city, these were housed in Renaissance palaces like the Uffizzi and were essentially subsumed by the Renaissance and Baroque tastes. Rome, on the other hand, promised to provide much easier access to the antique with its plentitude of open air examples, such as the Forum of Trajan and Trajan's Column. Brown's work in Rome reflects his appetite for the antique, yet he studied this material with the intention of using it to further American art. In his first months in Rome, Brown wrote to his brother-in-law Owen Taft that the modern schools of art, such as those found in Florence, have "gone astray from the Greek [and] they have strayed from truth."⁷² He further stated, "My object [in Rome] now is to bring home with me some memorial of each of these fine works to fix firmer and firmer in my mind the great principles upon which they [were] wrought...Rome for an artist who wishes to study the higher walks of his profession, is by universal consent the first place in the world."⁷³ He drew incessantly noting that the put more "labor in my portfolio... than in marble."⁷⁴ Indeed, the pages in Brown's sketchbooks from this period show his fascination with ancient art, particularly objects found in the Capitoline Museum or the Vatican Museum [Figure 1.09].

⁷² Ibid, 401.

⁷³ Ibid, 400-401.

⁷⁴ HKB to Owen Taft, Rome, 12 January 1844, HKBB 401.

The Browns left Florence for Rome in October 1843 in the company of Daniel Huntington and his wife, Seth Cheney, and [?] Boise of Boston. The group traveled by *veturra*, or charter carriages, stopping in Sienna and Balsaena.⁷⁵ It was in Rome that Brown really began to value his time abroad. Brown called Rome “the place to study the mind of Art” and expressed regret at having spent one full year living in Florence, writing to Prentice wistfully, “I would just as soon be in Albany as Florence.”⁷⁶ After just three months living in the Eternal City, Brown wrote, “We are delighted with Rome; objects of interest spring up at every step; I have never felt anywhere else as [I do] here.”⁷⁷

As in Florence, the American expatriate community was important to Brown. Thomas Crawford was the most established American sculptor in Rome. Crawford had arrived in the Eternal City in 1834 and studied with Bertel Thorvaldsen, the foremost living Neoclassical sculptor. By the 1840s, Crawford had a strong base of American clients. He married the socially prominent Louise Ward and gained access to more commissions through his wife’s cousin, George Washington Green, who was the American Consul in Rome. Lydia Brown would later accuse Green of advocating on behalf of Crawford “to the exclusion of all other sculptors.”⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the Browns and the Crawfords remained on friendly terms.

Of the American painters living in Rome, Brown continued his friendship with Seth Cheney, Daniel Huntington, and Albert Gallatin Hoit, all of whom he had known in

⁷⁵ Lydia Brown described the trip to her sister Adoline Udall Taft, 30 October 1843, HKBB 386-393.

⁷⁶ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 15 November 1843, HKBB 397.

⁷⁷ HKB to J. H. Prentice, Rome, 9 March 1844, HKBB 425.

⁷⁸ Lydia Brown to Mrs. Taft, Rome, 9 January 1845, HKBB 461.

Florence. The Browns' correspondence also mentions Alfred Morse and James De Veux, a painter from South Carolina.⁷⁹ Another artist, Henry Peters Gray and his wife, whom the Huntingtons and the Browns had known in Florence, lived in New York and occasionally wintered in Rome.⁸⁰ The American painter George Baker shared Brown's first studio at 9 via Pallacorda, where the Browns also rented residential rooms [Figure 1.10].⁸¹ It was around this time that Brown taught William Morris Hunt (1824-1879), an American artist better known today for his paintings.⁸²

The Americans in Rome often sketched together, as evident from a few surviving drawings.⁸³ In November 1844, some twelve American artists began to gather more formally on Tuesday evenings for a sketch club that met in the homes of Brown or Huntington,

⁷⁹ Brown made a death mask of De Veux, who had died in Rome, and a relief portrait for De Veux's tomb, which survives today in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome, is mentioned in Reverend William Ingraham Kip, *The Christmas Holidays in Rome* (New-York: D. Appleton & Co., 1846), 217. De Veux and Morse are mentioned in a letter, Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Tivoli, 26 April 1844, HKBB 429-430. Brown's pencil sketch of James De Veux is found in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook K, plate 88.

⁸⁰ For example, see Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Rome, 20 October 1845, HKBB 515.

⁸¹ Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, 5 May 1845, HKBB 479. Lydia mentioned that they had six furnished rooms and three studio rooms on the ground floor and that their rent was \$350-\$400 per year, Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Rome, 9 January 1845, HKBB 466.

⁸² Thayer Tolles, ed., *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume I* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999), 99. In a letter to Adoline Udall Taft, Lydia Brown mentioned that Hunt sent her a cameo of a likeness of Henry Kirke Brown, 2 April 1845, HKBB 474. For more on William Morris Hunt and his studies with Brown, see Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt, 1824-1879* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 10-11.

⁸³ One example is a sketch in the papers of the Cooper Union Museum for the Arts of Decoration, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., microfilm roll NCU 3, no frame number visible, inscribed "Cheny Mr. and Mrs. Browne/ By H.K. Brown/ after coming from Villa Pomphili [sic]."

although some of the sketches inscribed "D. Huntington sketch club" date to earlier than November [Figure 1.11].⁸⁴ A daguerreotype taken on 26 April 1845 by Philbert Perraud documents some of the members of this sketch club.⁸⁵ American artists also traveled together to other Italian cities, where they sketched and studied in groups, especially in the summer. The Browns visited Tivoli in the company of Daniel Huntington and his wife and George Baker.⁸⁶ In July and August 1845, the Browns traveled to Naples, Sorrento, Pompeii, and Herculaneum with George Baker and Trevor McClurgh.⁸⁷ Many of the sketches they made on this trip are preserved in Brown's sketchbooks at the Library of Congress [Figure 1.12].⁸⁸ One drawing Baker made in Sorrento shows Brown seated on a folding stool in the act of sketching [Figure 1.13].⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, 21 November 1844, HKBB 454. Several sketches in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook K bear inscriptions mentioning the sketch club including plate 68, inscribed, "D. Huntington Sketch Club" and "Sketch Club Rome Feb. 28 1844" and plate 62, inscribed "A.G. Hoit Rome March 16, 1844" and "Sketch Club Rome March 1844 D. Huntington."

⁸⁵ The daguerreotype is damaged and some of the figures are obscured by blotches on the plate; of thirteen sitters (recorded by hand in ink on the verso of the daguerreotype), only eleven are visible: "Sketch Club of American Artists at Rome during the winter of 1844 & 45 taken April 26, 1845 by Sig. Perraud for E. Leutze, D. Huntington, L. Terry, L. Lang, J. E. Freeman, W.B. Chambers, W.H. Powell, Bujac, Mason, Baker (Stephen), Baker, McClurgh, T.P. Rossiter / members absent H.K. Brown Sick / Wm. Hunt gone to Greece," Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

⁸⁶ Lydia Brown to Adoline Owen Taft, Tivoli, 26 April 1844, HKBB 428.

⁸⁷ This trip is described in detail in Lydia Brown to Adoline Owen Taft, Rome, 16 September 1845, HKBB 498-511.

⁸⁸ Sketches from this trip include those found in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook K, plates 37, 39, 40, 56, 57.

⁸⁹ The sketch is inscribed "by Geo. Baker Sorrento Ag. 12, 1845" and is in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook K, plate 56.

While the American colony was essential, Brown also began noticing other artists. Rome was infused with a more international air than Florence. In particular, Brown admired the important and influential German artist in Rome, Johann Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869), writing, "I hardly esteem him less than Raphaelo [sic]."⁹⁰ For Brown, who had come from rural Massachusetts and lived prior to his time in Italy only in mid-sized American cities like Cincinnati and Albany, this worldly city offered a taste of cosmopolitan life. Rome was not only an important place to study but also the ideal place to meet upper-class Americans and to launch his career as a sculptor.⁹¹ Americans on the Grand Tour routinely visited compatriot sculptors and commissioned art from them. Crawford received several commissions this way and was celebrated in at least one travel book, *Rome as Seen by a New Yorker in 1843-4*.⁹² To be closer to these tourists and clients, the Browns moved their residence in June 1845 to the top floor of 81 Piazza di Spagna, at the foot of the Spanish steps, in the heart of the expatriate community [Figure 1.14].⁹³ At the same time, Brown

⁹⁰ HKB to George Fuller, Rome, 2 February 1844, HKBB 412. A clipping of an engraving in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook D, plate 9 reads "Devotion by F. Overbeck 1846."

⁹¹ Brown mentioned the lack of commissions in America compared to Rome, writing, "Without reputation, without commissions and without any special hopes for either by going home, I think it best to stay," HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 13 January 1845, HKBB 458.

⁹² William M. Gillespie, *Rome: As Seen by a New Yorker in 1843-4* (New-York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 182-191.

⁹³ HKB to Adoline and Owen Taft, Rome, 6 July 1845, HKBB 492.

moved his studio to 2 C via Margutta, which to this day is lined with artists studios.⁹⁴ Brown eagerly anticipated that in the winter he would be “surrounded by Americans.”⁹⁵

In his first winter in Rome, Brown received five commissions totaling \$1,000.⁹⁶ He also sculpted several pieces without commission, including *Young Indian*, *David Triumphant*, *Musadora*, and two bas-reliefs, *Pleiades* and *Mazeppa*.⁹⁷ The following winter, 1844 to 1845, his commissions reached \$4,172 and included larger, more creative compositions.⁹⁸ The most important pieces Brown sculpted in his second year in Rome were *Chi Vinci*, *Mangia* (also called *Boy with Dog*), *Ruth*, *Rebecca* (known only by its drawing), and *The Four Seasons*, a series of four bas-reliefs [Figures 1.15, 1.16, 1.17, 1.18].⁹⁹ All of these were eventually commissioned in marble. Of these, *Chi Vinci*, *Mangia*, which translates as “he who wins

⁹⁴ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 19 June 1845, HKBB 488.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ These were *Bust of Bacchante* (\$150) for Henry Gurdon Marquand; *Bust of Father* (\$200) for Governor Paine; *La Grazia* (\$300) for Colonel Winchester; bas-relief *De Veaux* [sic] (\$50); and *Bust of Deuux* [sic] (\$300) for Dr. Gibbs, “Extract from account book. Commissions received in Rome first winter, 1843-4,” HKBB 531.

⁹⁷ Brown summarized his work in a letter to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 421-424. None of the sculptures survived but sketches are preserved in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook M, plates 49, 50 (*David*); plate 52 (*Musadora*); plates 54, 56 (*Pleiades*).

⁹⁸ Commissions listed for this year are: *La Grazia* (\$150) for M. Appleton; *Plyades* [sic] (\$150) for James Johnston; *Bust of Son* (\$300) Mr. Parker; *Monument* [of son] (\$500) for Mr. Parker; Bas-relief of wife (\$100) for Mr. Post; Bas-relief of wife Angels (\$50) for Mr. Post; Bust of self (\$300) for Mrs. Hunt; bust of father (\$300) Mr. Spencer; statue [*Rebecca*] (\$500) for Mr. Spencer; *Ruth* (\$800) for Mr. Ewing; *Ruth* (\$700) for Miss. Hicks, “Extract from account book,” HKBB 532.

⁹⁹ *Rebecca* is unlocated, a drawing in the LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook M, plate 47, shows a young woman holding a jug and is inscribed “First Sketch of the Statue of Rebecca Rome, For Captain Spencer of the Navy Lorilard.” The *Four Seasons* are also unlocated but drawings of these four bas-reliefs are found in the manuscript, HKBB 415A-415D.

eats,” was the most ambitious composition and consisted of a young boy restraining a chained dog anxiously lunging toward a bowl on the ground, a reference to the classical theme of man versus nature. The natural, less formulaic pose of *Chi Vinci, Mangia* also foreshadows the realist style that Brown developed in his later works.

During this second winter, Brown experimented with rendering his designs for sculptures. He made engraved prints of *Chi Vinci, Mangia* and *Pleiades*.¹⁰⁰ He hired P. Guglielmi to draw his sculpture of *David* for A. Bertini’s engraving, a print of which was shown at the National Academy of Design’s twentieth annual exhibition in 1845 [Figure 1.19].¹⁰¹ He sent engravings to patrons in Albany to advertise his latest work and also distributed them to visitors to his studio in Rome, with the hopes that they would be shown to potential clients in New York.¹⁰² Brown also collaborated with a cameo cutter in Rome, [?] Saulini, who rendered in shell and stone the design of the bas-relief *Pleiades*.¹⁰³ Unlike in Florence, where Brown boasted of carving his own marble, in Rome he relied more on Italian artists to help produce the engravings and cameos of his work, as well as employing

¹⁰⁰ Brown may have relied on a drawing by P. Guglielmi to engrave *Chi Vinci, Mangia*, see LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook M, plate 51. For Brown’s engravings of *Pleiades* and *Chi Vinci, Mangia* see Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Rome, 21 November 1844, HKBB 453-454.

¹⁰¹ The engraving was exhibited as number 275, “Engraved outline of H.R. [sic] Brown’s Statue of David, A. Bertini,” *Catalogue of the Twentieth Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design* (New-York: Israel Sackett, 1845), 21.

¹⁰² Brown sent a roll of engravings to E.P. Prentice, mentioned in a letter from Lydia Brown to Mrs. Prentice, Rome, 20 December 1844, HKBB 456. Brown also prepared a drawing of *David* for Henry Marquand to take to New York where Marquand said he would try to “warrant [Brown] a purchaser,” HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 421.

¹⁰³ An unnamed client from South Carolina commissioned a marble of *Pleiades* at this time, Lydia Brown to Mrs. Prentice, Rome, 20 December 1844, HKBB 457.

Italian artisans to carve his work in marble. His notebook from this period shows entries and prices paid to for blocks of marble and sums to the *scalpeline* and *trabalzo* for carving it.¹⁰⁴

For all the amenities they had in Italy thanks to the sale of Brown's sculptures to Americans on the Grand Tour, the Browns were sometimes critical of life abroad. Ironically, it was their own countrymen who most annoyed them most. American patrons and artists were important to Brown's success, but Lydia Brown, who by now had grown fluent in Italian, was critical of ignorant American tourists and expatriates who passed through Italy. After a dinner in Rome hosted by John Dix to commemorate George Washington's birthday, attended by thirty Americans, she commented on the American presence in Rome:

It was pleasant enough to see so many of our countrymen together,--but we were nearly all strangers to each other,--collected from every part of the New World to see the wonders of the Old... [some] who understand scarcely a word of the language, and know no more of the habits, manners or feelings of the Italians, than if they had never seen them... if they have walked through the galleries with a guidebook in their hands or have bought an old muddy picture or a flashy copy,-- they are perfect connoisseurs and patrons of the fine arts, and, perhaps, write home a puff or a criticism upon 'American artists abroad'... From such learned travelers we, particularly, desire to be delivered.¹⁰⁵

By 1845, after three years of living in Italy, Brown was preparing to return to the United States and was concerned about the support of the arts he would find there. One patron, William Ambrose Spencer (1793-1854), encouraged the sculptor to live in Rome permanently, reasoning that America was not a good place for an artist.¹⁰⁶ Spencer visited

¹⁰⁴ HKB "Daybook" 1845-1846, entries in green leather-bound notebook, LC, Manuscript Division, HKBB box 4.

¹⁰⁵ Lydia Brown to Caroline Brown, Rome, 1 March 1844, HKBB 420.

¹⁰⁶ Lydia Brown to Mrs. Taft, Rome, 9 January 1845, HKBB 465.

Brown in Rome and commissioned several sculptures totaling \$800.¹⁰⁷ It is telling that even patriotic Spencer, a United States naval captain whose brother had been the Secretary of War, had a bleak view on art in America.¹⁰⁸ But Brown never intended to stay abroad and was eager to pursue a career in America. He consulted with patrons back home and with Americans on the Grand Tour on when and where to establish himself. Ezra Prentice advised Brown in September 1845:

You know what a witchery there is in the very name of Italy... what dignity it gives to the subject, and how predisposed the community is to look with favor (comparatively) upon a work brought from there or executed by a person inspired there. You must stay long enough to be talked about as being there. I have in several instances, already, seen your works spoken of by travelers, in very complimentary terms...¹⁰⁹

Brown had not immediately thought to establish his career in New York. Earlier, Prentice asked him if he would move to New York, Philadelphia, or Boston, to which Brown replied, "I left my heart in Albany, and I can hardly think of any other place; though, of course, whatever may be best for me."¹¹⁰ New York, however, soon became his first choice. The city's population had doubled every decade since the American Revolution. With the opening of the Erie Canal in 1826, it became the gateway to commerce and soon earned the name Empire City. In 1843 Prentice had written to Brown, "New York is now, more bountifully supplied with work than any other city in the world and they are, already,

¹⁰⁷ Spencer commissioned a reduction of *Rebecca*, HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 30 October 1845, HKBB 520. Spencer purchased *Rebecca* for \$500 and the bust of his father for \$300, "Extract from account book. Rome Commissions received in Winter 1844-45" HKBB 532.

¹⁰⁸ William's brother, John Canfield Spencer (1788-1855), served as the Secretary of War from 1841 to 1843.

¹⁰⁹ E.P. Prentice to HKB, Mount Hope, Albany, 9 September 1845, HKBB 496.

¹¹⁰ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 422.

talking of further ornamenting their grounds and places with statues.”¹¹¹ Three years later, one New Yorker called his city, “the metropolis of the Union,” and regarded it the best place to build a Washington monument because it was “more able to undertake such a costly work than any other city in the whole Union.”¹¹² Brown first mentioned New York as a possible home in October 1845 in a letter to Prentice:

We have pretty much made up our minds to settle in N.Y. We have been advised to do so by most of our friends. I have great hopes that I shall not be driven back to Europe again that I may live in my own country. I was talking with Mr. Bryant, the poet about it; he says, he has not the remotest doubt, that should I come to N.Y., that I would be constantly employed...¹¹³

Indeed, Brown could expect to find support in New York from several patrons and proponents of American art who had visited his studio in Rome. William Cullen Bryant, the editor of the *Evening Post* and “the poet” Brown referred to in the above quote, visited Brown in October 1845. Bryant wrote a letter from abroad to the *Evening Post* describing the artist as “an American sculptor of great ability... who is just beginning to be talked about.”¹¹⁴ In this letter, Bryant highlighted Brown’s sculpture *Ruth*, which depicted the Biblical heroine standing in contraposto wearing sandals, a head wrap, a long classical tunic, and carrying a sheaf of wheat. Brown’s figure was inspired by John Keats’s poem “Ode to a Nightingale,” which reads, “Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,/She stood in tears amid

¹¹¹ E.P. Prentice to HKB, 27 March 1843, HKBB 365.

¹¹² I.S. Lyon, *The Washington Monument. Shall It Be Built, an Address to the Citizens of New York* (New York: William Oland Bourne, 1846), 8.

¹¹³ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 30 October 1845, HKBB 520-521.

¹¹⁴ William Cullen Bryant, Jr. and Thomas G. Voss, eds., *Letters of William Cullen Bryant*, 2 vols. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1977), 2:411. For a complete itinerary of Bryant’s trip with Leupp see “Europe Revisited,” in Bryant and Voss, eds., *Letters of William Cullen Bryant*, 2:287-292. Charles Leupp was the son-in-law of Gideon Lee and made his fortune in Lee’s leather business.

the alien corn."¹¹⁵ Keats had died in Rome in 1820 in the house across the Piazza di Spagna from Brown's apartment and was a poet of great interest to the Anglo-American tourists in Rome. As the lines of this poem suggest, *Ruth* was not just a Biblical figure but also a metaphor for the nostalgia for home felt by expatriates like Brown and Keats. *Ruth* proved a successful composition; Brown received three orders to execute it in marble for Ezra Prentice, [?] Ewing, a former member of Parliament from Glasgow, and Eliza Hicks of New York.¹¹⁶

Brown's work also caught the eye of Bryant's travel companion, Charles M. Leupp, a New York businessman who paid for their tour of Europe.¹¹⁷ Leupp was a great patron of American art and his interest in Brown's work would have major consequences for the sculptor.¹¹⁸ Bryant and Leupp traveled to Tivoli together with the Browns.¹¹⁹ Before leaving Rome, Leupp commissioned in marble Brown's *Chi Vinci, Mangia*.

Another New Yorker whom Brown met in Rome and who probably encouraged the sculptor to move to New York City was Henry Gurdon Marquand (1819-1902), a patron

¹¹⁵ Letter 561, William Cullen Bryant to the *Evening Post*, Rome, 5 October 1845, in Bryant and Voss, eds., *Letters of William Cullen Bryant*, 2:409-414.

¹¹⁶ Brown had also attempted to sell *Ruth* to Jonathan Sturges, HKB to Prentice, 13 January 1845, Rome, HKBB 458. According to Craven, Prentice purchased a marble *Ruth* in 1845 and Brown sold two replicas for \$1000 each, Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America*, New and Revised ed. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 148. For the purchases of *Ruth* by Ewing and E.P. Prentice see Lydia Brown to Adoline Udall Taft, Rome, 5 May 1845, HKBB 479 and 6 July 1845, HKBB 491. For the purchase of *Ruth* by Eliza Hicks see HKB to E.P. Prentice, 19 June 1845, HKBB 487.

¹¹⁷ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 30 October 1845, HKBB 519.

¹¹⁸ James T. Callow, "American Art in the Collection of Charles M. Leupp," *Antiques* 118 (November 1980): 998-1009.

¹¹⁹ Lydia to Adoline Taft, Rome, 20 October 1845, HKBB 512.

who would prove immensely important to his career. Brown first mentioned Marquand in 1844 after receiving a commission from him for an ideal head or *Bust of Bacchante* (location unknown).¹²⁰ At this time, Marquand also offered to show the engraving of Brown's *David* to potential clients in New York.¹²¹ In 1845, Marquand commissioned from Brown the set of bas-reliefs called the *Four Seasons* [Figure 1.18].¹²² Marquand eventually built a formidable collection of European art and became one of the founding officers of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹²³ Thus when Brown returned to New York in 1846, he already had powerful friends and patrons who actively and generously supported American art.

Brown Arrives in NYC

The Browns sailed for New York on 24 July 1846 in the company of Henry Peters Gray and his wife.¹²⁴ Upon arrival, Brown found that the city paled in comparison to the

¹²⁰ Brown refers to an ideal head in his letter, HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 421. Brown's account book, cited above, lists a *Bust of Bacchante* instead.

¹²¹ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 421. Marquand attempted to enter one of Brown's works, probably this bust, as a late submission to the NAD's twentieth annual exhibition but, if it was accepted, it was not included in the published exhibition catalogue. The NAD minutes read, "A communication was received from Mr. Marquand on the subject of a bust by Mr. Brown which he wishes to have in the present exhibition. The same having been left out by the accidental loss of Mr. Marquand's bust which was left in [illegible] Resolved that the Vice President and Mr. Gray be a committee to see the bust and if it be admissible, to make arrangements with Mr. Marquand for its exhibition." NAD Minutes, 16 April 1845, 22, Archives of American Art, microfilm roll 798, no frame number.

¹²² HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 30 October 1845, HKBB 519. Brown had also sculpted a series called *Seasons*, possibly sculptures in the round, for Prentice in 1842, HKB to Lydia Brown, Albany, 29 May 1842, HKBB 295.

¹²³ For more on Marquand as an art collector see Danielle O. Kisluk-Grosheide, "The Marquand Mansion," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal* 29 (1994): 151-181.

¹²⁴ HKB to Caroline [Brown], Paris, 16 July 1846, HKBB 543.

European cultural capitals of Rome and Florence. He despaired that New York drew him “into the vortex and confusion of business... The sound of B’way is like a distant thunder, it is the most unartistic city on the face of the globe in my opinion.”¹²⁵ One chronic problem that Brown faced was securing adequate studio space. He rented a studio for six months on the first floor of 321 Broadway, across from the National Academy of Design, “in the most fashionable part of the city.”¹²⁶ When the lease expired in May 1845, Brown was so discouraged in his search for a new studio that he momentarily considered moving to Boston. His patron Jonathan Sturges, President of the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts, offered him room in its building, the New-York Rotunda in City Hall Park, rent free, in exchange for “a present of some work which shall be an equivalent.”¹²⁷ The Rotunda had been erected by John Vanderlyn in 1818 to exhibit his panorama *Palace and Gardens of Versailles* and was a desirable place for an artist studio. Brown wrote to Prentice later that same month, “I have just got into my studio and like it very well... Rotunda in the Park Entrance on Chamber St.”¹²⁸ Still disappointed by the difficulties of living in New York, he wrote to Lydia, who had been visiting her family since their return from Italy, “I have

¹²⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, New York, 4 November 1846, HKBB 548-28.

¹²⁶ He rented the space for six months beginning in late October 1846, HKB to Lydia Brown, New York, 23 October 1846, HKBB 548-15. At this time Brown lived at 77 Spring Street, HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 21 November 1848, HKBB 548-30.

¹²⁷ HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 3 May 1847, 548-40. It is unknown when and how Sturges and Brown first met. As mentioned above, Brown had hoped to sell his sculpture *Ruth* to Sturges in 1845.

¹²⁸ HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 21 May 1847, HKBB 548-43.

worked in this infernal city now some eight months and am worse off in almost every respect than when I came here, especially in a pecuniary point of view.”¹²⁹

As much as Brown criticized the city, New York was the best place for an artist in America in the 1840s. The support he received from his friends and patrons there compelled him to stay. A number of friends celebrated his return from Italy with a dinner at the annual meeting of the Art-Union, of which Bryant was then President.¹³⁰ In Brown’s words, they “quite ‘Lionized me’ [at this] happy communion [of] Artists, Statesmen, Merchants and Poets all enjoying each others society.”¹³¹

Several clubs and institutions in New York supported American art in the 1840s. Many of them shared officers and members, making this a tight network.¹³² As a consequence, New York’s art world was rather homogenous in its aesthetics and politics. This was of great help to Brown, who found in this network a group of patrons who shared his civic beliefs.

The camaraderie in this circle of American art enthusiasts is especially evident in the portraits they commissioned of one another. For example, Leupp commissioned from

¹²⁹ HKB to Lydia Brown, 4 July 1847, HKBB 548-52.

¹³⁰ HKB to Lydia, New York, 12 October 1846, HKBB 548-11, 12.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² For example, Bryant, Sturges, and Leupp were members of the Sketch Club and executive officers of the Apollo Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts. Francis W. Edmonds was a member of the Sketch Club and the Century Club. At one point in the 1840s he was the Vice President of the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts while serving on the Executive Committee of the National Academy of Design, and the Art-Union Committee of Management, Nichols, “Merchants and Artists: The Apollo Association and the American Art-Union,” 380. For more on the intimate nature of New York art and intellectual circles see Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Women’s Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 8-27.

Brown a portrait of Bryant in 1846 [Figure 1.20].¹³³ Brown sculpted a portrait bust of Asher B. Durand for the NAD around 1847 [Figure 1.21].¹³⁴ Durand may have painted Brown's portrait around this time [Figure 1.22].¹³⁵ Jonathan Sturges ordered a portrait bust of the American painter Thomas Cole around 1849 [Figure 1.23].¹³⁶ Brown also sculpted a bust of Luman Reed in 1849 [Figure 1.24].¹³⁷ Ironically, these busts depict staunch supporters of American art in a very European, neoclassical style, with unincised eyes and classicizing drapery. As such, they reflect Brown's training in Rome as well as the enduring taste for neoclassicism for this type of parlor sculpture.

In addition to the support he received from Bryant, Sturges, and Leupp, Brown received help from his fellow artists. Henry Peters Gray and Daniel Huntington, Brown's close friends from his days in Italy, were of incalculable value to Brown during his first year in New York, assisting him with everything from making professional contacts to searching

¹³³ HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 3 December 1846, HKBB 548-31. One marble bust of Bryant is in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and given by Henry Kirke Bush-Brown in 1926. A slightly different marble bust of Bryant, with a classicized drapery, was a bequest in 1860 by the Leupp family to the New-York Historical Society.

¹³⁴ Brown exhibited the bust of Durand at the NAD in 1849. Brown gave Durand a marble carving of his bust which the Durand family gave to the NAD in 1887, David Dearing, "Asher B. Durand and Henry Kirke Brown: An Artistic Friendship," *American Art Journal* 20, no. 3 (1988): 76. Brown wrote "[I] am now modeling a head of Durand, nearly finished" to E.P. Prentice, New York, no date [circa March 1847], HKBB 548-35.

¹³⁵ The Bush-Brown family owns a portrait of Henry Kirke Brown that it has long been attributed to Asher B. Durand.

¹³⁶ This sculpture is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Tolles, ed., *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume I*, 42-43.

¹³⁷ Two articles mention the bust of *Luman Reed*, which is now in the collection of the New-York Historical Society, "Brown's Studio," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* 2, no. 1 (April 1849): 19; N. (Nehemiah) Cleaveland, "Henry Kirke Brown," *Sartain's Union Magazine of Literature and Art* 8 (February 1851): 137.

for studio space in Manhattan.¹³⁸ In 1846, Gray and Huntington were academicians and council members of the NAD. They probably introduced Brown to its President Asher B. Durand, with whom Brown forged a life-long friendship.¹³⁹ In November 1846, just months after Brown's arrival in New York, he was granted rooms to mount a solo exhibition at the Academy, which was then located at 348 Broadway.¹⁴⁰ Although it probably did not sponsor the exhibition and only provided the space, Brown's friends in the Academy likely helped with preparations for the show.¹⁴¹ It opened in the NAD's space in the Society Library Building on the same floor that John Vanderlyn was displaying his painting *Landing of Columbus*.¹⁴²

The first solo exhibition held by an American sculptor in New York City, this show was a milestone in American art.¹⁴³ Brown himself regarded it a success, writing that it was

¹³⁸ HKB to Lydia Brown, Astor House, New York, 12 October 1846, HKBB 548-10.

¹³⁹ Dearing, "Asher B. Durand and Henry Kirke Brown: An Artistic Friendship," 74-83.

¹⁴⁰ It was Durand who visited Brown's studio to tell him that the Academy's rooms were immediately available to him for the show, HKB to Lydia Brown, New York, 4 November 1846, HKBB 548-26.

¹⁴¹ Brown participated in eight of the NAD's annual exhibitions held between 1847 and 1868 and sent thirteen sculptures to the exhibit of 1850, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record 1826-1860* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1943), 53-54; Maria Naylor, ed., *The National Academy of Design Exhibition Record 1861-1900* (New York: Kennedy Galleries, 1973), 107. Durand was president of the NAD from 1845-1861, Brown's friend Daniel Huntington succeeded Durand in 1862, Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 356.

¹⁴² *Evening Post*, 1 December 1846, 2. HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 2 November 1846, 548-24.

¹⁴³ Wayne Craven proposed that Brown's was the first solo exhibition of a sculptor in New York City, stating that Thomas Crawford had held a solo exhibition at the Boston Athenaeum in 1844, Wayne Craven, "Henry Kirke Brown: His Search for an American Art in the 1840s," *American Art Journal* 4, no. 2 (November 1972): 46. In a "Letter to the Editor"

“as prosperous as we had expected; I think I shall have no cause to regret having made it.”¹⁴⁴

Brown knew that displaying his work publicly was essential to his success as a professional sculptor.¹⁴⁵ In his history of the NAD, Thomas Cummings described the exhibition as “a beautiful and chaste exposition of talent, [that] gratified [Brown’s] friends, although with little pecuniary success to the artist.”¹⁴⁶

The show contained fifteen sculptures in three media— plaster, marble, and bronze. Ironically, in spite of Brown’s interest in establishing a national art identity, nearly all of his works depicted classical or Biblical subjects, reflecting his training in Europe and the prevailing American taste for neoclassical subjects.¹⁴⁷ One review, however, complimented Brown for having “shaken off local prejudices, as must do all who would rival or approach the old masters. He has aimed at universality... there is no peculiarity of costume, natural

of the *Evening Post* one “connoisseur who has seen much of art in many countries” wrote, “I believe this to be the first exhibition in New York of the works of an American sculptor,” *The Evening Post*, 1 December 1846, 2.

¹⁴⁴ HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 21 November 1845, HKBB 548-30.

¹⁴⁵ While still in Italy, Brown had considered arranging an exhibit in Albany, where he had a number of patrons. He soon realized that an exhibit in New York would be more consequential. HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 422.

¹⁴⁶ Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 198.

¹⁴⁷ The sculptures exhibited were: *Bust of Ambrose Spencer*, *Adonis*, *The Seasons* (four bas-reliefs which were exhibited in plaster and marble versions), *Ariadne*, *Messengers of Venus*, *Grazzia* [sic], *Rebecca*, *Ruth*, *The Hyades*, *The Pleiades*, *Boy and Dog* (*Chi Vince, Mangia*), National Academy of Design, *Catalogue of Statues, Busts, and Bas Reliefs, & C by H.K. Brown* (New-York: Israel Sackett, 1846). Hicks loaned *Ruth* to the exhibition at the NAD, HKB to Lydia Brown, 4 November 1846, HKBB 548-26.

development, or subject, which can prevent these works from being understood by any people and at any epoch."¹⁴⁸

Walt Whitman reviewed Brown's solo exhibition in his article for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, "Matters Which Were Seen and Done in An Afternoon Ramble." While it is unclear if Whitman and Brown personally met at this nascent point in their careers, the two would become close acquaintances in a few years. Whitman favorably wrote of the exhibit, "Mr. B. is a young American, and deserves well; for he shows genius and industry. We particularly like two marble Bas Reliefs—one of the Pleiades, and another of the Hyades... An Adonis, quite the size of life, would perhaps be considered the most attractive 'feature' of the exhibition."¹⁴⁹

As suggested by the positive reviews of Brown's show, by 1847 Americans had developed more of a taste for sculpture than they had demonstrated in the 1830s when Greenough exhibited his *Chanting Cherubs*.¹⁵⁰ In ten short years, the first wave of American sculptors to go to Italy—Greenough, Powers, and Crawford—were well established and steadily sent sculptures back to the United States, either for exhibitions or for American clients. Brown's exhibition in New York in 1846 had followed Crawford's solo exhibition at the Boston Athenaeum in 1844. And in August 1847, the *Greek Slave* by Hiram Powers, the most famous American sculpture of the nineteenth century, drew unprecedented attention at

¹⁴⁸ "American Works of Painting and Sculpture," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 20 (January 1847): 59-60.

¹⁴⁹ [Walt Whitman], "Matters Which Were Seen and Done in an Afternoon Ramble," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 19 November 1846, 2.

¹⁵⁰ For a more complete discussion of the rising in interest in sculpture in the subsequent decades, see Michele Bogart, "The Development of a Popular Market for Sculpture in America, 1850-1880," *Journal of American Culture* 4, no. 1 (1981): 3-27.

its exhibition in New York.¹⁵¹ While still in Florence, Brown had seen Powers sculpting the *Greek Slave*, a marble composition of a chained, nude Greek girl enslaved by Turkish captors. At the time, he had called it, "a great work... among the gems of the world."¹⁵² Brown admired this first wave of American sculptors for their talent and their success in raising the level of interest in American sculpture. However, he came to criticize these earlier sculptors for remaining in Europe, for not furthering American art on their home soil, and for drawing too heavily from European models. Indeed, what distinguished Henry Kirke Brown from these sculptors was his decision to return to America. What made him appealing to cultural organizations in New York was his ambition to develop a national school of American sculpture through promotion of local talent, local materials, and local subjects.

Perhaps because of the success of his solo exhibition, the NAD elected Brown to associate status in 1847.¹⁵³ That year, he also submitted several pieces to the NAD's annual exhibition.¹⁵⁴ In 1847, Brown also became one of the forty-two founding members of the Century Club, a private club that had grown out of the more informal Sketch Club and

¹⁵¹ For a comprehensive history of the various versions of the *Greek Slave* and their exhibitions in the United States, see Samuel A. Roberson and William H. Gerdtz, "... So Undressed, yet So Refined... 'the Greek Slave,'" *Museum* 17 (Winter-Spring 1965): 1-32.

¹⁵² HKB to E.P. Prentice, Florence, 10 November 1842, HKBB 331. Brown later mentioned the *Greek Slave* in a letter addressed to an unknown recipient, HKB, 2 December 1847, HKBB 548-62.

¹⁵³ Archives of American Art, microfilm roll 798, frame 70. Brown accepted the invitation by letter, HKB to J. Chapman, New York, 25 October 1847, NAD Henry Kirke Brown file.

¹⁵⁴ The works shown at the 22nd annual exhibition were *The Pleiades*, lent by W.S. Hemmin, *Rebekah* [*Rebecca*] lent by William Spencer, and *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter*, [*Four Seasons*] lent by Henry G. Marquand, *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record 1826-1860*, 54. Marquand also lent *Four Seasons* to the annual exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1849, Peter Hastings Falk, ed., *The Annual Exhibition Record of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts 1807-1870* (Madison, CT: Sound View Press, 1988), 38.

closely affiliated with the NAD.¹⁵⁵ A history of the NAD published in 1865 recognized the Century as a “flowerlet” of the National Academy and deemed its gatherings “the most desirable of all the New-York winter entertainments” and a club that “embraced the highest talent in every branch of art, literature, and science.”¹⁵⁶ The Century Club was a balanced mix of authors, visual artists, patrons, and politicians from different economic and social backgrounds. Its constitution declared that it “shall be composed of authors, artists, and amateurs of letters and the fine arts, residents of the city of New York and its vicinity. Its objects shall be the cultivation of a taste for letters and the fine arts, and social enjoyment.”¹⁵⁷ Brown’s formal affiliation with the NAD and the Century Club officially sealed his position in New York’s cultural world.

In 1848, Brown sent only a single work, a watercolor, to the NAD’s annual exhibit, but he also had two sculptures on view at the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts.¹⁵⁸ The Gallery was founded in 1844 with the mission of preserving the collection of the late Luman Reed (1787-1836), a New York merchant who built a formidable art collection that included exceptional examples of American art, such as Thomas Cole’s *Course of Empire*. Upon Reed’s death, the Gallery maintained and added to the American art from the original collection which they regarded to be “a monument erected by taste and liberality.”¹⁵⁹ Not surprisingly,

¹⁵⁵ For a history of the Sketch Club and the Century Club see Durand, *Prehistoric Notes of the Century Club*.

¹⁵⁶ Cummings, *Historic Annals of the National Academy of Design*, 198.

¹⁵⁷ *The Century 1847-1946*, 5.

¹⁵⁸ *National Academy of Design Exhibition Record 1826-1860*, 54. Brown would finish the decade by sending thirteen sculptures to the NAD’s annual in 1850.

¹⁵⁹ *Catalogue of the Exhibition of the New York Gallery of the Fine Arts* (New-York: E.B. Clayton & Sons, 1848), 1.

among the officers and trustees of the Gallery were Sturges, Leupp, and Bryant.¹⁶⁰ Sturges, who was Reed's former partner, was the president of the Gallery.¹⁶¹ The exhibition was held in the Rotunda in City Hall Park, where Brown had a studio for a short time and where the Century Club was founded.¹⁶² The founders of the New-York Gallery maintained that other world-class cities with New York's population had at least one permanent Art Gallery and lamented, "There is nothing that our country *lacks* so much as the refining influence of Art."¹⁶³ The collection contained one hundred works, four of which were sculptures, including Brown's *Ruth*, which Eliza Hicks presented to the Gallery, and *Chi Vinci, Mangia*, which Charles M. Leupp presented to the Gallery after purchasing it from Brown in Rome.¹⁶⁴ The whole collection of the New-York Gallery of Fine Art, including Brown's works, was given to the New-York Historical Society in 1858.¹⁶⁵

American Art-Union

One of the most important institutional relationships that Brown forged during the late 1840s was with the American Art-Union. The Art-Union had grown out of the Apollo

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Sturges, *Reminiscences of a Long Life*, 168, 172.

¹⁶² *Catalogue of the Exhibition of the New York Gallery of the Fine Arts*, title page; *The Century* 1847-1946, 5.

¹⁶³ *Catalogue of the Exhibition of the New York Gallery of the Fine Arts*, 8.

¹⁶⁴ The other two sculptures in the collection were *General W.H. Harrison* and *Chief Justice Marshall*, sculpted by Shobal Clevenger. Catalogue numbers 97-100, Ibid., 10.

¹⁶⁵ For more on the history of this institution see Abigail Booth Gerdtz, "Newly Discovered Records of the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts," *Archives of American Art Journal* 21, no. 4 (1981): 2-9.

Association for the Promotion of the Fine Arts, which was founded in 1839 to advance American art through exhibitions and sales at the Association's gallery in New York.¹⁶⁶ The Apollo Association reorganized for financial reasons and changed its name to the American Art-Union in 1842. The Art-Union maintained a public gallery in New York, where it exhibited works that it had purchased from American artists. Annual membership to the Art-Union cost \$5 and entitled the subscriber to an engraving of one of the paintings from that year's exhibit. Members were also eligible to win a painting or sculpture from the exhibit through a lottery held in December. After 1848, members also received the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union*, a serial which reported on the exhibition and larger issues in the art world. The Art-Union, thus, offered artists commissions, exhibition venues, and publicity. Its membership climbed steadily and peaked in 1849 with almost 19,000 subscribers.¹⁶⁷

As with the New-York Gallery of Fine Arts, the National Academy of Design, and the Century Club, the Art-Union's officers included well-known advocates of American art, such as William Cullen Bryant, Francis W. Edmonds, Jonathan Sturges, and Charles M. Leupp.¹⁶⁸ The Art-Union saw art as a defining characteristic of every nation and asserted in one of its annual reports, "No country was ever truly great without Art."¹⁶⁹ It declared, in

¹⁶⁶ For more complete histories of the Apollo Association and the American Art-Union see Mary Bartlett Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union Exhibition Record, 1816-1852* (New York: New-York Historical Society, 1953); Nichols, "Merchants and Artists: The Apollo Association and the American Art-Union."

¹⁶⁷ Rachel N. Klein, "Art and Authority in Antebellum New York City: The Rise and Fall of the American Art-Union," *Journal of American History* 81, no. 4 (March 1995): 1546.

¹⁶⁸ *Charter and Constitution of the American Art-Union and Bylaws of the Committee of Management* (New York: George F. Nesbitt, 1848), 19-20.

¹⁶⁹ *Annual Report, Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1848* (New-York: George F. Nesbitt, 1849), 34.

comparing the United States to Ancient Athens and Rome, "In the progress of events, our own country must take her share of the renown which follows Art."¹⁷⁰ It proudly stated its mission:

We seek to establish a National School of Art. Ours is an American Association, founded upon American principles, fashioned by experience after American views, sustained by American patronage; and our aim shall ever be to promote the permanent and progressive advance of American Art... a school of our own fashioning; one that is not based upon the powerful yet offensive conceptions of antiquity alone, but upon the increasing refinement of modern taste.¹⁷¹

This rhetoric echoed Brown's own interest in cultivating support for American sculpture. The Art-Union championed Brown as an artist who exemplified what American artists ought to do for their nation. A monographic article in 1851 in the *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* applauded Brown:

It was his ambition to become, not a European but an American sculptor. To him it seemed that, if a school of art, with characteristics in any degree national, is ever to grow up among us, its work must be done mainly upon American ground, and amidst American influences.¹⁷²

It is likely that Bryant, who was president of the Art-Union from 1844 to 1846, invited Brown to participate in the 1847 exhibition.¹⁷³ One newspaper announced early in February 1847, "Mr. Brown the sculptor (a very worthy and deserving artist) is also to receive a commission for a bust, or a bas-relief... This is a very liberal step on the part of the

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 48.

¹⁷² "Henry K. Brown," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (April 1851): 14.

¹⁷³ The Committee of Management and the Secretary and the Treasurer collectively selected the works of art, Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union Exhibition Record, 1816-1852*, 120. Brown also became friendly with the two presidents who succeeded Bryant, Prosper Wetmore (1798-1876) and Abraham M. Cozzens. The latter commissioned Brown to design his wife's tomb in Green-Wood Cemetery.

Committee.”¹⁷⁴ The Art-Union purchased from Brown the marble bas-relief, *Christ Giving Sight to the Blind Man*, while it was still in progress.¹⁷⁵ This work went to John D. Locke of New York in the lottery of 1847 and is now unlocated, although a sketch survives in Brown’s papers [Figure 1.25].

The Art-Union noted the purchase of this bas-relief as part of its larger effort to support “certain branches of Art which at present receive too little encouragement in America.”¹⁷⁶ At its annual meeting in 1847, it announced that one goal was “to improve the annual collections... by the addition, for instance, of statuettes in bronze, and even of a few works in the highest walk of Sculpture.”¹⁷⁷ To this end, the Art-Union continued to purchase works from Brown, whom it classed with Greenough, Powers, and Crawford as “in their profession, the ‘foremost men of all their time.’ ”¹⁷⁸ To the 1849 exhibition and auction, Brown submitted a marble of *La Grazia*, an ideal bust he sculpted in Rome that may have been a portrait of the popular Italian model, Maria Grazia [Figure 1.26].¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ “American Works of Painting and Sculpture,” 405.

¹⁷⁵ “Artists from whom works of art have been purchased for distribution in 1847,” *Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1847* (New York: George F. Nesbitt, 1848), 17, 18, 32, 47. See also catalogue number eight “Christ giving sight to the blind man, -H.K. Brown St. John, ix. 6,” in “The American Art-Union: Plan of the Institution, List of Its Officers, and Catalogue of Its Paintings and Other Works of Art,” (New-York: Snowden and Prall, 1847), 6.

¹⁷⁶ *Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1847*, 18.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁷⁹ A period article states that Brown’s bust depicted Maria Grazia, “Maria Grazia and the Brigand School of Art,” *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (September 1850): 88. For *La Grazia* see number 329 “La Grazia. A bust in marble to P.M. Gillespy, Saugerties, N.Y.” in Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union Exhibition Record, 1816-1852*, 46. In 1928, Mrs. Howard Gillespy of Saugerties, New York, a possible descendent of the

More significant was the edition of twenty bronze casts of a Native American hunter, titled *Choosing of the Arrow*, which the Art-Union commissioned from Brown for distribution that same year [Figure 1.27].¹⁸⁰ Brown received this commission by March 1848 when he reported to Prentice, "The Art Union have given me a commission for a statuette of an Indian, 20 inches high, to be duplicated, the amount of the order is 22 hundred dollars, making one hundred and ten dollars each for the statuettes."¹⁸¹ With this commission the Art-Union took a major step to support American sculpture. Noting that the London Art-Union had offered bronze sculptures for some time, the American Art-Union explained that it had appointed a special committee, "to inquire into the expediency of procuring statuettes in bronze" for the 1849 lottery.¹⁸² It proudly announced that the "obstacle [of casting art] has now been removed, and there are here, at present several persons, lately arrived from Europe, who are fully competent to undertake this kind of work" and went on to applaud

original owner of *La Grazia*, wrote to the secretary of the National Academy of Design saying that she owned one of Brown's busts and requesting information about the sculptor, letter on file under "Henry Kirke Brown," curatorial files of the National Academy of Design. In 1938, the Metropolitan Museum of Art declined a gift from Miss J.S.F. Pidgeon of Saugerties, New York, who offered the museum a sculpture titled, *Grazia*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Archives. It is likely that the marble bust distributed by the Art-Union is the one now in the collection of the New-York Historical Society, accessioned in 1938 as a gift from the family of Peter Myers Gillespy. In 1846, Brown may have sent another marble bust of *La Grazia* to Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Longfellow's biography describes the opening a bale from Italy that "contained a bust by Brown; a portrait of a Roman woman,--a baker's wife, and model by profession. A striking and beautiful head," and states that this bust was in the hall of Cragie House in 1893, *The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Samuel Longfellow, 3 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1893), 2:44. There is also a bronze cast of *La Grazia* in the collection of the Smithsonian American Art Museum, given to the museum by Henry Kirke Bush-Brown in 1926.

¹⁸⁰ *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* 2, no. 8 (November 1849): 17.

¹⁸¹ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 3 March 1848, HKBB 548-63.

¹⁸² "Bronze Statuettes," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* 2, no. 1 (April 1849): 10.

Brown's success with casting bronze in this country.¹⁸³ Indeed, Brown had been experimenting with casting in his studio with the assistance of two foundry workers from France, Lalouette and Bellenout [Belnoux?], about whom very little is known.¹⁸⁴

The process of casting bronze is labor intensive and technically demanding.¹⁸⁵ In the simplest of terms, the artist usually begins with a clay model from which he builds a plaster mold, thus generating a negative record of his model. Larger compositions require the model be cut into pieces and cast in sections called a piece mold. After greasing the mold, one pours liquid plaster into its cavity to create a durable, plaster cast of the original soft clay model. This plaster cast is then used to create the sand mold, whose cavity will receive the liquid bronze. The mold for sand casting, the method used in the United States for most of the nineteenth century, is made of a fine powder-like earth, usually collected from a riverbed. The sand is packed tightly into metal frames and the plaster model is pressed into the sand to leave an impression of the model. In the case of a small composition, such as *Choosing of the Arrow*, the plaster is sandwiched between two sand-filled frames. After removing the plaster model and building a core for the center of the mold, the frames are assembled and sealed. Liquid bronze poured into this sand mold fills the narrow cavity that remains between the core and the impressed sand. Following the casting, there remains a great deal of cleaning, peening, pinning, and chasing of the surface of the bronze to render a finished surface. If done successfully, the results for the artist are tremendous because one can use

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 47.

¹⁸⁵ For an excellent and more elaborate explanation of bronze casting see Ibid.

the series of mold and casts to efficiently produce a large edition of casts from a single composition.

Brown's success with casting in his studio not only freed him and other sculptors from depending on the foundries and quarries of Europe, it also had the potential to bring sculpture to a wider audience. For Brown and the Art-Union, this mass production and distribution of a composition had democratic implications. As James Callow has stated, one of the goals of the Art-Union was to place the future of American art in the hands of the public rather than elite collectors and connoisseurs. One of Bryant's accomplishments as its president was "making [the Art-Union] a symbol of the public's triumph over private patronage."¹⁸⁶ As Americans developed a taste for art, the rising middle class sought to fill its homes with decorative objects, cheap reproductions in plaster of Paris were becoming widely available on the commercial market.¹⁸⁷ In the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville had shrewdly observed, "In an aristocracy a few great pictures are produced; in democratic countries a vast number of insignificant ones. In the former statues are raised of bronze; in the latter, they are modeled in plaster."¹⁸⁸ Brown and the Art-Union hoped to promote among the general public a taste for affordable, but finely made art. Each hand-chased cast of *Choosing of the Arrow* is a meticulously rendered individualized work of art.

¹⁸⁶ Callow, *Kindred Spirits: Knickerbocker Writers and American Artists, 1807-1855*, 34.

¹⁸⁷ For more on the proliferation of cheap replicas, see "Cheap Art," *Crayon* 2 (17 October 1855): 248; Bogart, "The Development of a Popular Market for Sculpture in America, 1850-1880," 3-27; Michele Helene Bogart, "Attitudes toward Sculpture Reproductions in America 1850-1880" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1979).

¹⁸⁸ "Cultivation of the Arts," in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (1835-40; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, 1945), 2:54.

The Art-Union saw the commission for *Choosing of the Arrow* as promoting American art not only by supporting the burgeoning bronze casting industry in this country but also by encouraging artists to depict subjects, such as Native American Indians, which it regarded as truly American.¹⁸⁹ To gather information for *Choosing of the Arrow*, Brown traveled to Lake Michigan in September 1848 to study the Mackinac peoples. Henry Gurdon Marquand, his friend and patron, accompanied him on the month-long trip. Marquand had enthusiastically supported Brown since they first met in Italy and occasionally offered the artist legal and financial counsel.¹⁹⁰ Marquand may also have introduced Brown to the silver manufacturer Ball, Tompkins & Black, for which Brown designed, and possibly cast, silver candelabra and decorative sword hilts.¹⁹¹

Marquand and Brown timed their trip to Michigan to coincide with an expected gathering near Mackinaw Island of 3,000 to 5,000 Native Americans, mostly Chippewa and Ottawa, who were awaiting payment from the federal government.¹⁹² Brown produced a sketchbook of twenty-four watercolors of Native American men and women, now in the

¹⁸⁹ For more on the Art-Union's opinion on American subjects, see Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union Exhibition Record, 1816-1852*, 152-153.

¹⁹⁰ Marquand and Brown also fished together on at least one occasion. Marquand's name appears in correspondence in the HKBB papers beginning on the following pages: 421, 436, 519, 548-14, 548-21, 548-56, 548-67, 548-69, 548-76, 584, 644, 853, 953, 1993, 2073.

¹⁹¹ The firm originally belonged to Marquand's family. Marquand & Co. became Ball, Tompkins & Black in 1838, Deborah Dendahl Waters, ed., *Elegant Plate: Three Centuries of Precious Metals in New York City* (New York: Museum of the City of New York, 2000), 370. Brown sculpted designs for the firm in 1847, HKB to Lydia, New York, 4 July 1847, HKBB 548-51, and 9 July 1847, HKBB 548-56.

¹⁹² HKB to Lydia Brown, Mackinac [sic], 16 September 1848, HKBB 548-75.

Library of Congress.¹⁹³ These watercolors are not abstracted studies or pastiches but individual portraits, often of leaders, whose names are recorded alongside the realistically-rendered faces [Figure 1.28].¹⁹⁴ Brown was personally moved by his experiences, writing, "It brings a sadness over me to look at these beings."¹⁹⁵ Yet he maintained his vision of them as degenerating noble savages, "tho' degraded as many of them are, ... I reverence the freedom and independence of their minds, which seems so closely allied to the freedom of nature."¹⁹⁶ As he had in Italy when sculpting the *Young Indian* that became the *Apollino*, Brown saw the Native American as an American Apollo. He regarded Michigan as an Arcadia in decline and even described Mackinaw Island as reminiscent of the view of the island of Ischia seen from Sorrento, Italy.¹⁹⁷

After returning to New York, Brown relied on these sketches to create more finished works, such as the two miniature bronze portrait busts of Native Americans, now in the collections of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Amon Carter Museum [Figure 1.29].¹⁹⁸ Another composition based on the studies in the sketchbook is a watercolor that Brown gave to Marquand in 1851 in remembrance of their trip [Figure 1.30]. This watercolor, now

¹⁹³ The sketches and watercolors of Native Americans are contained in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook K.

¹⁹⁴ See for example, LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook K, plate 9 which is inscribed, "Me sannacua do chief of Baydenoch."

¹⁹⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, Macanaw [sic], 13 September 1848, HKBB 548-70.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid, HKBB 548-72.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, HKBB 548-70.

¹⁹⁸ The Art-Union may have referred to one of these in stating, "the small bust of an Indian, beautifully modeled by Brown, has been reproduced," "Bronze Statuettes," 10. This bust may also be the one seen on the right in the photograph in the manuscript, HKBB 548-76C.

in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, shows a standing male Native American figure framed by a fishnet canopy that is trimmed with cork floats.¹⁹⁹ Under the left side of the canopy is a vertical spear draped with a bison head and under the right is a staff or spear draped with a drum, rifle, and shield. It most closely resembles the one Brown sketched in Sketchbook K, plate 14, which is inscribed “Wabinace” [Figure 1.31].

Ironically, *Choosing of the Arrow*, the commission that prompted the trip, bears little resemblance to the study sketches. In spite of his first-hand studies of the Mackinac and their clothing, Brown emphasized a highly classicized nude body that recalled his studies of Apollo. In a culture where depictions of the unclothed body were often controversial, Native Americans were deemed appropriate subjects for the artistic study of nudity because of a misconception that many Indians did not wear clothing. One period article argued, “People who wear modern clothes all the time are not good ‘studies of the nude.’ If any sculptor wants to revive his art... he must study people who are not unaccustomed to go naked... Here, then, among the Crows, the Sioux, the Chippewas, ... is a chance to study aright the form of man.”²⁰⁰

Brown finished sculpting *Choosing of the Arrow* by June 1849 and the Art-Union published a drawing and description of the sculpture in its July 1849 *Bulletin* [Figure 1.32].²⁰¹ At the lottery in December, the Art-Union distributed an edition of twenty bronze casts of

¹⁹⁹ This watercolor is inscribed on the lower left, “Brooklyn, L.I. Feb’ 10th 1851,” and the lower right, “For H.G. Marquand/ by his friend-/ H.K. Brown.”

²⁰⁰ “Mr. Ward's Indian Hunter,” *Nation*, 19 October 1865, 506.

²⁰¹ *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* 2 (June 1849), 26. This article announced that the auction later that year would include twenty bronze casts of *Choosing of the Arrow*, each standing twenty-two inches high, *Ibid.*, 5-6, illus. 4.

*Choosing of the Arrow*²⁰² This mass distribution literally brought sculpture into the homes of Americans as far away from New York as Mobile, Alabama, and New Orleans, Louisiana.²⁰³ Overall, the composition proved popular, however, there were complaints about the figure's nudity. At the discretion of the Art-Union, a metal fig leaf was added to each cast. In spite of this attempt at modesty, the compositions still raised eyebrows. The *Providence Journal* printed a letter from an irate reader:

[to] exhibit a figure like [*Choosing the Arrow*] entirely nude, in our parlours would be going farther than they would go in France or Italy... naked figures may do well enough ... in a gentleman's private library, or on the mantle piece of a bachelor; but imagine a beautiful young lady drawing such a thing as this.²⁰⁴

Continuing its support of bronze sculpture, the Art-Union commissioned Brown for another statuette in 1850.²⁰⁵ The sculpture *Filatrice*, which translates as the spinner, depicts a young girl in a long classical dress engaging in the ancient practice of spinning thread with a hand spindle and distaff [Figure 1.33].²⁰⁶ According to the *Art-Union Bulletin*, the sculpture

²⁰² The casts of this composition were all but lost for decades and only recently re-entered the commercial art market. There are several in private collections in addition to the cast in the collection of the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas. Those that have been available for study reflect superior chasing, a rich brown patina with red undertones, and removable accessories, such as the fig leaf and the arrows in the quiver.

²⁰³ The winners of the lottery who received *Choosing of the Arrow* are listed in "American Art-Union Distribution," 21 December 1849, in *Annual Report, Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1848*, 32, 60. The twenty entries distributed in the 1849 lottery were not recorded in Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union Exhibition Record, 1816-1852*. The Art-Union also distributed an additional, single cast at the lottery in 1850, Cowdrey, *American Academy of Fine Arts and American Art-Union Exhibition Record, 1816-1852*, 46.

²⁰⁴ *Providence [RI] Journal*, 13 November 1849, quoted in Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966; reprint, 1974), 223.

²⁰⁵ Brown writes of recently receiving a commission of \$2200 from the Art-Union for a statuette, HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 6 June 1850, HKBB 591.

²⁰⁶ Tolles, ed., *American Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Volume I*, 44-46.

showed a “*Girl Spinning* in the graceful manner in which that occupation is carried on in Italy” and recalled “A famous work upon a similar subject... [that] adorns the Duke of Devonshire’s collection at Chatsworth.”²⁰⁷ Another issue of the *Bulletin* drew a connection between the *Filatrice* and a painting in the exhibition and lottery of 1850 by describing *The Spinner*, by J.W. Glass, “An Italian woman engaged in spinning in the manner peculiar to her country. It was this mode of pursuing the occupation which suggested the graceful statuette of the *Filatrice*, which is included in the present distribution by Brown.”²⁰⁸ It is unknown how much Brown was influenced by the sculpture in the Chatsworth collection, but he certainly explored the subject of women spinning in Italy. His sketch on plate 27 of Sketchbook F shows a seated woman wearing a classical drape [Figure 1.34].²⁰⁹ A colorful print in Sketchbook K plate 97, bearing the inscription “12 / F. Ferrari f. / Donna di Vicovaro,” shows a seated woman holding a distaff [Figure 1.35]. On a similar note, while living in Florence Lydia Brown wrote to her sister after observing what she thought was an old-fashioned way of spinning:

[they] go about the streets spinning their linen with a distaff held under the arm... while the twirling of the bobbin as it falls to the ground twists the thread as they pull it out with their fingers, which is wound upon the bobbing-dropped again and another twisted in the same way.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ The sculpture in the Chatsworth collection is *Girl Spinning* by Johann Gottfried Schadow, “Affairs of the Association, Condition and Prospects of the American Art-Union,” *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (July 1850): 51.

²⁰⁸ *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (December 1850): 174, no. 334.

²⁰⁹ The inscription, “Lydia Louisa Brown Rome Oct. 28, 1845 From Henry” in the frontispiece of this sketchbook allows for the date of this drawing.

²¹⁰ Lydia Brown to Adoline Taft, Florence, 6 January 1843, HKBB 346.

The *Filatrice* may have had its roots in the old world— its style is certainly very classicized— but spinning was an activity that was tremendously important in nineteenth-century America. Laurel Ulrich's recent book, *Age of Homespun*, details the history of spinning and weaving in America and its significance as a patriotic activity.²¹¹ Even the Daughters of the American Revolution, founded in 1890, adopted the spindle as part of their logo. Spinning was a common task in many American homes early in the century. For instance, Rhoda Brown, lamented her daughter-in-law's absence at the spinning of wool in Leyden, Massachusetts, while the Browns were living in Italy.²¹² Brown's *Filatrice* was a subject that illustrated a practice common and important to American life. As he had with the image of the Native American, Brown translated the American colonial subject of spinning, into a classical one.

The sculpture was on exhibit at the Art-Union by early December 1850, and twenty casts were distributed at the lottery at the end of that month.²¹³ An illustration of the statuette appeared in the *Bulletin* in July 1851.²¹⁴ Like *Choosing of the Arrow*, *Filatrice* was an

²¹¹ Laurel Ulrich, *Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

²¹² Rhoda Brown to Lydia Brown, Leyden, MA, 27 September 1842, HKBB 326.

²¹³ Bronze casts of *Filatrice* may be found in the following museum collections: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Art Institute of Chicago; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; the Chrysler Museum of Art, Norfolk; the Detroit Institute of Arts; the Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens, San Marino; and the Newark Museum.

²¹⁴ The illustration is titled, "Drawn by Wallin, and engraved by Bobbett & Edmonds, from the original statuette by H. K. Brown, twenty copies of which in bronze were included in the distribution of the American Art-Union for 1850," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (July 1851): 57

early example of a bronze statue cast in America. It is likely that Brown cast the edition of twenty *Filatrice* in his studio with the help of Lalouette and Bellenout [Belnoux?].²¹⁵

Unfortunately for Brown and American artists, the Art-Union folded in 1852 due to a law that deemed it an illegal lottery. It had brought Brown's work, indeed, American sculpture in general, to a much wider and more diverse audience. The distribution of *Filatrice* and *Choosing of the Arrow* was a significant step to making high quality sculpture available to the masses. But an understudied legacy of the Art-Union was its interest in promoting civic monuments, including Brown's monument of De Witt Clinton. In his address to the Art-Union in 1846, William Cullen Bryant had said:

... we can hardly over-estimate the beneficial influence of monumental Art upon the general character of a people like ourselves... We have no king— no court— no imposing forms and ceremonies to serve as the external signs of this idea of country... We need something tangible to cling to and rally around.— We need the outward types and symbols afforded by Monumental Art.²¹⁶

To this end, the Art-Union promoted several efforts to erect civic monuments, including Brown's *De Witt Clinton* monument, erected in 1853, one year after the closing of the Art-Union.²¹⁷ Besides reporting on the progress of this monument, the *Bulletin of the Art-Union* encouraged its readership to contribute to the subscription to raise the *Clinton* and displayed

²¹⁵ The Ames Manufacturing Company casting records indicate that there were also thirty casts made by the foundry. These must have been cast after the edition of twenty for the Art-Union, since the earliest record of contact between Ames and Brown dates from 25 July 1851. For more on the casting history of the *Filatrice* see Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 46.

²¹⁶ *Transactions of the American Art-Union for the Year 1846* (New-York: G.F. Nesbitt, 1847), 20.

²¹⁷ The Art-Union also publicized John Frazee's designs for a monument to Washington. John Frazee, *Description of J. Frazee's Design for the Washington Monument Now Exhibiting at the Art Union* (New York: Jare W. Bell, 1848).

Brown's early model of the monument at its galleries at 497 Broadway.²¹⁸ No doubt such publicity for the project was encouraged by the officers of the Art-Union, several of whom were also trustees of the Cemetery, another example of the intimacy of New York's cultural world at this time.

"The Brooklyn School," Brown's Studio and Foundry in Brooklyn Heights

Brown moved his home and studio to Brooklyn in the summer of 1848, just before traveling to Michigan with Marquand. As he said in a letter to Prentice, "My present plan is to lease a lot in Brooklyn, and build on it, say lease it for 10 years."²¹⁹ For eight years Brown lived in Brooklyn, first at 222 Henry Street and later at 159 Henry Street, and kept a studio on Pacific Street, between Court and Clinton streets.²²⁰ He regarded Brooklyn as a place where he felt "freedom from old masters both ancient and modern."²²¹ Writing to Huntington, who was in Paris at the time, Brown optimistically described, "my little tree of hope is planted here [in Brooklyn] and its roots are spreading by nourishing waters... I feel

²¹⁸ See, for example, "The Clinton Monument at Greenwood Cemetery," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (April 1850): 14-15; "New Work by Brown, the Sculptor," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (May 1850): 28. The model was displayed in an exhibition of the works of Daniel Huntington from December 1849 to May 1850, "Catalogue of Paintings, by Daniel Huntington, N.A. Exhibiting at the Art Union Buildings, 497 Broadway" in *American Art-Union Catalogues of Exhibitions 1848-1857* (New York: American Art-Union, 1850).

²¹⁹ HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 19 July 1848, HKBB 548-66.

²²⁰ The 222 Henry Street address first appears in the letter, HKB to Lydia Brown, New York, 8 June 1848, HKBB 548-64, while the 159 Henry Street address appears in the letter, HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 12 June 1853, HKBB 644. Regarding the studio space, Shapiro wrote, "Real estate records show that Brown purchased a lot in Section 2, Block 286 on Pacific Street on April 26, 1853, and sold the same property on October 27, 1860. However, the sculptor may have leased this property before purchasing it," Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 45, 182 n. # 99.

²²¹ HKB to Daniel Huntington, Brooklyn, 24 December 1852, HKBB 639.

that my humble mission is here."²²² The most complete physical description of this studio appeared in an article in the *Home Journal*:

We turn south at Clinton-street, and then 'take the first road to the left,' which brings us at once to a nondescript building, two stories high, with an arched doorway. This is the studio. The anteroom is peopled with a few spectral plaster-figures, and opens onto a large apartment some thirty feet square, and as many in height. The floor is bricked, the windows oddly shaped and shaded, the bare brick walls hung around with numerous casts of heads and human limbs; and an immense wooden crane, with ropes and pulley blocks, is swung in the midst of it all, to say nothing of the appearance of mysterious trap-doors in the floor... from an unaccountable door half-way up the wall, to which leads a flight of steps, emerges the sculptor himself.²²³

It is here that Brown began experimenting with casting bronze, which became his favored medium for the rest of his career.

The new studio afforded Brown the space to train apprentices, among them John Quincy Adams Ward, who studied with Brown from 1849 to 1856.²²⁴ Ward acquired the Brooklyn studio in 1856, when Brown moved up the Hudson to Balmville, New York.²²⁵ The only surviving visual record of this building is a sketch by Ward in 1854 of an unpretentious wooden door to the studio.²²⁶

²²² Ibid.

²²³ "Studios of American Artists," *Home Journal*, 1 March 1856, 1.

²²⁴ Lewis I. Sharp, *John Quincy Adams Ward, Dean of American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 30.

²²⁵ Ibid., 35. Brown explained to William Morris Davis that he was living in Balmville but maintaining the studio in Brooklyn, Newburgh, 4 September 1856, HKBB 869. Ward continued to maintain the studio in Brooklyn from 1856 until he moved to Washington in 1859, Daniel O'C. Townley, "Living American Artists," *Scribner's Monthly* 2 (1871): 406.

²²⁶ The drawing, inscribed "Pacific St. Brooklyn / 54," is in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art and is published in Sharp, *John Quincy Adams Ward, Dean of American Sculpture*, 36.

The exposure to liberal ideas and the practical education apprentices gained by working in the studio illustrates Brown's commitment to sharing his knowledge with younger artists. The fact that it was one of the few places in the United States that anyone could witness a bronze pouring made it an exceptional place for aspiring sculptors. It is no surprise that Ward would closely follow his mentor and work almost exclusively in bronze in his own career.

Another artist Brown took under his wing in this period was the painter George Fuller (1822-1884), who was born in western Massachusetts close to Brown's hometown of Leyden.²²⁷ In an essay published in Fuller's memorial biography, the author William Dean Howells listed some of the people Fuller met in Brown's studio:

Mr. Gifford the painter, and such artists and connoisseurs as Mr. Huntington, Mr. Marquand, Mr. Richard Willis, Mr. Bromley Brown, Mr. Gray, Mr. Colman, Mr. Page, Mr. Durand, Mr. Stillman, Mr. Bryant and his family, Mr. William H. Ames, the young sculptors Quincy Ward and Larkin Mead, and a host of others.²²⁸

Howells also mentioned that this circle of artists would attend Bronson Alcott's "conversations."

The studio was a dynamic place, a forum for ideas on national culture, where artists and writers philosophized on the nature of America and its art. William Stillman, a painter and the co-editor of the critical art journal, *The Crayon*, referred to Brown's studio as "the meeting place of a school of transcendental thinkers (and I use the word in its full sense) of a very remarkable character... we used to call it the 'Brooklyn School.'"²²⁹ In his

²²⁷ Fuller painted a portrait of Brown in 1857, *George Fuller: His Life and Works* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1886), 87.

²²⁸ Ibid., 26.

²²⁹ William James Stillman, *The Autobiography of a Journalist*, 2 vols. (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1901), 1:219.; Stillman elaborates that spiritualism, a belief

autobiography, Stillman retrospectively credited his conversations with artists as inspiring him to found *The Crayon* with John Durand. Stillman recounted, "It was, perhaps, a natural consequence of all this talking and writing about art that, in the absence of a periodical devoted to it, my friends came to the conclusion that it would be a good and useful thing that I should start an art journal."²³⁰ He specifically listed Brown among the "thinkers and artists of distinct eminence."²³¹ *The Crayon* occasionally ran articles, presumably written by Stillman, on Brown's sculptures and favorably compared one of them to ancient Greek sculpture.²³²

One of the most notable visitors to Brown's studio was Walt Whitman. Their relationship, however, is only sparsely documented. As mentioned earlier, Whitman favorably reviewed Brown's solo exhibition of 1846 in his art review, "Matters Which Were Seen and Done in An Afternoon Ramble." Likewise, Brown admired Whitman and owned a first edition copy of *Leaves of Grass*, of which Whitman privately printed only about 800 copies for its July 4th publication in 1855.²³³ Brown regarded it highly enough to display it at

in contact between the living and the dead, was highly regarded by this circle of Brooklyn residents and noted that Lydia Brown was gifted with "peculiar powers," Stillman, *The Autobiography of a Journalist*, 1:183.

²³⁰ Stillman, *The Autobiography of a Journalist*, 1:221.

²³¹ Ibid., 1:222. Stillman and Brown were close personal friends who sporadically made extended fishing excursions together to the Catskill and Adirondack regions of New York. Letters in the HKBB manuscript that mention Stillman begin on pages: 651, 679, 698, 768, 776, 780, 1927.

²³² The sculpture discussed in this article, *Indian and Panther*, is now unlocated, "H.K. Brown's Indian and Panther," *Crayon* 2 (1 August 1855): 82-83.

²³³ The volume is identified as a second printing of this first edition based on its marbled ended pages and gilded cover, Ed Folsom, "Walt Whitman at Iowa," *Books at Iowa* 39 (November 1983): 11.

the entrance to his studio. Brown's apprentice Larkin Mead, wrote that the sculptor kept "the book [Leaves of Grass] on a parlour table and any one coming in must have a few pages read... I suppose that it is one of the greatest books ever written in this country... If you want to read a book that Mr. Brown ... and those delight in, that's the book."²³⁴

Direct contact between the sculptor and the poet was limited to the few years they shared in Brooklyn from 1848 to September 1856, but Brown continued to refer to Whitman in correspondence long after that.²³⁵ Ruth Bohan discusses Whitman's years in Brooklyn as a time when the poet took a great interest in the visual arts, writing art reviews for various periodicals and participating in the short-lived Brooklyn Art Union, to which he delivered the keynote address at the First Anniversary and Drawing of Prizes.²³⁶ Brown also supported the art organizations in Brooklyn and served as President at "the Institute in Washington street," which was probably the Graham Art School, in the same building where the Art Union was housed.²³⁷

Despite their formal affiliations with art institutions in Brooklyn, the center of their friendship was probably Brown's studio. Whitman commented on the studio:

²³⁴ Larkin Mead to Elinor [Mead], Brooklyn, 7 September 1855, typed transcript in William Rutherford Mead Papers (Ac 1867, Series a, Folder 14), Amherst College Library, Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, Massachusetts. Elinor Mead was Larkin Mead's sister and would later marry the writer William Dean Howells.

²³⁵ Brown mentions visiting with Whitman and Stillman while the three men were in Washington, D.C., in 1869, HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, no date [circa December 1869], HKBB 1927.

²³⁶ "First Anniversary and Drawing of Prizes of the Brooklyn Art Union," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 31 April 1851, 3; Ruth L. Bohan, "'the Gathering of the Forces': Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts in Brooklyn in the 1850s," in *Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts*, ed. Geoffrey M. Sill and Roberta K. Tarbell (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 1-27.

²³⁷ "Fine Arts in Brooklyn," *New York Times*, 18 November 1852, 5.

... I fell in with Brown, the sculptor— was often in his studios, where he was always modelling something— always at work. There many bright fellows came— Ward among them: there we all met on the freest terms.... There I would meet all sorts— young fellows from abroad stopped here in their swoopings.²³⁸

The poet referred to this period, yet to be troubled by the Civil War, as “big, strong days— our young days— days of preparation: the gathering of forces.”²³⁹

Although there is little archival material on the relationship between Whitman and Brown, their works of the 1850s reflect a similar interest in defining and shaping American culture. As Whitman expert Ed Folsom has noted, “Brown, Ward, and the others helped Whitman firm up his plans for a distinctly American poetry,” while the publication of Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* (1855) and the unveiling of Brown’s *George Washington* (1856) monument signaled, “the new revolution in American art, clearly revealed in the work of Whitman and Brown.”²⁴⁰ As Bohan has observed, it was during this period in Brooklyn that Whitman, “first articulated what was to become one of the central tenets of his artistic philosophy: the potentiality of the arts for moral and spiritual leadership,” a philosophy that was equally important to Brown.²⁴¹

In the spirit of Whitman’s celebration of a rugged American individualism, Brown’s efforts to cast bronze were driven by a desire to provide American sculptors with a means to execute their work entirely on home soil. With the rudimentary foundry in the Brooklyn

²³⁸ Horace L. Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, 5 vols. (1907; reprint, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1961), 2:502.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2:503.

²⁴⁰ Folsom, “Walt Whitman at Iowa,” 11.

²⁴¹ Bohan, “The Gathering of the Forces’: Walt Whitman and the Visual Arts in Brooklyn in the 1850s,” 1. The connection between Brown, Ward, and Whitman are briefly discussed in Vance, *America’s Rome*, 306-308.

studio, Brown pioneered the casting in America. In the late 1840s and early 1850s, he shifted from marble to bronze in a calculated effort by the artist to break away from the marble quarries and casting foundries of Europe. Eventually, Brown outgrew its capacity and turned to John Tyler Ames of the Ames Manufacturing Company, a firearms foundry in Chicopee, Massachusetts, to cast his larger works such as the De Witt Clinton monument discussed in the next chapter. In part this was a question of convenience but this practice took on a patriotic quality so that, by the end of the nineteenth century, bronze was favored for American monuments.

Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations

The rising interest in sculpture and bronze casting that Brown witnessed and promoted during his years in New York and Brooklyn were representative of society's wider interest in technology. In July 1853, the Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations opened in the glass and cast iron Crystal Palace, specially constructed on Forty-second street and Fifth Avenue. Modeled on the Crystal Palace exhibition of London of 1851, the exhibit heralded New York as an international city. In the words of the architects of the New York Crystal Palace, George Carstensen and Charles Gildemeister, "so grand a nation as America should in its turn realize on her own soil this novel idea of our progressive era."²⁴² Unlike the Crystal Palace in London, which had received great support from Prince Albert, the Crystal Palace in New York was a private, entrepreneurial venture: "In this country such an undertaking would not expect or require the assistance of the State, as is the case on the

²⁴² George Carstensen and Charles Gildemeister, *New York Crystal Palace, Illustrated Description of the Building* (New York: Riker, Thorne, & Co., 1854), 10.

continent of Europe... it was left to private enterprise to complete a task which elsewhere required royal exertion to insure its success.”²⁴³

The exhibit displayed an international selection of technological and artistic achievements. One speech made at the exhibition expounded, “A great city... should be the importer and distributor of all that genius can create” and described the exhibit as a school for “the artisan—the worker in metal, or stone, or wood.” With the Crystal Palace in New York, a student artisan “need not travel beyond these walls in quest of knowledge of his craft.”²⁴⁴

By now a leading cultural figure in New York, Brown served as a juror of the Fine Arts section under the chairmanship of Samuel F.B. Morse.²⁴⁵ He also exhibited his statue *Angel of the Resurrection*, a female figure gesturing skywards. The statue attracted more notice for its bronze medium than for its composition or subject.²⁴⁶ The real significance of the fair for Brown was not just his participation in it but the emphasis and attention that the fair lavished on sculpture [Figure 1.36]. Sculpture played a surprisingly large role in the Crystal Palace; included was a large collection of work by Bertel Thorvaldsen, the popular Danish sculptor who had lived in Rome and mentored Thomas Crawford. The largest sculpture in

²⁴³ Ibid., 11.

²⁴⁴ Richard O’Gorman’s speech quoted in *How to See the New York Crystal Palace: Being a Concise Guide to the Principal Objects in the Exhibition as Remodelled in 1854* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Co., 1854), 64.

²⁴⁵ Carstensen and Gildemeister, *New York Crystal Palace, Illustrated Description of the Building*, 75.

²⁴⁶ William C. Richards, *A Day in the New York Crystal Palace and How to Make the Most of It* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Co., 1853), 22. *Angel of the Resurrection* was criticized as having “little meaning and no beauty,” “The Exhibition at the Crystal Palace, Sculpture,” *Daily Tribune*, 16 July 1853, 1.

the central court was a colossal equestrian plaster statue, *George Washington*, by the Italian sculptor Baron Carlo Marochetti, contributed to the fair by Great Britain where the sculptor then lived. Several American sculptors, including Powers, Chauncey Ives, and Thomas Ball, exhibited marble and plaster works. One sculptor [possibly Thomas] Hoppin displayed a bronze dog, which was celebrated as “one of the few specimens of casting in bronze in this country.”²⁴⁷ Elsewhere an exhibition guide noted “some fine specimens of bronze castings; a department of manufactures in which we have as yet made no great progress upon this side of the Atlantic.”²⁴⁸ Changes in the casting industry had already begun to take place, and Brown was leading these changes.

In a city that boasted almost nothing in the way of permanent monuments, for a few months in the summer of 1853, a viewer could visit three monumental sculptures temporarily erected in close proximity to one another. In addition to Baron Carlo Marochetti’s equestrian monument of *George Washington*, Clark Mills’ equestrian sculpture, *Andrew Jackson*, was placed “in the vicinity of the Crystal Palace in a large and beautiful hall” that opened to the public on June 7 at “Broadway Hall, one square above the Crystal Palace.”²⁴⁹ Mills’ statue was probably a plaster version of the bronze cast that he had just completed for Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C. Two months before the fair opened in the summer of 1853, Brown placed his recently cast, monumental bronze sculpture of *De*

²⁴⁷ Richards, *A Day in the New York Crystal Palace and How to Make the Most of It*, 15.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 152.

²⁴⁹ “Colossal Equestrian Statue of General Jackson,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 20 July 1853, 1; “Mills Equestrian Statue,” *Brooklyn Eagle*, 3 June 1853, 2; “World’s Fair to Exhibitors,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 11 June 1853, 1.

Witt Clinton on the steps of City Hall for temporary public display. One editorial of the day commented that Brown's Clinton "should have been sent [to the Crystal Palace]." ²⁵⁰

In just ten years, Brown had completed his studies in Europe, established himself in New York, and won two major commissions for public monuments: *De Witt Clinton* and *George Washington*, the subjects of Chapters II and III. Not only had Brown's career evolved, but the Empire City itself had come of age. In part thanks to Brown's vision and artistry, New York was poised to enter an age of bronze public monuments. Had he remained in Italy, Brown likely would have gone on to have a successful career, but he would have filled his time with more private commissions for portraits, ideal busts, and so-called "fancy" pieces. He knew that in New York he stood a better chance to shape the future of American civic sculpture.

²⁵⁰ "Fine Arts," *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* 2, no. 7 (July 1853): 116.

Chapter II: *De Witt Clinton* (1853) in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn

De Witt Clinton was Brown's first monument commission. It marked the turning point in his career from a sculptor of portraits and ideal works to one of public monuments. By the time *De Witt Clinton* was completed in 1853, Brown had established a studio and foundry in Brooklyn Heights and had become an accomplished artist of distinction.

While this monument is widely recognized as one of the first bronze sculptures cast in the United States, there has been no scholarly account of its commission. This chapter traces the history of this commission from 1846 to 1853 and frames it in several contexts, beginning with the earliest efforts to commemorate Clinton after his death in 1828. As a statesman, Clinton was a tremendously popular figure who artists depicted throughout the nineteenth century. Brown himself had sketched designs for a sculpture of Clinton as early as 1841. Even while living abroad, Brown sent designs for a Clinton monument to his patron, Ezra Prentice of Albany. Although these early designs never reached fruition, the promise of eventually winning a commission for a major Clinton monument helped lure Brown back to America from his studies in Italy.

After his return to the United States in 1846, Brown immediately began the long, sluggish negotiations for the *Clinton* monument commission with Green-Wood Cemetery. This rural cemetery was founded in 1838 as one of several such modern cemeteries that provided both a place to bury the dead and a pastoral retreat for urbanites. As a new enterprise, Green-Wood depended on a high volume of visitors to whom it hoped to sell burial plots. As various efforts to build a monument to Clinton began and failed in Albany, the managers of Green-Wood recognized its unique position as guardian of the ex-governor's remains. The Cemetery saw these remains as an asset and capitalized on

Clinton's memory by building him a monument that would both memorialize the man and attract visitors to the cemetery.

Brown knew that the Clinton commission could further his career and aimed to create a monument that was at once historically informed and modern, that is, fashionably appealing to its public audience. Brown's monument, which stands in Green-Wood Cemetery, is a ten-and-a-half-foot-tall, full-length portrait of Clinton wearing an early nineteenth-century suit draped with a long, quilted cloak [Figure 2.01]. The statue is placed on a bronze base that is eight and a half feet high onto which are recessed two bronze bas-reliefs illustrating an historical and symbolic narrative about the building and use of the Erie Canal, Clinton's most consequential achievement [Figure 2.02].

The monument straddles the boundaries of private and public. It commemorates the location of Clinton's mortal remains with an accurate, intimate, full-length portrait of Clinton as he appeared in his day. It also didactically heroicizes Clinton with its larger-than-life size and its illustration of his public achievement in the bas-reliefs depicting the Erie Canal. These bas-reliefs made the monument relevant to Brown's audience of the 1850s by addressing politically charged issues of race, labor, and the removal of Native American Indians. More than a portrait sculpture, *Clinton*, referred to political and social issues important to both Clinton's America of the 1820s and that of the 1850s. By drawing parallels between the two decades, the bas-reliefs mitigate the passage of time between 1828, when Clinton died, and 1853, when the monument was unveiled.

The chapter concludes by considering the importance of the *Clinton* monument within the history of American sculpture. One of the first bronze monuments successfully cast in the United States, it was a landmark in American technology and art that heralded bronze as the new material of choice for public sculpture. Because of this commission,

Brown convinced James Tyler Ames, the proprietor of a firearms foundry in Chicopee, Massachusetts, to experiment in the casting of fine-art bronzes. Brown's partnership with Ames paved the way for the casting of monumental bronzes in the United States, giving American sculptors the means to build monuments on home soil. As a consequence of this commission, Brown secured his place as a vibrant member of the close-knit cultural community in New York, discussed in Chapter I, and was well-placed to accept and execute commissions for other monuments, which are discussed in subsequent chapters.

De Witt Clinton and the Erie Canal

A lifelong statesman active in local and national politics, De Witt Clinton (1769-1828) was a controversial figure, a Federalist in a time when the opposing Jacksonian Democrats were on the rise.¹ In the eighteenth century, members of his family fought the British in the American Revolutionary War and his uncle, George Clinton (1739-1812), served as the first post-colonial governor of New York State from 1777 to 1795. Resuming the office of governor again from 1801 to 1804, George Clinton went on to become the Vice President of the United States from 1805 to 1812, during the Madison administration.² De Witt Clinton entered politics around 1790 as his uncle's personal secretary and became a state senator in 1802. The following year and until 1815, the younger Clinton served as mayor of New York, winning ten annual mayoral elections.³ In 1812, he ran unsuccessfully

¹ For a recently-published biography of De Witt Clinton, see Evan Cornog, *The Birth of Empire, De Witt Clinton and the American Experience, 1769-1828* (New York: Oxford, 1998).

² Brown sculpted *George Clinton* (1873) for National Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol.

³ During this period, the city's term for mayor lasted one year. Clinton lost two elections between 1803 and 1815.

against James Madison as the Federalist Party's presidential candidate. From 1817 to 1823 and again from 1825 until his death in 1828, Clinton served as New York's governor.

Clinton remains one of the most influential politicians in the history of both the city and state of New York. In the early nineteenth century, New York mayors held "a power little short of dictatorial."⁴ Under Clinton's mayoralty, the city witnessed several major historical developments, including Robert Fulton's experiments with steam engines on the Hudson in 1807, the British blockade of New York Harbor during the War of 1812, and the beginning of the transformation of New York from a colonial outpost to the Empire City. Clinton's administration implemented several enduring changes, including the adoption of the grid plan of 1811 for Manhattan streets. Clinton was also a great supporter of the arts and served as a founding and/or board member of many of the city's cultural institutions including the New-York Historical Society and the American Academy of the Fine Arts.⁵

The project that contributed most to Clinton's fame was the building of the Erie Canal. It took nine years to build the 364 mile long canal, and Clinton's role as its primary political supporter was critical to its completion. The canal linked the Hudson River at Albany to the Great Lakes at Buffalo, providing a continuous waterway between New York and what was then the western frontier. Previously, commerce traversed the state by expensive, slow overland routes. With the opening of the canal in 1825, passenger travel

⁴ N[ehemiah] Cleaveland, *Green-Wood: A Directory for Visitors* (New-York: Pudney & Russell, 1850; reprint, 1852), 119.

⁵ For example see De Witt Clinton, *A Discourse Delivered before the American Academy of the Arts by the Honourable De Witt Clinton, LL.D. (President) 23rd October, 1816* (New York: T.&W. Mercein, 1816). For scholarship on Clinton and the arts see Kenneth Robert Nodyne, "The Role of De Witt Clinton and the Municipal Government in the Development of Cultural Organizations in New York City, 1803-1817" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1969).

time from New York to Buffalo dropped from twenty days to six.⁶ More significantly, New York became the most important port on the east coast of North America. By 1825, half of all imports to the United States passed through the city.⁷

Clinton died at his home in Albany, New York, in 1828. At his elaborate public funeral on February 14, a contemporary tribute noted that:

many spectators wore badges, bearing a miniature likeness of Clinton... [The funeral] procession moved through [the streets of Albany], to the place of sepulture, where the military escort opened to the right and left... The mortal remains of De Witt Clinton were then deposited in the 'narrow house;' military honours were paid to them, and the procession dismissed at half past four.⁸

His many public works, including the Erie Canal, which one nineteenth-century periodical called "a monument of his patriotism and perseverance," immortalized him as no monument ever could. At the same time, there was a strong desire to commemorate his memory in more tangible forms.⁹

Early Efforts to Commemorate Clinton

Arguably the first posthumous monument to Clinton was a building, Clinton Hall in New York City. At the time of Clinton's death, the Mercantile Library Association had been

⁶ James A. Henretta and others, eds., *America's History: Volume I to 1877* (New York: Worth Publishers, 1993), 302.

⁷ This history of New York City is summarized from Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁸ Cuyler Staats, *Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton* (Albany: Webster and Wood, 1828), 95.

⁹ "Bronze Statue of De Witt Clinton," *Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion* 4 (1853): 384.

planning to build a “permanent and efficient aid in promoting the laudable efforts of the merchants’ clerks in this city.”¹⁰ Merchants had prospered the most from the opening of the Erie Canal, and so the Association vowed that its new building, Clinton Hall, “might prove a lasting and at the same time *useful* monument of the graceful recollection entertained by the merchants of this city of the services of that distinguished statesman.”¹¹ The Hall would not only commemorate Clinton, but also celebrate the canal “by which the rich treasures of our northern and western boundaries are poured into the lap of this emporium of American commerce.”¹² Clinton Hall opened in 1830 at 9 Beekman Street, near Naussau Street, as the home of the Mercantile Library Association. From 1830 to 1869, it also served as an exhibition venue for the National Academy of Design, the Apollo Association, and the New-York Gallery of the Fine Arts.¹³ In 1829, the directors of the Clinton Hall Association commissioned the British-born sculptor Robert Ball Hughes (1806-1868) to create a larger-than-life marble figure of Clinton for the façade of their building. Relying on prints and portraits, Hughes “produced the most perfect and accurate delineation of the imposing features which distinguished that profound statesman.”¹⁴

¹⁰ From the *New York Daily Advertiser* as reprinted in Staats, *Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton*, 131.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 132.

¹³ For more on Clinton Hall and its use as an exhibition space see Carrie Rebora Barratt, “Mapping the Venues: New York City Art Exhibitions,” in *Art and the Empire City New York, 1825-1861*, ed. Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 68.

¹⁴ *New York Mirror* (13 February 1830) as quoted in ; *Evening Post*, 24 November 1829, 2.

Clinton Hall was followed by a bust of Clinton in Carrara marble proposed for City Hall by Enrico Causici (flourished, U.S., 1822-1835), an Italian émigré who claimed to have studied with Antonio Canova (1757-1822). Causici was already noted for his sandstone reliefs *Conflict of Daniel Boone and the Indians*, 1773 (1826-27) and *Landing of the Pilgrims* (1825), sculpted for the Rotunda of the United States Capitol, as well as for his stone figure of Washington placed in 1829 atop Baltimore's Washington Monument, a massive column designed by Robert Mills. By February 1832, Causici's marble sculpture of Clinton was on exhibit "for public inspection at the New-York Institution, at the rear of City-hall."¹⁵

Even before securing the *De Witt Clinton* commission from Green-Wood Cemetery, Brown participated in these early commemorative efforts. In January 1841, he sculpted a portrait of Clinton while living in the area of Troy/Albany, New York, where Clinton had had many political supporters.¹⁶ Brown's portrait of Clinton was likely commissioned by Clinton's surviving supporters. At least two of Brown's clients in this area were powerful members of the community who had been closely allied with Clinton.¹⁷

¹⁵ "Causici's Bust of Clinton," *New York Mirror*, 25 February 1832, 271.; *New York Commercial Advertiser*, 1 March 1832, 4.; "Bust of Clinton," *New York Commercial Advertiser*, May 1831.

¹⁶ Brown lived in the Troy/Albany area for several years in the early 1840s, after returning from his studies and travels in Ohio as a surveyor for the Illinois Central Railroad.

¹⁷ These included in 1839, Dr. Eliphalet Nott (1773-1866), a local religious leader and President of Schenectady's Union College, who had participated in Clinton's funeral procession and in 1840, and George Tibbits (1763-1849), who designed the financial plan that helped Clinton plan the Erie Canal and the mayor of Troy from 1830 to 1836, *Staats, Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton*, 94. HKB to George Fuller, 25 December 1839, Boston, HKBB 157; HKB to Caroline Brown, 14 May 1840, Troy, HKBB 202.

Very little is known about this sculpture, which is now unlocated.¹⁸ In a letter to his wife Brown emphasized the importance of producing the Clinton monument in this country:

... they will order that statue of Clinton if it can be done here, and the only objection that could be raised to it is the sending it abroad... the American sculptors are all in Italy... the names of Greenough, Powers, Crawford, and Cleavenger, sound well by themselves, but the commonest of names, Brown, appears best alone and at home.¹⁹

Brown recognized that he was in a unique position as one of very few American sculptors living in the United States capable of undertaking a monumental commission. Brown kept abreast of his affairs in the States by corresponding with Ezra Prentice, hoping that he eventually would be awarded the commission. In March 1844, Brown wrote to Prentice about reviving the Clinton monument project after their mutual acquaintance, Henry Rowe Schoolcraft (1793-1864), visited Brown in Rome and “talked much to [him] about that old affair of making a statue of De Witt Clinton,” promising to help raise ten thousand dollars towards the monument upon his return to Albany.²⁰ Brown thought these funds “would be sufficient to execute a statue ten or twelve feet high.”²¹ Another visitor to Brown’s studio was William Ambrose Spencer (1793-1854), a United States naval captain whose family had great political clout and who was in Rome in the winter of 1844-1845. His father, Judge Ambrose Spencer (1765-1848), was the Chief Justice of the New York State Supreme Court

¹⁸ Lydia Brown said her husband was working from “half a dozen different pictures [of Clinton] bearing but little resemblance to each other, and still less to him whom they are intended to represent,” Lydia Brown to Caroline Brown, 30 January 1841, Albany, HKBB 255.

¹⁹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Albany, 7 April 1841, HKBB 282-283.

²⁰ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 8 March 1844, HKBB 421. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft was involved with Indian affairs in New York State and was an ethnologist who had studied and extensively published on American Indians.

²¹ Ibid, HKBB 422.

from 1804 to 1823 and a personal friend of Clinton. At about the same time that Captain Spencer was in Rome commissioning \$800 worth of sculpture from Brown—including a marble copy of the bust of *Judge Spencer*—his father Ezra Prentice wrote to Brown saying that he had met with Judge Spencer regarding the plans to erect a monument to Clinton in the Troy/Albany area.²²

Although Prentice never visited Brown abroad, he remained Brown's strongest link to the Troy/Albany Clinton monument project and wrote the artist the heartening words, "The monument to Clinton will yet be erected in this city, and I think I may say, if prudence is exercised, you will do it."²³ According to Prentice, the project's tenuous nature stemmed from a lack of political support. In anticipation of presenting the project to the New York State legislature in the winter of 1845, he confessed to Brown, "we shall probably not get anything until we get a Whig House."²⁴ The Clinton monument for Troy/Albany did progress in December 1845, when Prentice informed Brown:

A few gentlemen met last week to consider the propriety of making an immediate effort to do something for Clinton. A committee to report a plan of organization and operation was appointed, and on Saturday with Mr. Corning and Townsend I called upon the Governor to see if he would accept the presidency of an association... He said he would accept the Vice-Presidency. We then saw Judge Bronson upon the subject... I am persuaded he will take it.²⁵

²² A plaster and a marble of *Ambrose Spencer* are in the collection of the Albany Institute of History and Art. HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 30 October 1845, HKBB 520; HKB to Adoline, Rome, 9 January 1845, HKBB 465; HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 30 October 1845, HKBB 520; "Rome. Commissions received in Winter 1844-5," HKBB 532. Brown wrote to Prentice asking him to send the cast of the bust of Justice Spencer to Rome, HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 13 January 1845, 459. Lydia Brown wrote to Caroline [Brown?] that the bust of Judge Spencer had been completed, Albany, 30 January 1841, HKBB 255; E.P. Prentice to HKB, no date, circa July 1844, HKBB 440.

²³ *Ibid.*, 439.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 440.

²⁵ E.P. Prentice to HKB, Mount Hope, 8 December 1845, HKBB 524.

Prentice hoped to ensure that the commission be awarded to Brown and asked the sculptor to send him “some drawings and something like estimates... something like the drawing you made here when it was talked of before; in anything of the kind let there be a statue on top... I mean a statue instead of a column.”²⁶ It seems from Brown’s correspondence that the committee had considered erecting a column. No doubt wanting to gain work as a sculptor, Brown argued in favor of a sculpture over a column and cited examples from antiquity to support his stand:

To my recollection, there is no instance of a simple column being erected to commemorate a single individual; those are more especially adapted for some act where individuals have been concerned; like battles &c. the columns of Trajan, Focus and Antonicus [sic], were all surmounted with the statues of the personages, and in two cases were decorated with basso relieves.²⁷

Hesitating to prepare drawings without more information as to the intended location of the monument, Brown made only general recommendations in his response of February 1846.

With marked Yankee sensitivity to cost, he wrote:

the cheapest and most appropriate monument would be a statue to surmount a massive and beautiful plynth [sic], upon which there might be a basso relieve illustrating the prominent events of his [Clinton’s] life... the pedestal should not be so high as to injure the effort of the statue, and large enough to receive the remains of the person, if necessary. A statue of twelve or thirteen feet high could be made for from six to twelve-thousand dollars... I shall, at once, make the sketch of the whole monument in clay, and make drawings from it to send by the next steamer.²⁸

A Clinton monument presented such a tantalizing opportunity for Brown’s career that he and his wife returned to the United States, a move that they had been contemplating

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 17 February 1846, HKBB 527-528.

for some time. He minced no words telling Prentice, “you are well aware of what it would do for my reputation in America, and what a fine commencement it would be for me on my return... we hope to leave Rome by the first of June.”²⁹ But by March 1846, the plans for a Clinton monument had all but died. Prentice wrote to Brown, “I am sorry to tell you the monument project is, for the present, given up.”³⁰ Prentice faulted the appointed committee for excluding him and for failing to work quickly over the winter, a time he thought ideal for drawing support for such a project. Prentice still believed that “the thing will go on and that to accomplish it, nothing but organization and efficiency is wanted.”³¹ He reassured Brown, “You cannot get it now, but I think you will yet cut a statue of Clinton,” which implies that the monument would have been made in marble and not bronze.³² Prentice was painfully aware of how easily monument committees failed to reach their goal, and cited other “unfortunate enterprises of this kind in our country,” including the *Washington* monument in Washington, D.C. and the *Bunker Hill Monument* in Boston.³³

Although this marked the end of the Troy/Albany effort to erect a monument to Clinton, other such efforts were in motion elsewhere in New York. Brown, having spent the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ E.P. Prentice to HKB, Mount Hope, 28 March 1846, HKBB 532.

³¹ Ibid, 533.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid. For more on the unsuccessful efforts to erect a monument to George Washington in the District of Columbia see Kirk Savage, “The Self-Made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 22 (Winter 1987): 225-242. For a history of the Bunker Hill Monument see George Washington Warren, *History of the Bunker Hill Monument Association During the First Century of the United States of America* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1877).

last six years intermittently designing a Clinton monument, was well prepared to offer a proposal to another monument committee.

Green-Wood Cemetery

Brown visited Green-Wood Cemetery for the first time in October 1846, eight years after it opened, in the company of Dr. [?] Amesberg of Troy, New York, who had invited Brown there to discuss a commission for his wife's funerary monument. Brown commented to Lydia Brown that Green-Wood Cemetery was "very beautiful, but not more so than the [cemetery] at Albany."³⁴ Later that same month, Brown would begin designing a Clinton monument for Green-Wood.

Two years earlier, in the summer of 1844, Clinton's remains had arrived at Green-Wood Cemetery. For reasons unknown, at the behest of Clinton's family, the remains were "removed from Albany to Green-Wood [Cemetery in Brooklyn, where they] were placed temporarily, in the tomb of Mr. Le Roy, upon Bay Grove Hill."³⁵ The Cemetery anticipated the arrival of the remains and planned for a Clinton monument in advance. Green-Wood's self-published history explains, "The Trustees had previously voted to set apart a piece of ground for the final reception of the relics [of Clinton], and for a suitable monument. A subscription was soon after opened for the erection of such a memorial, the sum of \$2,100 was pledged."³⁶

³⁴ HKB to Lydia Brown, New York, 12 October 1846, HKBB 548-10.

³⁵ Nehemiah Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864* (New York: Anderson & Archer, 1866), 47.

³⁶ Ibid.

Green-Wood's interest in erecting a monument to Clinton must be understood within the context of the rural cemetery movement, a new feature in the American landscape. The growth in urban areas and the subsequent lack of burial space in cities prompted this development of cemeteries in rural outskirts. In New York in particular, "prohibitory legislation started an inexorable removal of the dead from Manhattan and the central areas of Brooklyn" as early as 1823.³⁷ Green-Wood had opened in 1838 as one of several rural cemeteries, including Mount Auburn (1831) in Cambridge and Laurel Hill (1836) in Philadelphia, built during the late antebellum period as picturesque public spaces that were the forerunners to the urban park movement.³⁸ But the desire to erect monuments over the graves signifies another aspect of the rural cemetery movement. As discussed in David Charles Sloane's *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*, rural cemeteries offered a romantic, picturesque garden in which to remember the deceased; the emergence of rural cemeteries decorated with sculptural elements reflects a fundamental change in how Americans viewed death and public mourning. Inscribed on the title page of one of Green-Wood Cemetery's guides was Washington Irving's recommendation, "the grave should be surrounded by everything that might inspire tenderness and veneration for the dead; or that might win the living to virtue. It is not the place of disgust and dismay, but of sorrow and meditation."³⁹ Such an environment also served a didactic purpose and "offered an opportunity in which nature could be more fully exploited as an instructor about moral and

³⁷ David Charles Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 67.

³⁸ For more on the cemetery movement see Neil Harris, *The Artist in America* (New York: George Braziller, 1966); Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*.

³⁹ N[ehemiah] Cleaveland, *Directory for Visitors* (New-York: Pudney and Russell, 1850; reprint, 1857), title page.

ethical behavior in an increasingly profane and commercial world.”⁴⁰ The very word “cemetery,” which literally meant a sleeping chamber, was fresh to common usage in the nineteenth century and rapidly replaced the old church graveyards.⁴¹ Cities with the foresight to embrace this new outlook on death and mourning were deemed “culturally progressive.”⁴² In the absence of public parks, tourists and urbanites increasingly visited these carefully-designed, well-ornamented cemeteries for recreation.

Proposed by Brooklyn resident, Henry Evelyn Pierrepont, who had visited Cambridge’s popular new Mount Auburn in 1832 and Paris’s Père Lachaise Cemetery in 1833, Green-Wood Cemetery was initially a joint-stock company.⁴³ Green-Wood’s founders believed Brooklyn would benefit from a rural cemetery, but they also stood to benefit individually.⁴⁴ For example, the Pierrepont family had owned large tracts of land in Brooklyn and for several generations had controlled the ferries connecting Brooklyn to Manhattan, which would become the primary means for funeral corteges and visitors arriving at Green-Wood from New York. Green-Wood was criticized for seeking commercial profit under the guise of a philanthropic institution and soon changed to an

⁴⁰ Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*, 50.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 57.

⁴³ Pierrepont was part of a committee responsible for preparing a plan for the streets and squares of Brooklyn, which, in the 1830s, was fast developing from a village to a city. The founding members of Green-Wood who applied for the incorporation of the cemetery were David B. Douglass, A.G. Hammond, G.G. Van Wagenen, Frederic Marquand, Henry E. Pierrepont, Pliny Freeman, and Joseph A. Perry, Cleaveland, *Directory for Visitors*, 275.

⁴⁴ This history of Henry E. Pierrepont and Green-Wood Cemetery is summarized from “Henry Evelyn Pierrepont, Esq.,” in Henry R. Stiles, ed., *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, N.Y.* (New York: W.W. Munsell & Co., 1884), vol. 1, no. ii, 443.

incorporated trust, in which profits would serve the lot holders rather than investors.⁴⁵

Upon its incorporation as a public cemetery in April 1838, when it was declared exempt from taxes, founding engineer Major D.B. Douglass (1790-1849) claimed, "Green-Wood Cemetery, therefore, as it now exists, is, in the fullest sense, a Public Institution, unconnected with any purposes of profit or gain to any individual whatever."⁴⁶ But its board remained a union of the most influential families in Brooklyn and New York. Financially, the cemetery relied on private management by wealthy individuals.⁴⁷

Green-Wood was an entrepreneurial experiment that, like any business, required marketing and promotion. Memorial sculpture would come to play an important role as a cultural feature that promised to attract visitors to this new, meditative ambience. Fulfilling that ambition, the Clinton monument became one of Green-Wood's biggest attractions and was a crucial factor in the cemetery's success. For the Board of Trustees of Green-Wood, the Clinton monument was an investment, one of many capital improvements made by

⁴⁵ Sloane, *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*, 59.

⁴⁶ Pierrepont invited Major David B. Douglass, a civil engineer to deliver a public address in the fall of 1835 on the subject of the proposed cemetery. A former officer in the United States Army, Douglass had helped build the Croton waterworks and the Jamaica/Brooklyn railroad. Cleaveland quotes Douglass in "History of Green-Wood," Cleaveland, *Directory for Visitors*, 279. Green-Wood Cemetery, *A Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Green-Wood Cemetery, from 1839 to 1861 by Order of the Trustees* (New-York: Green-Wood Cemetery, 1861), 85, 90; Cleaveland, *Directory for Visitors*, 279; Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, 7.

⁴⁷ Green-Wood's financial struggle following the Panic of 1837 was mitigated by individual personal wealth contributed by men such as Joseph Alfred Perry who helped "by private advances of money and credit, and by untiring personal exertions." Perry, who had married a Pierrepont in 1834 and whose family owned J.D. Beers & Co., one of the largest banks in New York City, became comptroller of Green-Wood in 1842. Stiles, ed., *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn, N.Y.*, vol. 1, no. ii, 606.

1853, including the doubling of its acreage and the addition of a “receiving tomb for temporary reception” of caskets awaiting interment.⁴⁸

Among Green-Wood’s publicity tools were its self-published guides and histories. The cemetery hired Nehemiah Cleaveland (1796-1877), the principal of a school in Brooklyn, to write romantic texts for its visitors.⁴⁹ With the two-fold purpose of attracting more visitors and advertising the anticipated monument to raise the funds needed to build it, Cleaveland’s guides featured Clinton’s remains as a noteworthy stop as early as 1847:

The remains of De Witt Clinton repose temporarily in one of the tombs on Bay-Grove Hill. They were laid here in the expectation that they would soon find a final resting-place in some commanding position of the ground, and beneath a monument worthy of his great man, and of the city and commonwealth which owe so much to him. But this tribute... New York has yet to pay... A beginning, indeed, has been effected by the proffer of a few liberal contributors, but no general and earnest call has yet been made.⁵⁰

Green-Wood Illustrated, which paired Cleaveland’s text with detailed engravings, depicted an ample, fenced off, empty burial plot with the promising caption, “View From Ground Appropriated for the Clinton Monument.”⁵¹ [Figure 2.03] Cleaveland slyly admonished the responsible citizen to participate in the project:

It is your duty and privilege to record it [the memory of Clinton]... Engrave it, then in ever-during stone. Embody your sense of his merits in the massive pile. From the

⁴⁸ Ibid., vol. 1, no. ii, 602.; N[ehemiah] Cleaveland, *Hints Concerning on Green-Wood: Its Monuments and Improvements* (New-York: Pudney & Russell, 1853), 1.

⁴⁹ Payment to N. Cleaveland for his history of Green-Wood and for the publication of the history are among the expenses listed in *Green-Wood Cemetery, A Report of the Receipts and Expenditures of the Green-Wood Cemetery, 1864 by Order of the Trustees* (Brooklyn: Green-Wood Cemetery, 1865), 13.

⁵⁰ N[ehemiah] Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Illustrated in Highly Finished Line Engraving* (New York: R. Martin, 1847), 27.

⁵¹ Nehemiah Cleaveland and James Smilie, *Green-Wood Illustrated, Rural Cemeteries of America Series* (New York: R. Martin, 1847), [no page].

loftiest heights of beautiful Green-Wood let the structure sire, a beacon at once to the city and the sea. Severe in beauty, and grand in project, it should be emblematical of the man and his works.⁵²

Cleaveland claimed that “[Clinton’s burial plot] has become the daily resort of citizens and strangers— an uncouth throng.”⁵³ But Green-Wood Cemetery wanted to erect a monument that would respectfully mark the location of Clinton’s remains and draw even more of a crowd. Brown’s design offered a monument that satisfied these two needs.

Brown’s Introduction to Green-Wood Cemetery

Brown had heard about Green-Wood’s intentions through Ezra Prentice’s brother, John H. Prentice, a trustee of Green-Wood Cemetery, who had moved to Brooklyn from Albany in 1840.⁵⁴ By now Brown had a cache of ideas and designs for Clinton monuments. He wrote to his wife upon setting up his new studio in Manhattan:

This evening I have made a design for a monument to Clinton, which they are now talking of erecting at Greenwood— understand this has nothing to do with the monument. Not long since his remains were removed from Albany to Greenwood, and entered [sic] there, and a most beautiful site they have chosen for him too. They have already started a subscription for that purpose, and Mr. Prentice says I must have the work accordingly have made the design. They probably will raise a thousand dollars... As it relates to me the matter is all in embryo yet.⁵⁵

John H. Prentice formally introduced Brown to Green-Wood’s Clinton monument committee in November 1846. The cemetery trustees had been fundraising for a monument

⁵² Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Illustrated in Highly Finished Line Engraving*, 39.

⁵³ Cleaveland, *Green-Wood: A Directory for Visitors*, Part II, 146.

⁵⁴ E. Parmalee Prentice, *Prentice Memoirs*, 1954, vol. I, 65, New York Public Library, Genealogy Division, New York.; Cleaveland, *Directory for Visitors*, 287. Brown sculpted a bust of John H. Prentice, which is mentioned in a letter from HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 17 March 1850, HKBB 588.

⁵⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, New York, 27 October 1846, HKBB 548-22.

since acquiring Clinton's remains in 1844, but they did not contact any artist or to have had any specific designs for the monument before meeting Brown. The sculptor claimed the committee was looking for something that would "attract attention, that people could go there and look upon it for hours with pleasure."⁵⁶ Evidently, he regarded the meeting a success, for he wrote, "The design which I have made ... pleases very much, and I have no doubt that if it is done that I shall be called upon to build it."⁵⁷ There was no formal competition and Brown officially received the commission by March 1848, when he reported to Ezra Prentice, "The Clinton statue goes on findly[sic]. Yesterday Mr. Geo. Clinton called upon me and approved of my design in the highest degree. There seems a very general interest manifested in its progress. The Statue is modeled (in scale) and the base will soon be done."⁵⁸ The letter further states that Brown estimated that the monument would cost \$10,000 to \$12,000.

While Brown's papers reflect a lull in the project from March 1848 to January 1849, the sculptor continued to strengthen his connection to Green-Wood by completing two memorials commissioned privately by individual patrons of the cemetery. A. M. Cozzens, an officer for the Green-Wood Cemetery Clinton Monument Committee, commissioned a monument for his wife Marion, who died September 1846.⁵⁹ In June 1848, Brown sculpted a white marble bas-relief entitled, *Angel of the Resurrection*, for the Cozzens memorial [Figure 2.04]. The relief, depicting a winged angel accompanying a female figure was set into a

⁵⁶ Henry Kirke Brown to Lydia Brown, New York, 4 November 1846, HKBB 548-28.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 548-27.

⁵⁸ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 3 March 1848, HKBB 548-64.

⁵⁹ The memorial is inscribed, "Marion, XXXIX Sept. M. DCCC.XLVI."

plinth, the corners of which were marked by sculpted winged cherub faces.⁶⁰ A period guidebook to the cemetery described the scene, “The countenance of the liberated spirit, thus welcomed and guided to its abode of bliss, expresses a sweet and holy trust.”⁶¹ The Cozzens memorial may still be visited in Green-Wood, although the marble relief is quite weathered.⁶²

Also in June 1848, Brown completed a memorial for Samuel L. Mitchill (1764-1831), a physician, chemist, naturalist, and New York State senator in Green-Wood’s Deep-wood Dell section.⁶³ The monument consists of a seated figure of the muse of history, Clio, who holds a tablet and stylus. Sculpting these private memorials introduced Brown to the cemetery’s stockholders and gave him the opportunity to exhibit his artistic talent and prove his professionalism to Green-Wood before immersing himself in the Clinton commission.⁶⁴

The Clinton Monument Association, Green-Wood’s Competitor

One reason for the lull in the Clinton project may have been the strong competition Green-Wood began to face from the Albany-based Clinton Monument Association, which

⁶⁰ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 8 June 1848, HKBB 548-64.

⁶¹ Nehemiah Cleaveland, *Green-Wood: A Directory for Visitors* (New York: Pudney & Russell, 1857; reprint, 1852), 135.

⁶² A cast of the relief on the Cozzens memorial is in the collection of the Brooklyn Historical Society.

⁶³ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 8 June 1848, HKBB 548-64, and Cleaveland, *Green-Wood: A Directory for Visitors*, 193-195.

⁶⁴ Later on, Brown sculpted the memorial to William Satterlee Packer (1800-1850), also in Green-Wood Cemetery.

was incorporated by New York State in February 1848.⁶⁵ The Association was a threat because it was a statewide effort, with representatives from several counties lobbying the Clinton family to return De Witt's remains to the state capital to be incorporated in a monument. Green-Wood Cemetery took credit for inspiring this competing effort, stating in a self-published history, "as if [our] slight effort in the city of New York [to erect a monument to Clinton] had touched and roused the slumbering gratitude of the people, movements for a monument to Clinton were made in different parts of the State."⁶⁶

Green-Wood recognized the Clinton Albany Association as a competitor and carefully distinguished itself, claiming to have "neither connection nor conflict," and wishing the Clinton Monument Association "full success" for its "large and expensive" projected monument in Albany.⁶⁷ In effect, Green-Wood anticipated that there would be two monuments to Clinton. The Albany Association considered erecting either a building or a colossal sculpture in one of the cities on the Erie Canal. The Association rejected the many private sites eagerly offered by cemeteries in New York State and considered only public sites in Albany, Little Falls, Utica, Syracuse, Rochester, Lockport, and Buffalo, cities that had boomed with the building of the Canal. Between March and August 1848, the Association's Board of Trustees held several administrative meetings at City Hall, New York, and the State House, Albany, and appointed a special committee to address several questions: Would the Clinton family allow the Association to exhume De Witt Clinton once again so that his

⁶⁵ *The Clinton Monument* (New York: Clinton Monument Association, 1848), 5.

⁶⁶ Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, 47.

⁶⁷ Robert Ray, *Clinton Monument* (New York: Green-Wood Cemetery, 1849), 5.

remains could be incorporated into their public monument? Should their monument be “sepulchral” or “civic”? What should it be made of and where should it be located?⁶⁸

The family’s answer to the first question would determine the nature of the monument. On October 19, 1848, DeWitt Clinton’s son, Charles A. Clinton, declined the Association permission to move his father’s remains to a new site.⁶⁹ The Association consequently selected a proposal for a civic monument. The design, by the architect James Renwick, Jr. (1818-1895) was a single triumphal arch crowned with a colossal statue of Clinton and decorated with the arms of New York State, Albany, and New York City to be “located at the head of State street” in Albany and enclosed “within the Capitol park” [Figure 2.05].⁷⁰ Renwick projected an arch that would rise between seventy-two feet and

⁶⁸ The committee consisting of Luther Bradish of New York, Millard Fillmore of Buffalo, and William Parmalee of Albany, was selected in May 1848, *The Clinton Monument*, 8. The classification of monuments as either “sepulchral” and “civic” was made by the Clinton Albany Association, a monument committee incorporated in 1848 as a competitor to Green-Wood Cemetery’s Clinton monument project, *The Clinton Monument*.

⁶⁹ By the time Charles A. Clinton denied the Clinton Monument Association access to his father’s remains, George Clinton had, seven months prior, given his blessing to Brown’s monument for the new gravesite in Green-Wood Cemetery, see footnote 58 above.

⁷⁰ The committee publicly advertised a request for proposals for sites and designs for the monument. The Association received six proposals by August 1848 but extended the competition until October 27, 1848, by which time it received an additional three proposals, all from the architect James Renwick, Jr. These were an “obelisk and colossal statue, one single, and one a triple triumphal arch.” Although the arch was a monument associated with Roman emperors and monarchical imperialists, the use of local materials and the New York state iconography was expected to frame the Clinton monument as an American civic monument. Renwick proposed building the monument from a combination of marble and the same Mohawk valley limestone that had been used to build the locks and aqueducts of the Erie Canal. The facades were to be carved with stalks and ears of corn, much like Benjamin Latrobe’s capitols for the Old Senate Chamber in the Capitol in Washington, D.C. In addition to the colossal sculpture of Clinton, ranging between seventeen and twenty-four feet high, the monument would have had a bas-relief and alto-relief frieze representing points on the Canal and the tow boats and horses. The names of cities, lakes, and rivers connected to the Canal were to be inscribed over the arches, *The Clinton Monument*, 26.

one-hundred-two feet high and cost between \$47,000 and \$93,000.⁷¹ While the De Witt Clinton monument for State Street in Albany never materialized, it merits close examination as a contrast to Green-Wood's effort to erect a *Clinton* monument and will be further addressed in this chapter in a broader discussion on the nature of heroic memorials in the 1840s.

Green-Wood's *Clinton* Monument

It is possible that Green-Wood's trustees stalled their Clinton project to see how the cemetery would fare in the battle for the governor's remains. Indeed one history of Green-Wood explained that the family's final decision not to remove Clinton's body from Green-Wood, "naturally led to a revival of the effort to place a suitable monument over his grave."⁷² Green-Wood's Clinton project was once again underway in January 1849, when Brown wrote, "The Clinton statue for Greenwood [sic] has lately been revived and, they say, with some spirit."⁷³ In February, Brown wrote to Ezra Prentice, "The prospect seems to be very fair for their taking up the Clinton monument again. I have been requested to model the design and give it to Mr. Perry [comptroller of Green-Wood]... he seems much interested in it, as well as having me get the order. Shall make the model immediately."⁷⁴

Although Green-Wood had been planning to erect a monument since the arrival of Clinton's remains in 1844, and Brown had been in contact with the cemetery since

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, 49.

⁷³ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 15 January, 1849, HKBB 557.

⁷⁴ Mr. Perry refers to Joseph A. Perry, the comptroller of Green-Wood Cemetery. HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 12 February 1849, HKBB 563.

November 1846, it was not until March 1849 that Green-Wood officially publicized Brown's proposal in its pamphlet, "The Clinton Monument," which noted the "design will readily secure the subscription of a sum sufficient to complete the work."⁷⁵ Newspapers announced that the monument could be completed for fifteen thousand dollars, a "sum it is proposed to secure before entering on the undertaking. Let no one feel that he is contributing to a structure destined to rest after the laying of the corner-stone or to stick, when half finished, in mid-air."⁷⁶

To raise the funds for the monument, the Cemetery formed a committee of ninety-three members. The chair of the committee was Robert Ray (1794-1879), a member of the banking firm of Prime, Ward, King & Co, the treasurer and clerk of Grace Church, and president of the Green-Wood Cemetery Association.⁷⁷ The secretary was Henry G. Marquand, Brown's patron and friend, who had accompanied him on a trip to Michigan in 1848.

Green-Wood's pamphlet included a letter from March 20, 1849, signed by twelve supporters who unanimously approved Brown's model for the monument.⁷⁸ Brown had an excellent rapport with all the signers of this letter, having fostered friendships and/or professional relationships with many of these powerful collectors and artists, who were dedicated to promoting American art: Jonathan Sturges, Asher B. Durand, William C.

⁷⁵ Ray, *Clinton Monument*, 7.

⁷⁶ "Monument to Clinton," *Evening Post*, 11 February 1850, 2.

⁷⁷ "The Late Robert Ray," *New York Times*, 8 March 1879, 3.

⁷⁸ Other pamphlets may have been published in 1850 when Green-Wood chose the officers of its Clinton monument committee, HKB to E. P. Prentice, New York, 23 January 1850, HKBB 586; Ray, *Clinton Monument*, 7.

Bryant, Prosper M. Wetmore, Charles M. Leupp, Thomas P. Rossiter, Francis W. Edmonds, A. M. Cozzens, Henry Peters Gray, Daniel Huntington, Charles C. Ingham, William J. Hoppin.⁷⁹ With this announcement, the art world threw its weight behind Brown and the Clinton monument for Green-Wood.

Most of the committee members and the signers of the letter furthered their endorsement by promoting the Clinton monument in other art-related venues, most importantly through the American Art-Union. As discussed in Chapter I, Brown received several commissions from the Art-Union between 1847 and 1851. Interestingly, there were many overlapping officers of the Art-Union and Green-Wood Cemetery. For instance, the artist Francis W. Edmonds served as the Treasurer for the former in 1839 and the Treasurer for Green-Wood's Clinton Monument Committee in 1849.⁸⁰ A.M. Cozzens, one of only a handful of committee members to contribute \$500 towards the monument, was also a long-standing officer in the Art-Union.⁸¹ The *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* regularly reported on Brown's progress with the model for the *Clinton* monument. The Art-Union also exhibited Brown's model and the subscription list for the *Clinton* monument at its showroom at 497 Broadway in December 1849, at the entrance to an exhibition of paintings by Brown's

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Among the many officers who served both institutions were: William Cullen Bryant, A.M. Cozzens, Francis W. Edmonds, George W. Austen, John H. Gourlie, Charles M. Leupp, Jonathan Sturges, and Jacob Le Roy. "Officers and Managers" in *Character and Constitution of the American Art-Union and by Laws of the Committee of Management* (New York: George F. Nesbitt, 1848), 19; Ray, *Clinton Monument*, frontispiece

⁸¹ "Appendix XIII. Contributions to the Clinton Monument," in Cleveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, 188.; *Character and Constitution of the American Art-Union and by Laws of the Committee of Management*, 19.

close friend Daniel Huntington.⁸² In 1851, *The Bulletin* also rallied its readership to contribute to the *Clinton* monument subscription campaign:

Mr. Brown has modeled [sic] an admirable sketch for a colossal statue of De Witt Clinton, which it is proposed to erect over his remains in Greenwood [sic] Cemetery. It possesses a grandeur and simplicity which give it a rank among the best portrait statues of modern times. But two or three thousand dollars are needed to complete the sum required to cast this in bronze. It is a reproach to the merchants of New York, that there should have been so much delay in making up the amount. It is only fifteen thousand dollars, and for two or three years the undertaking has been lingering long.⁸³

Brown knew that the fate of the *Clinton* monument lay in the hands of its fundraisers. He indicated his confidence in a letter to Ezra Prentice, "The subscription here goes on slowly, but, apparently, successfully, and although the work has all to be done by two or three friends, it will be accomplished in time." The committee raised most of the funds between March 1850, when the subscriptions totaled \$800, and early June, when they totaled 13,000.⁸⁴ That fall, several newspapers reported that "the statue was commenced in clay on the 20th of September, 1850."⁸⁵

From the beginning, when Brown publicly exhibited a plaster sketch model in 1849 at Green-Wood's Manhattan satellite office at 64 Broadway, the monument consisted of a

⁸² The Art-Union exhibited Huntington's show from December 1849 to May 1850. "Catalogue of Paintings, by Daniel Huntington, N.A. Exhibiting at the Art Union Buildings, 497 Broadway" in *American Art-Union Catalogues of Exhibitions 1848-1857* (New York: American Art-Union, 1850).

⁸³ "Henry K. Brown," *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* (April 1851): 14.

⁸⁴ HKB to E.P. Prentice, New York, 17 March 1850, HKBB 588 and HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 6 June 1850, HKBB 591; one newspaper reported the total at this time to be \$12,000, "Compilation," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 7 June 1850, 2.

⁸⁵ "Statue of De Witt Clinton," *Ballou's Pictorial Drawing-Room Companion*, 30 July 1859, 77.

full-figure portrait of the ex-governor.⁸⁶ Although no illustration of this model survives, its description in the pamphlet suggests that it looked very much like the monument we see today in Green-Wood. The only perceptible difference being that in the model of 1849, “The right hand and arm are extended, and rest gracefully and easily upon a tablet which is supported against the side,” while the monument, as it stands today, has no tablet.⁸⁷

Brown’s model for the *Clinton* monument enjoyed positive reviews. In particular, the committee praised Brown’s treatment of the subject’s clothing given, in the committee’s words, the “difficulties of [depicting] the modern costume.”⁸⁸ By “difficulty” the committee meant the problem of wanting to preserve the historical accuracy of a portrait while elevating the subject to a level of prestige and dignity associated with the classical world. In history painting, American painter Benjamin West had popularized the practice of depicting contemporary heroes in period dress, beginning with his *Death of General Wolfe* (1770). More popularly, as discussed in the Introduction, portrait sculptures in America, such as those by Canova, Chantry, and Greenough, often depicted American statesmen in classical Roman drapery. Classical drapery was thought to distinguish a subject better than modern dress and to make his fame and greatness appear timeless. Brown’s solution of draping a cloak over Clinton’s suit was considered an innovative success because it managed “with sufficient accuracy to identify the epoch” without violating “the laws of grace.”⁸⁹ The quilting on the underside of the cloak and its tailored collar clearly distinguish it from a generic classical

⁸⁶ Ray, *Clinton Monument*, 6.

⁸⁷ “Henry K. Brown,” 18.

⁸⁸ Ray, *Clinton Monument*, 7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

drapery [Figure 2.06]. Ray described the monument as “the severe but noble style of classic beauty.”⁹⁰ The cloak had the same dignifying effect as fluid, classical drapery but was understood to be, “the full dress of an American gentleman, sixty years ago. The long cloak of that period hangs loosely from the shoulders, and, like the Roman toga, imparts to the figure an aspect of greater fulness [sic] and dignity.”⁹¹ Brown’s apprentice, John Quincy Adams Ward, who in his own prolific career would also depict his sitters in period costume, wrote at the time, “[Clinton is] so grand, so full of power, & feeling yet in perfect repose. The modern costume which he has treated... so beautifully & adroitly... that the strictest classic could not object or the most fastidious historian find an error. It is slightly altered from the original sketch.”⁹² The *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* also favorably reviewed the design, “The difficulties of costume are cleverly surmounted. Enough is shown to suggest the epoch, while we are not shocked by any minute representation of tailor’s work. It is the man we are looking at, and not his clothes, which is more than can be said of many modern commemorative statues.”⁹³ One period article described the *Clinton* as, “dressed in modern costume, but so cleverly and artistically as to conciliate, we imagine, the most bigoted advocates of the classic ‘toga.’”⁹⁴ However, the engraving of the monument illustrating in this article misrepresented Clinton’s cloak without its quilting, obviously mistaking it for classical drapery.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁹¹ Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, Appendix III, 128.

⁹² John Quincy Adams Ward to Edward [?], Brooklyn, 7 March 1852, HKBB 619.

⁹³ “Brown’s Studio,” *Bulletin of the American Art-Union* 2, no. 1 (April 1849): 18.

⁹⁴ “Bronze Statue of De Witt Clinton,” 384.

Not everyone approved of the cloak. A critic from *The Evening Post* reviewing the unfinished sculpture in Brown's studio in 1851, wrote:

At first the figure was modeled in such a manner that the neck, chest and the limbs, not covered by the cloak, were entirely without drapery. In this state it had so fine an effect, that the friends of the artist were strongly inclined to urge him not to barbarize its noble proportions by the use of the modern costume. It now, however, has the coat on.⁹⁵

Writing almost ten years later, Brown's friend William Stillman, the co-editor of *The Crayon*, criticized the cloak: "[the figure of Clinton] was buried, so far as American fame is concerned, in its classical draperies—its cloak was its shroud, and unfortunately, because the work has many and great merits."⁹⁶

At the time, there was near unanimous approval, however, as Brown's monument was deemed to be an excellent portrait of the ex-governor, "the best of all likenesses, not one of mere features but one of character."⁹⁷ An early review of the model claimed, "Clinton had an uncommonly fine head, and the artist has preserved a strong likeness."⁹⁸ One guidebook to Green-Wood asserted the monument's greatness "As a portrait, the face has been approved by many who were once familiar with the man."⁹⁹

Clinton's face was well known because his portrait was painted by numerous painters both before and after his death. By the end of the nineteenth century, a tiny portrait of his

⁹⁵ *Evening Post*, 22 November 1851, 2.

⁹⁶ William Stillman, "American Sculpture," *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 4, no. 1 (March 1860): 4.

⁹⁷ "Brown's Statue of Clinton," *Evening Post*, 12 October 1853, 2.

⁹⁸ *Evening Post*, 22 November 1851, 2.

⁹⁹ Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, Appendix III, 128.

face could be found on every tobacco stamp.¹⁰⁰ Several of the best American portraitists of the nineteenth century—including Ezra Ames, George Catlin, Samuel F.B. Morse, Charles C. Ingham, John Wesley Jarvis, and John Trumbull—painted portraits of Clinton before his death in 1828 [Figure 2.07]. While it is impossible to confirm which of these portraits Brown may have studied in preparation for his sculpture of Clinton, it is likely that he was familiar with most of them, either as originals or in the widely disseminated copies and engraving.

Two sculptors also depicted Clinton before his death. In 1825, John Henri Isaac Browere (1792-1834), known for his gallery of plaster casts of life masks of “Great Americans,” proposed taking “‘an exact likeness of his Excellency De Witt Clinton, superbly modeled in plaster of Paris, with modern or antique drapery and pedestal.’”¹⁰¹ Using the life mask he made from Clinton’s face, Browere produced a portrait bust of Clinton, embellishing it by sculpting wavy, stylized locks of hair and a toga-like drape [Figure 2.8].¹⁰² Another artist, William J. Coffee (1774 c.-1846), sculpted a plaster of Clinton around 1817 [Figure 2.09].¹⁰³ Brown’s friend Asher B. Durand made an engraving from this portrait that

¹⁰⁰ Edwin Gill, *De Witt Clinton: The Man on the Cigarette Stamp* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards & Broughton Co., 1953).

¹⁰¹ “Clinton Bust,” *New York Mirror*, 5 August 1825, 15.

¹⁰² The portrait bust of Clinton produced by Browere appears in Charles Henry Hart, *Browere’s Life Masks of Great Americans* (New York: Doubleday and McClure Company, 1899), 70-71, 17. A plaster and a bronze cast of the bust are in the collection of the New York State Historical Association, Cooperstown, NY, *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New York Historical Society*, vol. 1 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 147.

¹⁰³ *Catalogue of American Portraits in the New York Historical Society*, 147.; Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America*, New and Revised ed. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 69.

was widely published.¹⁰⁴ Brown likely knew of Coffee's sculpture of Clinton, since he hired Coffee to cast his works in plaster while the two were living near Albany during the early 1840s.¹⁰⁵ In this large collection of painted and sculpted portraits of the statesman, Brown's *Clinton* occupies a unique place as it is the only full-length sculpture that stands above Clinton's mortal remains.

"Sepulchral" versus "Civic"

The rhetoric published by Green-Wood Cemetery's Clinton Committee and its competitor, Albany's Clinton Monument Association, reveals that each of these committees grappling with the desire to build monuments to Clinton that were at once commemorative and civic in nature. The fact that these committees articulated these interests shows that there were few precedents dictating what would be appropriate for a publicly-funded monument. Albany's Clinton Monument Association claimed that "the object of the contemplated monument [was] to commemorate the public services, rather than the private virtues of... De Witt Clinton as a public man, a statesman, and a public benefactor; and not to him as an individual."¹⁰⁶ The Association distinguished between a monument in a cemetery, which serves to cherish the departed and "commemorate their private virtues,

¹⁰⁴ Durand's engraving appeared in *The National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans with Biographical Sketches*, 4 vols. (Philadelphia: D. Rice & A.N. Hart, 1854), entry 18.

¹⁰⁵ Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 69. Brown mentions riding from Troy to Albany to visit Coffee, HKB to Lydia Brown, Troy, 10 May 1840, HKBB 202.

¹⁰⁶ *The Clinton Monument*, 15.

personal qualities, and individual character,” and a civic monument, which was not appropriate to a cemetery but rather to “the thronged city, and the busy haunts of men.”¹⁰⁷

While Green-Wood Cemetery had the privilege of knowing that its monument to Clinton was sure to be “sepulchral,” it wanted it both ways and hoped its monument would be “civic” and express “appreciation of [Clinton’s] eminent public services.”¹⁰⁸ The dual nature of the Clinton monument as both civic and sepulchral naturally grew out of Green-Wood’s hybrid status as a public private institution, a joint-stock company that became an incorporated not-for-profit, non-denominational cemetery and public resort.

Brown’s *Clinton* monument was designed to fulfill Green-Wood Cemetery’s demand for a sculpture that could serve both missions: to mark the tomb of the deceased and to commemorate a heroic public figure. Thus, the monument at once pays homage to the memory of Clinton as an individual and to his role as a public statesman. By accurately capturing Clinton’s portrait and dressing him in period clothes, the monument is a tomb that conjures up a physical vision of the deceased. Its placement over Clinton’s body endows it with a spiritual, personal quality. These features work to present Clinton as a real person, while the monument’s colossal size casts Clinton as a public figure of mythic proportions.

Its status as a civic monument was furthered by the monument’s most striking feature: two large bas-reliefs placed eye-level to the viewer. The artist first mentioned reliefs for a Clinton monument in his letter from Rome of February 1846, responding to Prentice’s request for a proposal for a Clinton monument for the Troy/Albany area.¹⁰⁹ When Brown

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁰⁸ Ray, *Clinton Monument*, 5.

¹⁰⁹ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Rome, 17 February 1846, HKBB 527.

began to prepare designs for the Clinton monument for Green-Wood in November 1846, he included bas-reliefs. The only known titles for these reliefs are ones assigned by Wayne Craven, who identifies them as *The Digging of the Erie Canal* and *Commerce on the Erie Canal*, but Brown's contemporary press and correspondence do not refer to these reliefs by title.¹¹⁰ Together, these two reliefs depict the passage of time from the Canal's construction to its completion. This passage of time correlates to the lapsed time between Clinton's death and the installation of the monument.

The relief inset on the rear or eastern side of the monument depicts the brawn and brains needed to plan and construct the canal [Figure 2.10]. In the distance we see the rolling hills of upstate New York covered with dense woods. In the middle ground on the left, a group of men use a team of horses to uproot trees and clear the ground in preparation for the Canal. Across the foreground, a team of surveyors works together taking measurements across the vista. Figures hold an array of staffs, leveling rods, and spades. A crouching figure holds the end of a measuring chain laid out along the bottom edge of the relief. Since Brown worked as a surveyor for the Illinois Central Railroad from 1837 to 1838, his familiarity with a surveyor's equipment enabled him to depict accurately these objects in the relief.¹¹¹

The relief on the opposite or western side of the monument depicts the use and consequences of the canal [Figure 2.11]. In this panel, the action moves from right to left, paralleling the canal's expansion of the economic market from New York City to the West. The rightmost figures carry boxes and barrels marked for transport via the canal. A

¹¹⁰ Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 151.

¹¹¹ For letters relating to Brown's experience as a surveyor in 1837 and 1838, see HKBB 103-141.

nineteenth-century critic read these figures as “laborers composed of different nations.”¹¹²

In the way that genre scenes of the time were known for depicting “types,” people who stood in for various populations in society, each figure in the relief seems to refer to a different group of people. The reviewer singled out “the Negro and the Irishman, so truthfully rendered—the smoking emigrants and the American youth in an easy attitude... contemplating the advantages the canal will probably be to him.”¹¹³ A combination of German, British, and Irish immigrants actually built the canal, but the critic singled out the “Irishman,” perhaps because the Irish had recently flooded New York City following the potato famine of 1847.

Slavery, another major issue in this decade before the Civil War, is prominently addressed in the central figure of a barefoot, shirtless African American, who wears an earring and carries a box inscribed “Virginia plug tobacco,” a cash crop produced with slave labor [Figure 2.12]. This overlooked figure may be the earliest depiction of an African American on a public monument in the United States. In Sketchbook L there is a related drawing of the head of a black man wearing an earring. The drawing is inscribed “H.K. Brown - A dark page in human affairs Washington 17 May 1849” [Figure 2.13].¹¹⁴ This man is centrally positioned in the foreground of the relief. Although he is not chained, the figure in the bas-relief stands suggestively close to the chains of the horse cart.

To the left of the black man, a man on horseback rides towards a family of three Native Americans who gaze on from the leftmost boundary of the relief away from the

¹¹² “Brown’s Statue of Clinton,” 1.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ HKB LC, Prints and Photographs, Sketchbook L, page 26.

chaos of commerce. The father figure in this family stands and confronts this scene, while the mother, who carries a baby on her back, also looks on from her squatting position. This mother holds several pairs of moccasins, a reference to the trade opportunities that the canal potentially offered to the Indians of the Great Lakes. They gaze on from the periphery, much as the Native Americans of the Great Lakes watched while the canal brought industry westward. One period description suggests, "The bustling scene around the boat and the dock is happily contrasted with the idle group of Indians who seem to be looking away in sadness on the enterprise before which they and their bark canoes are fast fading away."¹¹⁵ Another period critic described the scene as a "rush of emigration... sweeping towards the Indians, whose melancholy aspect and situation on the extreme end of the bas-relief indicates their prospective extinction."¹¹⁶

The canal had, indeed, led to the displacement of many Native Americans in New York and other Great Lakes states. As discussed in Chapter I, when Brown visited and sketched the Mackinaw of Lake Michigan in 1848 he commented on how they seemed to be a vanishing race. His trip to Michigan very much informed his depiction of Native Americans on the *Clinton* bas-relief. Several watercolor sketches from the trip resemble the two adult Native American figures found in the bas-relief. Most notably, Brown incorporated the same cloak with the striped band, the walking staff, the profile view, and the moccasins seen in his sketches of 1848.¹¹⁷ Two bronze busts of Mackinaw male models

¹¹⁵ Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, 129.

¹¹⁶ "Brown's Statue of Clinton," 2.

¹¹⁷ See discussion of these images in Chapter I. Brown was reviewing his sketches from their trip to Michigan while working on the Clinton monument as evidenced by the date, 1851, of his drawing of an Native American for Marquand.

also resemble both the sketches and the male Native American in the bas-relief.¹¹⁸ Thus the Indians seen on the *Clinton* monument represent the Mackinaw that Brown studied in the late 1840s and not those who suffered the consequences of opening of the canal in the 1820s.

Although the critic from 1853 was reviewing the whole monument, he focused most closely on the bas-reliefs. More to the point, by choosing contemporary issues that had also been important in Clinton's day, namely, the removal of Native Americans, the arrival of immigrants, and the use of slave labor, Brown sought to express continuity with the past.¹¹⁹

Brown already had experience sculpting bas-reliefs, including an allegorical series of four reliefs, called *The Four Seasons*, which two of his patrons involved with Green-Wood's *Clinton* monument, Marquand and Ezra Prentice, owned.¹²⁰ One of Brown's earliest experiments with combining relief and in-the-round sculpture was his *Young Indian*, which he later changed to *Apollino*. As discussed in Chapter I, below the figure of the Indian were bas-reliefs and in place of the acanthus leaves commonly found at the corners of sculptural bases, Brown sculpted a buck head with Indian corn. Similarly, in the *Clinton* monument, Brown sculpted bas-reliefs and trimmed the base with ornamental scrollwork consisting of

¹¹⁸ I am indebted to Janis Conner of Conner Rosenkranz, for this observation.

¹¹⁹ Brown depicted African Americans and Native Americans throughout his career. Some works in which Brown depicted African Americans are his proposal for an *Abraham Lincoln* monument for Union Square, proposal for the House Pediment of the U.S. Capitol, proposal for the pediment for the State House of South Carolina. Examples of Brown's depiction of Native American Indians are his watercolor studies of the Mackinaw, his sculptures *Choosing the Arrow* and *Indian and Panther*.

¹²⁰ Lydia Brown to Mrs. E. Prentice, Rome, 30 October 1845, HKBB 519.

acorns, oak, and other leaves, “intended... to have an allegorical meaning as descriptive of the forest trees of the State of New York.”¹²¹

Brown’s friend and fellow sculptor Erastus D. Palmer, who saw the *Clinton* monument in Brown’s studio, praised its bas-reliefs as “that most classic of American productions.”¹²² Unlike the classical sarcophagi reliefs that Brown saw in Rome, Brown’s bas-reliefs for the *Clinton* monument do not illustrate the hero’s life. Rather, they illustrate the building and history of the Erie Canal, a construction project that was inextricably interwoven with the memory of Clinton and was called “a monument of his patriotism and perseverance.”¹²³ At the time of Clinton’s funeral, one commemorative newspaper article fantasized that the most ideal monument to Clinton would be a modern-day Colossus of Rhodes “with one foot resting at the commencement of the grand canal at Buffalo, and the other at its termination in Albany.”¹²⁴

The reliefs offered Brown the chance to incorporate a more creative, modern composition into a commission for a traditional, albeit, colossal portrait. Additionally, in each relief, Brown constructed a complex narrative to address national issues that were relevant to both Clinton’s America of the 1820s and the America of 1853, when the monument was unveiled. The effect was to bridge the gap between these decades, to make the past and De Witt Clinton more accessible to the monument’s audience. The reliefs

¹²¹ “Statue of De Witt Clinton,” *New York Herald*, 25 May 1853, 4.

¹²² Erastus D. Palmer to Henry Kirke Brown, Albany, 9 October 1852, HKBB 636.

¹²³ “Bronze Statue of De Witt Clinton,” 384.

¹²⁴ “Monument to Clinton” *Albany Advertiser*, reprinted in Staats, *Tribute to the Memory of De Witt Clinton*, 101.

afforded Brown his commentary on current issues while reinvigorating the memory of Clinton, who, by now, had been dead for twenty-five years.

Casting the *Clinton*

The *Clinton* drew national attention, because it was one of the first monuments to be successfully cast in bronze in this country, and as such, it demonstrated America's technical prowess. As the leading expert sculptor in the new medium, Brown was largely responsible for its growing popularity and success in the United States and probably encouraged Greenwood's committee to commission the sculpture in bronze, a material which the committee deemed durable, historically appropriate, and cost-efficient.¹²⁵

By 1849, as Greenwood's *Clinton* project began to progress more seriously, Brown had already experimented with casting bronze in his studio foundry. This space had served his purposes for casting the small, table-top bronzes for the Art-Union, but it was not large enough to cast a colossal bronze monument. For the colossal *Clinton*, Brown turned to the Ames Manufacturing Company, a firearms foundry in Chicopee Massachusetts. Brown first contacted its proprietor, James Tyler Ames (1810-1883), in July 1851.¹²⁶ From the beginning, Brown intended for this partnership to flourish into the establishment of a professional, fine-arts casting foundry:

¹²⁵ Ray, *Clinton Monument*, 7.

¹²⁶ Michael Shapiro established that the first record of contact between Ames and Brown is a letter, dated 25 July 1851 from Brown to Ames. The letter discusses Brown's intention to send Ames his sculpture, Angel [of the Resurrection]. Michael Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 182, note 113. Brown wrote to his wife that he hoped to send a statue to Mr. Ames immediately, HKB to Lydia Brown, 28 July 1851, HKBB 612.

I am anxious that you should succeed in these castings for very many reasons—the first of all is of course that I may have a place where all my works may be cast and that to be an American establishment. So far as I can discover there is no establishment in this country so well calculated to extend itself into a branch of this kind as yours...¹²⁷

To ensure the success of the foundry in its nascent days, Brown wrote to Ames, “I will pledge you my word that I will stick by you till the last.”¹²⁸ Brown and Ames had several motives for building a bronze foundry. Both hoped the venture would bring them financial success. Brown was also eager to have a place in the United States where he could closely follow the casting of his monumental works. For Brown, it was a matter of “pride in doing these things here upon our own soil... It would be a very humiliating thing to me to be obliged to go abroad to do that which must so soon be done here.”¹²⁹

Ames and Brown’s partnership had enormous consequences for the casting of bronze monuments in the United States. To appreciate the magnitude of their success, one need only consider the earlier efforts at casting bronze in this country. The first bronze monument cast in the United States was the life-sized statue *Nathaniel Bowditch*, placed on the grave of the astronomer, mathematician, and author in Mount Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge in 1847 [Figure 2.14]. Its sculptor was Robert Ball Hughes, the same artist commissioned in 1829 by the Clinton Hall Association to sculpt a Clinton monument. After struggling for several years to cast the *Bowditch* memorial he “‘completed an imperfect casting’” with the

¹²⁷ Henry Kirke Brown to James Tyler Ames, Brooklyn, 2 August 1851, Stearns-Ames Papers, reel 3828, frame 41, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

¹²⁸ Henry Kirke Brown to James Tyler Ames, Brooklyn, 2 August 1851, Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

help of Henry N. Hooper, a bell founder in Boston.¹³⁰ While it was a major technological novelty, the casting was flawed, developed holes, and needed major repairs as early as 1853. The dilapidated bronze ultimately had to be recast in 1887.¹³¹ *The Evening Post* applauded Brown and Ames for their technical prowess in casting the *Clinton* monument while citing the *Bowditch* as problematic, “on account of the imperfections of the original castings, [the *Bowditch*] is much patched, and the metal is a great deal thicker than it should be.”¹³²

There is no record of Brown visiting the *Bowditch* monument in Mount Auburn Cemetery, but his contact with Clark Mills, another American sculptor who experimented in bronze, is well documented. Brown visited Mills’s studio in 1849, where he saw the artist’s equestrian monument of *Andrew Jackson* for Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C. [Figure 2.15].¹³³ This monument, the first equestrian bronze monument cast in the United States, was dedicated on 8 January 1853, five months before Brown’s *De Witt Clinton* was in the public eye. But it was Brown’s sculpture that most influenced the future of casting bronze monuments in America.¹³⁴

Clark Mills (1815-1883) was self-taught and his *Jackson* monument is awkward in its composition and poorly cast. For the purpose of balancing the monument in a composition where the horse’s forelegs do not touch the ground, Jackson’s body is at a rigid ninety degree

¹³⁰ Quoted in Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 32. Another source, states that the Bowditch was cast at the Boston foundry of Gooding and Gavette, Blanche Linden-Ward, *Silent City on a Hill: Landscapes of Memory and Boston’s Mount Auburn Cemetery* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1989), 237.

¹³¹ Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 32.

¹³² “Statue of Clinton, Bronze Castings,” *Evening Post*, 3 March 1852, 2.

¹³³ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, 18 May 1849, HKBB 567-572.

¹³⁴ Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 41.

angle to the animal. Mills cast the sculpture in pieces between October 1850 and August 1851, with the help of Charles Ludwig Richter, a foundryman from Germany.¹³⁵ As Michael Shapiro has noted, “Whereas Mills would be praised for the tenacity of his vision and for not settling for anything less than perfection, the completed cast [of the *Jackson* monument] was, at best, barely satisfactory.”¹³⁶ During Brown’s visit, the two artists together examined the full scale plaster model of *Jackson*. Brown wrote to Lydia, “It may be said that Mills is succeeding against all obstacles, but his success will not be exactly that which I propose to myself. A monument of such enduring materials, constructed in an inferior manner, is a terrible comment upon the ambition of an artist.”¹³⁷

In the summer of 1851, Brown sent his first sculpture, the bas-relief *Plato and His Pupils*, to the Ames Manufacturing Company for casting [Figure 2.16].¹³⁸ A pair of lion heads soon followed. The foundry made several failed attempts to cast these works over the course of many months. It was not until the successful casting and installation of *Plato and His Pupils* for Daniel Appleton’s Bookstore on Broadway in Manhattan in April 1852 that Brown sent his more challenging *Clinton* monument to Ames.¹³⁹

As the Ames Company perfected its casting system in preparation for the ambitious task of casting more monumental sculptures, Brown finished sculpting the full scale model of *Clinton* in clay and began the process of translating the clay into plaster through molding

¹³⁵ Ibid., 38-41.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 40.

¹³⁷ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 28 July 1851, HKBB 613.

¹³⁸ Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 50.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 53.

and casting in his Brooklyn studio in December 1851.¹⁴⁰ In April 1852, he crated the plaster cast and transported it to Chicopee. Appropriately, the monument to Clinton and his canal traveled by boat as far as Hartford, Connecticut, and then by railroad to Springfield, Massachusetts.¹⁴¹

The *Clinton* was cast in sections, as are most bronze sculptures of that size.¹⁴² The foundry began the casting with the upper body.¹⁴³ Brown monitored the process at Chicopee and documented this historic moment in American art, “they were nearly ready to cast the head of Clinton; of course, I dropped all and went out to assist; we closed the mould and poured the metal all went fine. It was most interesting to see the quiet earnestness of the workmen... everyman understood his business...”¹⁴⁴ The casting proceeded under the direction of Ames:

We have gone over the pedestal of the Clinton very carefully and if we get the right measurement, casting it 3/8 [inches] thick it will weigh 3500 lbs or about that, and I will finish it at 35 to let it weigh more or less, which is very low. We think the surface is larger than your figures indicate but think the amt. we have ____ ed will do it. It will cost about \$100 to mount... and the plain patterns about \$20. From the above you can form an estimate.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ Lydia Brown to Henry D. Udall, Brooklyn, 28 December 1851, HKBB 615.

¹⁴¹ HKB to Lydia Brown, 19 April 1852, HKBB 620-621.

¹⁴² A detailed history of the relationship between Ames and Brown and the casting of Brown’s monuments at the foundry in Chicopee may be found in Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 44-60.

¹⁴³ Costs for casting the *Clinton* monument and the bas-reliefs are itemized in Stearns-Ames Papers, frame 231 to 236.

¹⁴⁴ HKB to Lydia Brown, Chicopee, MA, 20 April 1852, HKBB 623.

¹⁴⁵ James Tyler Ames to Henry Kirke Brown, Chicopee, MA, 1 June 1852, Stearns-Ames Papers, frame 59.

Although the bronze was cast in Chicopee, Massachusetts, it was chased and finished in Brown's studio in Brooklyn, where the committee could check on its progress. The process included the riveting together of the sections, removing the core pins, peening back the seams where the pieces were joined, chiseling in finer details that may have faded in the translation from plaster to bronze, and finally, patinating the surface to achieve a modulated color that would enhance the sculpted forms. Thus, the finishing and chasing work was a very clamorous and visually exciting part of the project, one that drew attention in Brooklyn. The *Clinton* was seen as a local project, and the committee was proud to call Brown "a sculptor of our own," who had "recently opened a studio in this neighborhood."¹⁴⁶ Brown brought the head of *Clinton* to his studio and described it to his wife, "I have got the largest pieces together and shall tomorrow commence repairing them and shall mount the arms anew. This all will take me two days at least, and may be more."¹⁴⁷ By April 1852, Brown estimated that it would "take a year to finish it all as there is a great deal of work to be done in chasing it & c., after it is cast."¹⁴⁸ By mid-July, the casting was half completed.¹⁴⁹ Perry, the comptroller of Green-Wood Cemetery visited Brown in July and "expressed a strong desire to see [the monument] up this fall," and was hoping to secure Daniel Webster as a speaker at its dedication.¹⁵⁰ Brown doubted that he could finish the project so soon.

¹⁴⁶ Ray, *Clinton Monument*, 5.

¹⁴⁷ HKB to Lydia Brown, Chicopee, MA, 20 April 1852, HKBB 623.

¹⁴⁸ Lydia Brown to Henry D. Udall, Brooklyn, 15 April 1852, HKBB 626.

¹⁴⁹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 18 July 1852, HKBB 634.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 635.

Brown's *Clinton* was a major technical accomplishment, but its anomalous physical structure shows how Brown and Ames struggled to reinvent the process of making a bronze monument.¹⁵¹ The bronze self base is decorated with many leaves that are all cast separately and attached to the monument like an appliqué [Figure 2.17].¹⁵² In any case, as one of the first bronzes successfully cast in the United States, the monument was a fitting memorial to Clinton, whose canal was built in the name of progress and had also challenged the limits of technological innovation in the United States.

The completion of the *Clinton* monument created great excitement. The sculpture entered the public eye through its exhibition in a decidedly civic space, the steps of City Hall, Manhattan, from May to September 1853, before its permanent installation in Brooklyn. In anticipation of its arrival, the press announced, "yesterday preparations were made for placing the [statue] in front of the City Hall this morning, for public inspection, previous to its removal to Greenwood [sic] Cemetery... The likeness [to its subject] is said to be accurate."¹⁵³ The monument was received by "a large crowd of spectators, who were evidently struck with admiration at the spectacle of the stupendous work of art."¹⁵⁴ Yet not everyone thought it had been appropriate to exhibit the monument at City Hall. One of Green-Wood's self published guides regretted that the monument,

¹⁵¹ I am indebted to conservator and sculptor, Mark Rabinowitz, of Conservation and Sculpture, Inc., for sharing the observations he made while conserving the De Witt Clinton monument in 2000.

¹⁵² It is interesting to note that both Brown's monument and Renwick's proposal included ornamental elements that depict flora local to New York State.

¹⁵³ "Statue of Governor Clinton," *New York Herald*, 24 May 1853, 2.

¹⁵⁴ "Statue of De Witt Clinton," 4.

during its short sojourn in front of the New York City Hall (where it was seen at great disadvantage and should never have gone), was subject to various criticism. Seen in its present admirable position, at the height and distance necessary to give due proportion and effect to a colossal form, it is a fit and noble memorial of the illustrious original.¹⁵⁵

The Crystal Palace had opened on 14 July 1853 and Brown probably wanted his new bronze monument to be on view during this international exhibition that celebrated the "Industry of All Nations."

The *Clinton* monument was removed from City Hall on 20 September 1853, and installed at its permanent location in Green-Wood Cemetery.¹⁵⁶ On October 12, the *New York Evening Post* announced, "Clinton's monument at Greenwood [sic], from the hand of Brown, is at length in place where it will stand for centuries," but did not say anything about a dedication.¹⁵⁷ It was suppose to be dedicated on October 26, which marked the twenty-seventh anniversary of the opening of the Erie Canal.¹⁵⁸ Surprisingly, there is no account of what must have been a long-awaited event. It appears that De Witt Clinton's son, Charles A. Clinton, invited secretary of state Edward Everett to deliver a eulogy, which he agreed to do. However, the invitation dates from November 8 and Everett's response from November 15, suggesting that some event was perhaps scheduled for later that year.¹⁵⁹ Published

¹⁵⁵ Cleaveland, *Green-Wood Cemetery: A History of the Institution from 1838 to 1864*, Appendix III, 128.

¹⁵⁶ "The Clinton Statue," *New York Daily Times*, 21 September 1853, 4:4.

¹⁵⁷ "Brown's Statue of Clinton," 2:1.

¹⁵⁸ One article said the monument's "formal inauguration... will not take place until the anniversary of the opening of the Erie Canal,... sometime in September next," "Bronze Statue of De Witt Clinton," 384.

¹⁵⁹ Edward Everett to Charles A. Clinton, Boston, 14 November 1853, New-York Historical Society Manuscript Collection, BV. Sec. C.

collections of Everett's addresses do not include the event and it is unclear if any formal dedication ever took place.¹⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the completion of the Clinton monument was a milestone in American sculpture. It was a technical success and firmly established the Ames Manufacturing Company as a dependable foundry for casting fine art in the United States. Immediately, other American sculptors availed themselves of its expertise and sent their work there to be cast.¹⁶¹ Aesthetically, Brown's sculpture heralded a new language for commemorative monuments, one that fluidly navigated between the historical and the modern. Its power to evoke the past—the memory of Clinton and an America of the 1820s—made it historical. Its novel composition, its realist style and use of bronze casting identified it as modern and innovative. It appropriately heroicized Clinton while making him accessible to the public by inviting the viewer to consider the hero's place in history and to see that history as a continuum between the hero's life and the present. As Brown's first monumental commission, the *Clinton* established the sculptor within an important circle of private art patrons, many of whom contributed to the artist's three subsequent public monuments in New York. For the *George Washington* commission, the subject of the next chapter, Brown used the same methods and technology to sculpt another civic-minded, public monument to an even better known national hero.

¹⁶⁰ Edward Everett, *Orations and Speeches on Various Occasions, by Edward Everett* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1850-1868). Everett declined the invitation to deliver a speech for the *Clinton* monument in a letter to Robert Ray, Washington, D.C., 31 March 1854, HKBB 671.

¹⁶¹ In 1853, Thomas Ball had statuettes of his *Daniel Webster* cast at Ames and Richard S. Greenough cast his sculpture *Shepherd Boy with Eagle* there as well, Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 56-57.

Chapter III: A Democratic Monument for the Empire City, *George Washington* (1856)

In contrast to the silent, uneventful installation of the *De Witt Clinton* monument in Green-Wood Cemetery, Brown's monumental *George Washington* at Union Square Park was unveiled to a crowd of thousands in a public event that lasted several hours [Figure 3.01]. At the dedication ceremony on July 4, 1856, Brown was recognized and applauded, a gesture that marked a new era for American sculptors.

Several years before in January 1853, Clark Mills had enjoyed a similar reception when his monument *Andrew Jackson* was unveiled in Lafayette Park in front of the White House in Washington, D.C. Mills had succeeded in casting the first bronze equestrian monument in the United States. Although it was celebrated as a technological first, artists and art connoisseurs quickly criticized its clumsy aesthetics. Unlike Brown, Mills was a self-trained artist who had never studied in Europe and who had only seen a handful of sculptures in person before attempting to make his equestrian monument. Nevertheless, the reception of Mills' statue indicates that Americans were eager to embrace ambitious monuments.

Brown's *Washington* surpassed Mills' *Jackson* in several ways and remains his best known and most influential work. Brown's design reflected his years of training in Italy and took as its compositional inspiration the ancient statue *Marcus Aurelius* in Rome. As a subject, Washington was immeasurably more popular and more important than Jackson. Moreover, the cultural importance of New York in contrast to Washington, D.C. added to the prestige that the *Washington* earned its sculptor.

Brown's monument was particularly important to New York because it was the first permanent, outdoor, public sculpture installed in the city since the British had left the

colonies. It also marked the culmination of dozens of unrealized proposals put forth by various groups over several decades to erect a monument to George Washington in New York. Brown's monument became a symbol of civic pride not only because of its artistic merits but also because it represented the father of our country and was made in the United States by an American artist.

This chapter traces the early history of monuments to Washington, some of which were proposed even before his death in 1799. It dissects the national fascination with the leading hero of antebellum America and summarizes the history of early proposals for Washington monuments outside of New York, particularly those sculpted by the European artists Houdon, Canova, and Chantry. Not until 1832 did an American sculptor, Horatio Greenough, win a federal commission from Congress for a monument of Washington for the United States Capitol. To construct this selective chronology, this chapter relies on a variety of historical sources since, remarkably, there is no comprehensive contemporary study of the early painted and sculpted studies of Washington.¹ All of the monuments to Washington were part of the growing interest in commemorating American history that took shape in projects like the campaign for a national monument in Washington, D.C. and the purchase and preservation of the Mount Vernon plantation in Virginia.

The chapter then narrows its focus to consider the importance of Washington to New York. In the intervening years between Washington's death and the unveiling of

¹ One excellent study of paintings of Washington is Mark Edward Thistlethwaite, *The Image of George Washington: Studies in Mid-Nineteenth-Century American History Paintings* (New York: Garland Pub., 1979). Washington was also the subject of the exhibition *George Washington: American Symbol* at the Museums at Stony Brook, 6 February to 31 May 1999, and other venues, and the accompanying exhibition catalogue, *George Washington: American Symbol*, ed. Barbara J. Mitnick (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1999). Most recently, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, organized and exhibited *George Washington: Man, Myth, and Monument, Images from the Metropolitan*, on display from 19 October 2004 to 27 February 2005.

Brown's monument in 1856, countless proposals for monuments to Washington circulated in New York, some of which are outlined as background to Brown's commission.

Brown's monument stands apart from both the national and local Washington monument proposals that came before it. Unlike his contemporaries and his predecessors, Brown found a unique and brilliant solution that balanced the desire to emulate Europe's monuments while commemorating the foremost hero of America's democracy. This chapter closely traces the commission history. It gives particular attention to Brown's work methods which made it a major technical achievement using the new medium of bronze. With this sculpture, Brown succeeded in his ambition to build a monument that accurately, realistically depicted Washington and vitalized American history.

Early Monuments to George Washington, Uncontested National Hero of the Early Republic

Antebellum America is marked by a sustained fascination with George Washington. He was as much enshrined in the private home as he was in the public square. By the early nineteenth century, his face had been drawn, painted, carved, and embossed on every type of object imaginable, from coins to cutlery. In 1811, the European diarist and artist Pavel Petrovich Svinin (1787/88-1839) noted, "every American considers it his sacred duty to have a likeness of Washington in his home."² Even Washington's silhouette was recognized by the city merchant and the yeoman farmer alike, a remarkable feat in a pre-photographic age.

In some ways, it was a privilege of democracy that anyone who wanted to was allowed to depict Washington's face; in Europe, one could be punished for unauthorized

² Pavel Petrovich Svinin, *Picturesque United States of America 1811, 1812, 1813*, (New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1930), 34, quoted in William Ayres, "At Home with George: Commercialization of the Washington Image, 1776-1876," in *George Washington: American Symbol*, ed. Barbara J. Mitnick (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1999), 95.

depictions of a nobleman like the Marquis de Lafayette.³ By 1824, Washington's likeness had been reproduced so many times that the American Academy of the Fine Arts felt obligated to print a list identifying which depictions were most accurate. The Academy feared, "we are cursed as a nation with the common, miserable representation of our Great Hero, and with the shocking counterfeits of his likeness by every pitiful bungler that lifts a tool or a brush, working solely from imagination without any authority for their representations."⁴ To the dismay of the Academy, Washington's image was accessible to all; his had become a truly democratic face.

Washington's fast rise to power and charismatic hold over his constituents would be notable in any era of American history. Given the perils of establishing a democracy in the former colonies of a monarch, it is intriguing that so many Americans regarded Washington as a paternal figure. Some historians argue that in the early days of the republic Americans "transfer[ed] praise and affection from George III to George Washington."⁵ Paul Longmore explores this theory in his book, *The Invention of George Washington*, suggesting that "When revolutionary Americans expelled George III from their hearts, they immediately adopted a native hero and leader."⁶ The fervor with which the public championed Washington led to a "quasi-'monarchical' veneration of him."⁷ Another historian, Marcus Cunliffe noted, "To

³ "While America is seeking in every manner to perpetuate the image... of Lafayette, it will be seen by the following extract from a Paris paper, that in his own native land, it is a punishable offence to strike a medal of him," "The Fine Arts," *New York American*, 23 November 1824.

⁴ "Original Busts and Portraits of Washington," *Atlantic Magazine*, October 1824, 435.

⁵ Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 184.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

his admirers he was 'godlike Washington,' and his detractors complained to one another that he was looked upon as a 'demigod' whom it was treasonable to criticize."⁸

Perhaps it is because of Washington's seemingly irrevocable power and popularity that some Americans cautioned against building his monument. For these people, Washington's position as "first in the hearts of his countrymen" was honor enough.⁹ In 1803 one New Yorker protested local efforts to build a Washington monument, reasoning that it would be disrespectful to the thousands of unburied, dead revolutionary soldiers. Multitudes had died on British prison ships anchored in the East River during the occupation of the city, and their bones were "exposed to every indignity [on the beaches of Brooklyn]" until their interment in 1808. This New York protester wrote, "To erect a monument to their chief, before they have a common grave, you would deservedly draw on yourselves, a reproach never to be wiped away."¹⁰ At the heart of his disapproval lies a fundamental question: is there a place for monuments in a democracy?¹¹ A monument often promoted one human life as exemplary, elevating it above others and casting the majority in its shadow. At the same time, Americans wanted their cities to rival those of Europe. In the struggle to establish a national culture, civic monuments to American heroes were often

⁸ Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington, Man and Monument* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), 6.

⁹ This popular phrase was first used by Henry Lee in his eulogy to Washington, cited in William M.S. Rasmussen and Robert S. Tilton, *George Washington: The Man Behind the Myths* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), 262.

¹⁰ Quoted from *American Citizen*, 8 January 1803 in I.N. Phelps Stokes, ed., *The Iconography of Manhattan Island* (New York: 1926; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1967), 5:1398.

¹¹ For an extensive account of this debate in reference to the campaign for a national monument to Washington see Kirk Savage, "The Self-Made Monument: George

proposed to enhance the city. The challenge for artists was to produce public sculptures that were well designed, reflect knowledge of European art and, simultaneously, resonated with the egalitarian ideals of democracy.

The desire to copy the European aesthetic was most visible in the earliest efforts to commemorate Washington. In 1783, while Washington was still alive and while New York was slated to be the nation's capital, Congress voted to commission a rather bombastic equestrian monument of Washington for the Capitol:

That the Statue should be of bronze— The General to be represented in a Roman dress, holding a truncheon in his right hand, and his head encircled with a laurel wreath; the Statue to be supported by a marble pedestal, on which are to be represented, in basso relieve the following principal events of the war, in which General Washington commanded in person.¹²

This federal commission was never built, but the criteria outlined by Congress show the popularity of European standards and the fervent desire to cast Washington as a Roman leader. Subsequently, several states commissioned the finest European sculptors of the day to depict Washington according to established European conventions.

Jean-Antoine Houdon (1741-1828) was the first European sculptor commissioned to depict Washington.¹³ In June 1784, the Virginia Assembly voted to commission the eminent French sculptor for a marble statue of Washington, who had not yet been elected president. Benjamin Franklin, who was then serving as ambassador to France, and Thomas Jefferson, who was about to replace him, arranged the commission with Houdon and encouraged him

Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial," *Winterthur Portfolio* 22 (Winter 1987): 225-242.

¹² "On the National Monument," *Gazette of the United States*, 25 April 1792, 414. If the monument had been built, it probably would have been in New York, which was the seat of Congress from 1785 to 1790.

¹³ The details of this commission are summarized from Gustavus A. Eisen, *Portraits of Washington*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (New York: Robert Hamilton & Associates, 1932). For recent

to travel to the United States to sculpt Washington from life instead of relying solely on a painted portrait by Charles Willson Peale, as had been initially proposed. Houdon left Paris in July 1785 and arrived at Mount Vernon by October. In preparation for the marble figure of Washington, he captured the likeness of Washington's face in a plaster life mask.¹⁴ This mask, along with the bust which Houdon modeled from it, became the gold standard for depictions of Washington throughout the nineteenth century and served as a model for many subsequent depictions of Washington, including the monument Brown sculpted.

While visiting Washington in Virginia, Houdon sculpted a bust in terra cotta and took measurements of his body [Figure 3.02].¹⁵ He also shadowed Washington through the day, even following him to a funeral, to observe his movements and gestures.¹⁶ Houdon returned to Paris with casts of Washington's face for his models and completed sculpting the life-size statue in Paris in 1788.¹⁷ The design was translated into Italian marble by 1791 and finally installed in the state capitol in Richmond in 1796 [Figure 3.03].

Houdon debated whether to depict Washington in modern dress or classicized drapery and eventually deferred to Washington's preference to be depicted in modern dress and showed him wearing an understated general's uniform that, apart from the epaulets, could be misread as a gentleman's suit. Dressed as such, Houdon's Washington is a leader in transition, leaving his post as commander-in-chief and returning to Virginia to be the

scholarship of Houdon, see Anne L. Poulet, Guilhem Scherf, and et al., *Jean-Antoine Houdon: A Sculptor of the Enlightenment* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2003).

¹⁴ The life mask is in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library.

¹⁵ The terra cotta bust is in the collection of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. A 1785 plaster cast of the clay bust is in the collection of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

¹⁶ Rasmussen and Tilton, *George Washington: The Man Behind the Myths*, 157.

gentleman farmer and master of the plantation that the artist had observed. A plow stands behind Washington, suggesting that he is a modern-day Cincinnatus, the Roman hero who was twice appointed dictator and twice renounced power, retreating to agrarian civilian life. The statue's parallel to the story of Cincinnatus, as well as the white marble, and the column of fasces, contribute to the monument's neoclassical quality that is perfectly complemented by its architectural surroundings in the state capitol designed by Jefferson.

Several other states and cities followed Richmond in the first decades after the American Revolution and commissioned sculptures of Washington from European artists. As with Houdon's monument, each commission debated how to dress Washington and what moment of his life to depict. While there was much discussion as to his dress, nearly all the commissions agreed to depict him nobly relinquishing his power.

The General Assembly of North Carolina voted to purchase a statue of Washington for its state house in Raleigh in 1815. It considered commissioning the Italian sculptor Giuseppe Valaperta (?-1817), who was then at work decorating the federal Capitol in Washington, D.C.¹⁷ Antonio Canova (1757-1822), one of the most famous neoclassical sculptors in Europe, ultimately won the commission.¹⁹ Thomas Appleton, the American Consul at Livorno, Italy, arranged the commission with Canova, who agreed to sculpt the statue for \$10,000. The marble sculpture of a seated Washington arrived in Raleigh in

¹⁷ John S. Hallam, "Houdon's Washington in Richmond: Some New Observations," *American Art Journal* 10, no. 2 (November 1978): 72-80.

¹⁸ Valperta was recommended by the architects of the Capitol, William Thornton and Benjamin H. Latrobe.

¹⁹ The details of Canova's statue and its commission presented here are taken from R.D.W. Connor, *Canova's Statue of Washington* (Raleigh: North Carolina Historical Commission, 1910); Philipp Fehl, "Thomas Appleton of Livorno and Canova's Statue of George Washington," in *Festschrift Ulrich Middeldorf*, ed. Antje Kosegarten and Peter Tigler (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1968), 523-552.

December 1821. Canova based the face on a bust by Giuseppe Cerrachi (1751-1802), one of many European artists to sculpt Washington's bust, but the only one besides Houdon to do so from life.²⁰ Although Canova accurately copied Cerrachi's portrait of Washington, he fantastically dressed the American Commander-in-Chief as a Roman general with a scepter at his feet and wearing a tunic and cuirass [Figure 3.04]. The base had four reliefs illustrating Washington's life and was sculpted by Raimondo Trentanove (1745-1812), one of Canova's students, who was living in the United States.²¹ The monument received mixed reviews.²² While some Americans were pleased with the classical treatment of the first president, others were, "quite struck dumb by the fact that the Father of His Country was dressed in a Roman general's costume, with toga, bare legs, and sandaled feet."²³

The Massachusetts Assembly commissioned a British sculptor for a figure of Washington for the State House in Boston.²⁴ Sir Francis Chantrey's (1781-1841) marble monument was unveiled in 1826 and depicted the forefather in a modern suit covered with a heavy drape that satisfied neoclassical tastes. Less was said about its depiction of Washington than about the irony of awarding the commission to a British sculptor.

²⁰ Cerrachi's sculpture depicted Washington as a Roman general. The artist lived in the United States from 1791 to 1795, Wayne Craven, *Sculpture in America*, New and Revised ed. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 53-54. For more on Cerrachi, see Ulysse Desportes, "Giuseppe Ceracchi in America and His Busts of George Washington," *Art Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1963): 141-178.

²¹ Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 63.

²² The monument was destroyed in a fire in the State House in June 1831. In 1910, a copy made from a model in the Canova Museum at Possagno, Italy, was installed in the State House at Raleigh. Connor, *Canova's Statue of Washington*, 9.

²³ Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 63.

²⁴ Ilene D. Lieberman, "Sir Francis Chantry's Monument to George Washington: Sculpture and Patronage in Post-Revolutionary America," *Art Bulletin* 71 (June 1989): 254-268.

Baltimore earned the sobriquet “Monumental City” for its 160-foot-high column, which was designed by the American architect Robert Mills in 1815.²⁵ Mills originally planned to place elaborate sculptures and terraces for the column, which he abandoned because the cost of erecting the column had far surpassed his original estimates. In 1826, Baltimore held a competition for a sculpture to crown the column. The winner, Italian émigré Enrico Causici, agreed to sculpt a thirteen-foot-high figure of Washington for \$9,000. In 1829, the stone statue was installed atop the column, where it still stands today.²⁶ The column and the monument are unusual because, like the Bunker Hill monument, they were erected outdoors as a public monument, unlike the Washington statues in Boston, Raleigh, and Richmond, which graced the interiors of state capitols.

By the 1830s, expatriate American sculptors who had trained in Italy began to win commissions for monuments to Washington in the United States. Horatio Greenough, the first American sculptor to train abroad, received a major commission from the United States Congress in February 1832. Two men prominent in American culture, the writer James Fennimore Cooper and the artist Washington Allston, encouraged Congress to award the commission to their fellow American and friend.²⁷ Edward Livingston, the Secretary of State, formally awarded Greenough the commission in a letter writing, “As an American, you will duly appreciate the importance of your task, and the honor you will acquire by its

²⁵ Pamela Scott, “Robert Mills and American Monuments,” in *Robert Mills, Architect*, ed. John M. Bryan (Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Architects, 1989), 143-177.

²⁶ “History of the Washington Monument and Mount Vernon and Washington Places,” <http://www.wam.umd.edu/~jlehnert/history.htm>, February 26, 2003. Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 66; “Washington’s Monument-Baltimore,” *Ladies Companion*, New York 17 (August 1842): 278.

²⁷ Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 105.

execution.”²⁸ The letter detailed Congress’s stipulations: the face was to be based on Houdon’s bust, the body left to the discretion of the artist, and the base to include bas-reliefs depicting the surrender of Yorktown, Washington’s resignation, his inauguration, and an inscription. Greenough accepted the commission for a fee of \$20,000. He predicted the work would take four years to complete. He promised to sculpt an accurate representation of Washington the man, using “the dress of the time... and as many portraits as are preserved” for references. Greenough also said that his monument would “not be a mere image of the man... but an embodiment of his spirit.”²⁹

Exceeding the estimated four years to complete, Greenough’s sculpture arrived in the United States on 31 July 1841 and was installed in the Capitol rotunda by the following November.³⁰ Not only did it arrive five years later than expected, it cost twice as much as the original estimate, and the figure did not wear clothes contemporary to the 1790s as Greenough had declared.³¹ Instead, Greenough depicted Washington as a modern-day Zeus, taking as one of his inspirations a lost statue by the ancient Greek sculptor Phidias.³² The

²⁸ "Statue of Washington," *New York Mirror*, 21 July 1832, 23.

²⁹ "Mr. Greenough's Answer, Florence July 8, 1832," *Niles' Register*, 27 October 1832, 142.

³⁰ For more information on the shipment and receipt of the sculpture see "Greenough's Statue of Washington," *Niles' Register*, 19 June 1841, 256; "The Statue of Washington," *Niles' National Register*, 30 October 1841, 132; John Tyler, "To the House of Representative of the United States," *Niles' National Register*, 7 August 1841, 367.

³¹ "House of Representatives," *Niles' National Register*, 21 May 1842, [page unknown].

³² Saunders illustrates the sketches Greenough drew in exploring the composition of this monument and traces the source for Phidias' Jupiter to Edward Everett, a Greek scholar at Harvard and congressman from Massachusetts who was instrumental in passing the legislature that commissioned Greenough for the monument., Richard H. Saunders, *Horatio Greenough: An American Sculptor's Drawings* (Middlebury, VT: Middlebury College Museum of Art, 1999), 91.

seated Washington is bare to the waist, his muscular, youthful chest at odds with the faithfully historical portrait of his aging face [Figure 3.05]. The lower half of his body and his right arm are wrapped in a classical drapery and his feet are clad with sandals. His right hand gestures upwards, and his left hand extends the hilt of his sword, a symbol of relinquished military power. The throne is covered in iconographic ornament that fuses European and American subjects, including Columbus, a Native American Chief, and the Genii of North and South America as personified by infant Hercules and infant Iphikles.

Greenough's *Washington* was deemed a great success by some and an utter abomination by others. Those who praised the monument delighted that an American artist had succeeded in sculpting such a large work of art and that the nation could now boast of a monument to its own hero in a material and style comparable to those of European monuments. One magazine praised it as "a sort of domestic jupiter" and called it "human, and at the same time... godlike."³³ Others liked that its neoclassical style imbued it with an abstract and eternal quality. It was reviewed as "a glorious work and one that cannot fail to reach its destination—namely, the distant posterity."³⁴ It did not show a specific moment or deed in Washington's life but rather presented "a poetical abstract of his whole career."³⁵ Another reviewer wrote, it is "not intended to be a portrait-statue, as Houdon's is. It is meant to be a representation of the historic idea of Washington."³⁶ Congressman Edward Everett wrote that it was "one of the greatest works of sculpture of modern times," and yet he also compared it to masterpiece antique sculptures:

³³ "Statue of Washington," *Niles' National Register*, 14 August 1841, 370.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 371.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 370.

³⁶ "Statues of Washington," *National Press*, 10 October 1846.

if, instead of being a statue of Washington it had been a statue of Julius Cesar or Alexander the Great; if, instead of coming from the *studio* of a young American of the present day, with all its freshness upon it, it had been dug up in the ruins of the baths of Titus, of the Villa of Adrian... restored, had been set up in the Vatican or the Tribune, it would have been deemed as fine apiece of sculpture as any there.³⁷

To Everett's eyes, Greenough's sculpture was America's first antiquity.

A more vocal majority, however, did not approve of Greenough's monument. One congressman objected that it was un-American, "it was not Christian; it belonged to another age and country," and went so far as to say, "if the head could be preserved [he] would vote to throw the body into the Potomac... lest the world should think that that was this people's conception of their nation's father."³⁸ As historian Garry Wills has noted, "The objections were not to classicism as such, which was the dominant mode in American sculpture at the time."³⁹ Instead, the problem with the monument was that it was too abstract; it did not represent Washington as he had appeared in life but rather as a Greek god.

There were also problems with the monument's display inside the Capitol. Since no one had thought to procure a suitable base, the statue was temporarily installed on a pedestal of common yellow pine posts. Congress met to discuss funding a base, which led to a larger discussion about the aesthetics of the sculpture. Greenough was not pleased with the way his sculpture looked in the rotunda and petitioned to have it moved.⁴⁰ By May 1843, the

³⁷ Edward Everett, "American Sculptors in Italy," *New World* 3 (4 December 1841): 361.

³⁸ "House of Representatives."

³⁹ Gary Wills, "Washington's Citizen Virtue: Greenough and Houdon," *Critical Inquiry* 10 (March 1984): 432.

⁴⁰ Saunders, *Horatio Greenough: An American Sculptor's Drawings*, 85.

sculptor was supervising the relocation of the monument to the gardens east of the Capitol.⁴¹ It was placed on a pedestal of Quincy granite, and a plan was made to enclose it in an octagonal temple measuring forty feet across and twenty-five feet high, with a Doric portico.⁴² The sculpture was moved four more times and is now located in the Smithsonian National Museum of American History. Public opinion improved little with the sculpture's relocation outside the Capitol, though some wrote fervent articles defending its aesthetics.⁴³

This monument may seem out of touch with what we now demand from a public monument to a political figure, and it was certainly criticized in its own day, but it is part of a rich body of images depicting Washington as a timeless hero, who immortally transcends history through apotheosis.⁴⁴ Greenough's depiction of Washington makes more sense if we examine the events that preceded its commission. Congress had talked of erecting a monument to Washington in the Capitol since 1783. After Washington's death, the idea of erecting a monument became intertwined with the repeated failed efforts to move Washington's remains to a tomb in the Capitol.⁴⁵ The floor of the central chamber of the

⁴¹ "Greenough," *Niles' National Register*, 13 May 1843, 176.

⁴² "Greenough's Statue of Washington," *Niles' National Register*, 22 July 1843, 323. For an illustration of Robert Mills' 1841 design for an octagonal canopy for Greenough's monument see Rhodri Windsor Liscombe, *Altogether American: Robert Mills, Architect and Engineer, 1781-1855* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 230.

⁴³ See for example, Alexander H. Everett, "Greenough's Statue of Washington," *U.S. Magazine and Democratic Review*, June 1844, 618-621.

⁴⁴ There were many works of art depicting the apotheosis of Washington. The most famous of these is found on the ceiling of the dome of the Capitol's Rotunda painted by Constantino Brumidi from 1859 to 1865.

⁴⁵ For a history of Greenough's sculpture and its funerary qualities see Karal Ann Marling, "The United States Capitol as Mausoleum or, Who's Buried in Washington's Tomb?," in *A Republic for the Ages: the United States Capitol and the Political Culture of the Early Republic*, ed. Donald R. Kennon (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia for the United States Capitol Historical Society, 1999), 448-464.

Capitol, which was under construction during the early nineteenth century, was open until 1828 to reveal a crypt area that was intended for a sculptural tomb, which was suppose to hold Washington's body below it. Washington's family declined Congress's request for the relocation of the remains, since his body was just moved to a newer tomb at Mount Vernon in April 1831.⁴⁶ Thus Greenough's monument was a compromise; although it did not mark Washington's remains, it was a cenotaph, an empty tomb in the Capitol. In the words of art historian Karal Ann Marling, Congress's bill commissioning the sculpture from Greenough "seems to acknowledge the finality of the Mount Vernon interment of 1831."⁴⁷ As a funerary monument, Greenough's neoclassical interpretation of Washington as Zeus makes much more sense. It was not a portrait of the forefather but an eternal, mythic portrayal of him that was designed to fill an empty crypt. As a civic outdoor monument connected to the United States Capitol, this presentation of Washington was unacceptable to the public.

Despite the controversy over Greenough's sculpture, the number of efforts to build monuments to Washington increased throughout the 1840s and into the 1850s and other American sculptors were given opportunities similar to Greenough's. Thomas Crawford (1813-1857), another American sculptor who had a studio in Italy, won the commission from the Virginia State Assembly in 1849 to sculpt a monument to Washington, with multiple figures to be placed on the grounds of the State Capitol at Richmond. Crawford's monument was different from most of the earlier monumental sculptures of Washington in that it was designed for placement outdoors. It depicted Washington in contemporary dress, without the addition of any classical drapery, and was rendered in bronze instead of marble

⁴⁶ John A. Washington wrote to Congress, 15 February 1832, Rasmussen and Tilton, *George Washington: The Man Behind the Myths*, 285.

[Figure 3.06]. Crawford completed the designs and sent several of the figures to be cast at Ferdinand von Muller's foundry in Munich, but the sculptor died in 1857, leaving several figures modeled but not cast. Randolph Rogers, another American sculptor living in Rome, was hired to complete the commission and supervised the casting, shipment, and installation of the sculptures in Richmond.⁴⁸ Crawford's monument to Washington, with its use of bronze and contemporary dress, shares some of the defining characteristics of Brown's *Washington*. However, its multiple figures and baroque composition lacked the directness and immediacy of Brown's single figure composition. Since Crawford sculpted and cast the monument in Europe and died before its installation in Richmond, a less influential city than New York, his project did not have the impact on the development of American sculpture that Brown's monument did.

Commemorating Washington in New York City

Although New York did not unveil a permanent monument to Washington until 1856, from the late eighteenth century the city was a contentious hotbed of proposals for Washington monuments that vied with each other for attention and approval. New York's unusual position during the Revolutionary War may have been one reason for this. The city fell to the British at the beginning of the war in September 1776 and remained occupied territory until Evacuation Day on November 25, 1783. Following the war, New York was home to the federal capital from 1785 to 1790. New Yorkers watched as Chancellor Robert Livingston swore in Washington as the first president on the steps of the former City Hall, further strengthening Washington's ties to their city.

⁴⁷ Marling, "The United States Capitol as Mausoleum or, Who's Buried in Washington's Tomb?," 448-464.

⁴⁸ Craven, *Sculpture in America*, 130-131.

Like all Americans, New Yorkers admired Washington for both his role as a founding father and for his victory over the British. Interest at the time in erecting his monument reflected a “transfer of praise and affection from George III to George Washington.” Prior to the Revolution, a monument to George III had stood at the southern tip of Manhattan at Bowling Green [Figure Intro.03]. This equestrian sculpture was commissioned by the General Assembly of New York to accompany a monument to William Pitt, the Earl of Chatham, which the Freeholders of New York City had requested to honor Pitt for championing the rights of colonists in calling for the repeal of the Stamp Act.⁴⁹ The Assembly prudently ordered a monument to George III, finding it inappropriate to erect a monument to the Earl of Chatham without erecting one to the king. The British sculptor Joseph Wilton sculpted both monuments, which arrived in New York in 1770. Pitt’s monument was made of stone and stood at Wall and William Streets until 1778 [Figure Intro.04]. King George’s monument was made of gilded lead and stood until 1776, when, after a public reading of the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July, an enraged mob tore it down and melted the lead into bullets for the Revolutionary War. The monument’s empty pedestal lay barren until about 1818. As Arthur Marks has noted, at least two artists depicted Washington standing in front of the empty pedestal. John Trumbull’s painting *George Washington* (1790) for New York’s City Hall and Corneilus Tiebout’s engraving after Charles Buxton’s *George Washington* (1798) both show the empty block.

⁴⁹ For a complete history of these monuments see Philipp Fehl, “John Trumbull and Robert Ball Hughes’s Restoration of the Statue of Pitt the Elder,” *New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin* 56, no. 1 (January 1972): 8-27; Anthony Marks, “The Statue of King George Iii in New York and the Iconology of Regicide,” *American Art Journal* 13, no. 3 (1981): 61-82; Alexander J. Wall, “The Equestrian Statue of George Iii and the Pedestrian Statue of William Pitt Erected in the City of New York 1770,” *New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin* July (1920): 36-57.

[Figure 3.07 and 3.08]⁵⁰ If, as Longmore argues, Washington “filled the king-shaped vacuum that followed the overthrow of George III,” then a monument to Washington would fill the void left in the destruction of Wilton’s sculpture.

One of the earliest proposals for a monument to Washington in New York City came in 1802 from the New York State Society of Cincinnati.⁵¹ By 1806, the Society announced the receipt of a design by an unnamed European artist but no physical representation followed.⁵² The first exhibition of a Washington monument in New York City was a private venture. For the July 4th celebrations in 1803, Joseph Delacroix erected an 18-foot-high equestrian statue of Washington at Vauxhall Gardens, an entertainment establishment at Bayard Place.⁵³ This sculpture was part of a large commercial scheme, which drew 4,000 people to Vauxhall to view a fireworks display. The fireworks failed and the sculpture alone was such a poor substitute for the anxious crowd that almost no description remains of it.⁵⁴ While it was neither public nor permanent, the sculpture is significant because it was such an ambitious and early fulfillment of the wish to build a figural sculpture of Washington. It was not, however, so much a monument as a decorative centerpiece in a private celebration.

⁵⁰ Marks, “The Statue of King George III in New York and the Iconology of Regicide,” 69-73.

⁵¹ *Minutes of the Common Council* (New York, 1802), 3: 163; Stokes, ed., *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, 5:1395, 1396.

⁵² Stokes, ed., *The Iconography of Manhattan Island*, 5:1410, 1411.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 5:1398, 1410, 1411.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5:1410.

In 1821, John Trumbull and others presented a plan to the New York City Common Council to erect a statue of Washington in City Hall Park.⁵⁵ In 1823, Enrico Causici, the Italian émigré who had been sculpting decorations for the United States Capitol and who would go on to sculpt Baltimore's Washington monument, received permission from the Common Council of New York to exhibit his equestrian statue of Washington. The large plaster model was displayed outdoors in City Hall Park for several months beginning in July 1826.⁵⁶ It was criticized for inaccurately depicting a horse and for failing to show Washington's superior horsemanship:

An artist who undertakes to represent a fine horse should be intimately acquainted with its anatomy... before such a work is executed, it ought to be submitted not only to artists, but also to practical men, as they would detect professional errors which from acquaintance of military practice would escape the notice of artists.⁵⁷

Causici eventually sued the city over the sculpture claiming that he had been promised the commission to carry the model into a final bronze. He lost the lawsuit and the monument was never completed. The only visual record of it is a tiny depiction visible in the center of an illustration of City Hall Park by A.J. Davis [Figure 3.09].

The year 1831 marks the arrival of Horatio Greenough to the Washington monument effort in New York City. Although there was no clearly defined commission or association, New York cultural institutions began discussing the possibility of erecting a monument of Washington in the city. Greenough, who had been sculpting in Florence since 1825 and who had recently been commissioned by J.I. Roosevelt of New York to sculpt a

⁵⁵ *Minutes of the Common Council* (New York City, 1821), 12: no. 37.

⁵⁶ For more on this sculpture see "Equestrian Statue of Washington," *New York American*, 13 October 1824; "Letter to the Editor, 'M.'" *New York American*, 11 July 1826; "Statue of Washington," *New York American*, 24 June 1826.

⁵⁷ "Letter to the Editor, 'M.'"

bust of Washington, was seen as the best sculptor for the expected commission. He exhibited his marble composition, *Chanting Cherubs*, at the American Academy of the Fine Arts that December, which donated the proceeds of the exhibition to the fundraising drive for a Washington monument in the city [Figure Intro.04]. The National Academy of Design, the American Academy's rival, also pledged that its council members would "exert themselves individually to raise the sum of Five Thousand Dollars, for the purpose of employing Greenough, Esq. to execute a Statue of Washington, for this city."⁵⁸ The *New York Evening Post* championed Greenough's talent, seen in the *Chanting Cherubs* and his recent portrait bust of Washington, as evidence for his ability to sculpt a Washington monument.⁵⁹

The *Post* emphasized the importance of awarding the commission to an American artist:

an American sculptor of skill and talent can execute a better statue of Washington than it is possible for a foreign artist to do. We are all familiar from our childhood with pictured representations of his features, which we are taught to contemplate with emotions of veneration and gratitude.⁶⁰

It is unclear why this Washington monument failed to come to fruition, but by February 1832, Greenough had received the more important Congressional commission for a Washington monument for the Rotunda of the Capitol, which occupied him for the next ten years.⁶¹

⁵⁸ "Statue of Washington," *New York Evening Post*, 2 December 1831, 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid. This article says that Greenough's bust of Washington in the collection of J.I. Roosevelt should indicate to the public how well Greenough would sculpt a Washington monument. *New York Evening Post*, 3 December 1831, 2. Further information on the bust may be found in Nathalia Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1972), 59, note 6.

⁶⁰ "Statue of Washington."

⁶¹ Secretary of State, Edward Livingston's letter to Greenough awarding him the commission was published in "Statue of Washington," 23.

But this did not end the story of New York's pursuit of a Washington monument. In 1843, the Washington Monument Association of the City of New York incorporated and initiated a more serious effort to erect a permanent memorial, which included organized design competitions.⁶² In response to the competitions, the Association received several proposals, which drew on different art-historical styles, including medieval European, classical, and ancient Egyptian. One ambitious proposal suggested a figural sculpture of Washington, which, at 125 feet high, would stand as tall as a building. This proposal by Thomas Crawford and Frederick Catherwood was described as Egyptian in style because of its monumentality and well-defined linear style [Figure 3.10].⁶³ Catherwood was known for his travel writings on Egypt and Mesoamerica; his proposal posited Washington's figure as a rival to the sphinxes. The design called for cast iron, which was becoming popular in both American architecture and the manufacturing industry.⁶⁴ Given its size it could not have been easily built in any other material. And yet the size, perhaps its most outstanding feature, became a liability. No group could afford to build a monument so large.

Another design, drafted around 1843 by the architect Calvin Pollard, called for a Gothic tower for Union Square that would reach 425 feet high and 68 feet across [Figure

⁶² The New York Washington Monument Association was first incorporated in 1833 and incorporated a second time in 1843. For histories of these early proposals and the Association see Dorothy C. Barck, "Proposed Memorials to Washington in New York City," *New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin* 15 (October 1931): 79-88; Jacob Landy, "The Washington Monument Project in New York," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 28 (December 1969): 291-297.

⁶³ An image of this proposal was shown at the National Academy of Design, *Catalogue of the Twentieth Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design* (New-York: Israel Sackett, 1845), 14.

⁶⁴ Landy, "The Washington Monument Project in New York," 293.

3.11].⁶⁵ Pollard's tower was the first proposal submitted to the new committee. Initially, the Association eagerly approved it without much discussion. But while some called it "Grand in its conception—chaste and beautiful in its style—noble and majestic in its proportions, and magnificent in its outlines," others opposed Pollard's design and argued, "a Gothic monument in honour of Washington [was]... the very sublime of nonsense."⁶⁶ The Washington Monument Association was not only criticized for its aesthetic decision but it also taken to task for its undemocratic infrastructure.

In response to Pollard's tower, other architects submitted unsolicited plans to the committee. Among these were several classical designs employing circular colonnades, columns, and domes. One design, by Robert Kerr, even illustrated the apotheosis of Washington with a vertical structure consisting of progressively more complex columns from Doric to Ionic to Corinthian [Figure 3.12].

A second design competition was held in July 1847. New York architect Minard Lefever, noted for his ecclesiastical designs in Brooklyn and Manhattan, submitted a design for an ornate obelisk [Figure 3.13].⁶⁷ John Frazee, a New York sculptor who had started out as a decorative marble carver but who became professional sculptor and a founding member of the National Academy of Design in 1825, exhibited his design for a "Greek style" monument at the Art-Union.⁶⁸ None of the designs was accepted and the Association

⁶⁵ Ibid. 291.

⁶⁶ I.S. Lyon, *The Washington Monument. Shall It Be Built, an Address to the Citizens of New York* (New York: William Oland Bourne, 1846), 7; *Broadway Journal* 1 (11 January 1845): 2; Landy, "The Washington Monument Project in New York," 292.

⁶⁷ "The Washington Monument Project in New York," in Jacob Landy, *The Architecture of Minard Lefever* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 140-146.

⁶⁸ John Frazee, *Description of J. Frazee's Design for the Washington Monument Now Exhibiting at the Art Union* (New York: Jare W. Bell, 1848).

begrudgingly resigned itself to erect Pollard's Gothic tower. With a fervor that was matched by a total lack of foresight, the Association held an elaborate cornerstone ceremony at Hamilton Square, between Third and Fourth Avenues and 65th and 66th Streets, on 19 October 1847. Four months later, however, the Association announced a suspension of their project because a design could not be agreed upon. The suspension proved to be indefinite and marked the demise of the Washington Monument Association.

The physical form that the memorial should take— architectural or sculptural— elicited much discussion. Each form had its implications within a democracy. A building, it was anticipated, would house relics from Washington's life. Like a museum, it would educate the viewer; like a reliquary, it was meant to inspire him. As a museum and a library, its practical uses seemed to outstrip those of a mere sculpture. But such a building could charge an admission fee that might have been prohibitive to some. Furthermore, how meaningful could a Gothic tower or a Greek temple be for the viewer who had never traveled to Europe and who did not see the parallels that were implied? A sculptural figure of Washington, on the other hand, could be recognized by anyone. While depicting a single figure in sculpture may have seemed elitist, it also had promising narrative and pedagogical potential.

Although the proposals were outlandish, interest in building a Washington monument continued as the city grew into a thriving commercial and cultural metropolis. Other forces also motivated New Yorkers to erect a monument to Washington. Waves of immigrants arrived with each decade, changing the demographics of the local population. A monument to Washington would clearly send a message about his importance in American culture. Nationally, interest in Washington was also on the rise. Politics between the North and the South were beginning to show the stress fractures that led to the Civil War. In this

United States of growing difference and conflict, the memory of Washington cast a nation back to its nostalgic past and its still-treasured common ground of the American Revolution. William Ayres has noted, "In the years just before the Civil War, Washington images were available, and sought after, in unprecedented numbers."⁶⁹ It was also during these years, that the project to erect the 555-foot-high obelisk on the Mall in the District of Columbia gained momentum.⁷⁰ The Washington National Monument Society, "a local movement in the guise of a national one [that was founded in 1833] by a few permanent residents of the capital," threatened to siphon funds from New York City's efforts.⁷¹

Henry Kirke Brown's *George Washington*

In spite of dozens of proposals for Washington monuments in New York, by 1850, the city had yet to erect a permanent Washington monument. Those that were temporarily displayed or partially built languished. At this time, Colonel James Lee (1796-1874), owner of the shipping and mercantile business, James Lee & Co., located at 49 Wall Street and 85 Broad Street, began to organize yet another Washington monument commission.⁷² The nineteenth-century art historian Henry Tuckerman wrote that Colonel Lee was inspired to do so after seeing monuments in Europe, "Like many of his traveled countrymen [Lee] was impressed with the appropriateness and beauty of statuary monuments as the ornaments and

⁶⁹ Ayres, "At Home with George: Commercialization of the Washington Image, 1776-1876," 102.

⁷⁰ For a history of the commissioning of the Washington Monument on the Mall see Savage, "The Self-Made Monument: George Washington and the Fight to Erect a National Memorial."

⁷¹ Ibid. 233.

⁷² Trow's Directory, New York, 1856-7, 265 cited in Agnes Miller, "Centenary of a New York Statue," *New York History* 48 (April 1957): 168.

trophies of a great city, and deeply felt our national inferiority in this regard.”⁷³ What little is known about Lee comes from a biographical pamphlet published by his daughter.⁷⁴

Anecdotally, it states that Lee’s Episcopalian family escaped from Presbyterian Scotland and that his father was a sympathizer of the French Revolution. As a child, Lee had seen Raphaelle Peale’s portrait of Washington, owned by his uncle Samuel Lee, and had watched Washington’s funeral procession in New York City. Lee demonstrated his enthusiasm for the American Revolution as one of the promoters of the Lafayette Ball, the marching procession honoring the Marquis de Lafayette’s celebrated visit to the United States in 1824.⁷⁵

According to the biographical pamphlet, Lee began to campaign for the monument on 22 February 1850, Washington’s birthday.⁷⁶ He planned to raise \$50,000 by soliciting \$500 subscriptions from wealthy individuals. By March, Lee had secured contributions from several high-profile New Yorkers, including August Belmont, William B. Astor, James Lenox, Hamilton Fish, Jonathan Sturges, and Charles M. Leupp, many of whom were introduced in Chapter I as Brown’s early patrons.⁷⁷ Like Lee, these so-called merchant princes had greatly profited from New York’s economic expansion and recognized a civic duty to its public. Civic pride was their primary motive for sponsoring the monument. For

⁷³ Henry T. Tuckerman, *The Character and Portraits of Washington* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1859), 80.

⁷⁴ Sarah Lee, *A Remembrancer of the Life of Colonel James Lee of New York* (New-York Historical Society Library, 1896).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁷⁷ Henry Kirke Brown to Ezra Prentice, March 17, 1850, HKBB 587.

a city as wealthy and important as New York, it was becoming an embarrassment not to have notable public monuments. One article announcing the commission celebrated, "New-York is no longer to remain under the reproach of not possessing a single public statue."⁷⁸

Colonel Lee and his colleagues did not want a fanciful architectural folly or a colossal figure but a sculpture that both embodied the aesthetics of European monuments and was accessible to the common man in America. The commission consulted with "several European sculptors of distinction, and other gentlemen of high authority in matters of art [to determine] the manner in which the Great Hero should be represented."⁷⁹ These consultants were Baron Carlo Marochetti, a court sculptor for Louise Philippe, whose own equestrian sculpture of Washington was exhibited at the New York Crystal Palace in 1853; Christian Daniel Rauch, a court sculptor for the Prussian Empire; and Count Alfred d'Orsay, a Parisian nobleman and patron of the arts. No comparable committee of American art critics existed. Thus, this commission for a monument to America's greatest democratic hero was from the beginning informed by the criteria that defined European monuments. The monument that Brown sculpted for this commission succeeded because it fulfilled these criteria while simultaneously appealing to a wide popular audience.

Politics of Obtaining the Commission

It is unclear exactly when the commission first contacted Brown. The sculptor first mentioned the project in March 1850 in his correspondence to his friend and patron Ezra Prentice in which he applauded Colonel Lee's success soliciting sponsors for the

⁷⁸ "Equestrian Statue of Washington," *Home Journal*, 8 May 1852, 2.

⁷⁹ Col. James Lee, *The Equestrian Statue of Washington* (New York: John F. Trow, 1864), 5.

monument.⁸⁰ At the Colonel's request, Brown began sculpting a model at his own expense as early as May 1851.⁸¹ Several members of the commission joined Lee in a visit to Brown's studio in Brooklyn in June 1851 to review the model.⁸² Brown heard nothing from the committee until the following spring when, much to his surprise, Horatio Greenough contacted him and "proposed [that Brown] join [him] in this execution of the work."⁸³

The more established American sculptor, who had been living in Italy intermittently since 1825, had returned to the United States in the fall of 1851.⁸⁴ Greenough demonstrated his interest in sculpting a monument of Washington for New York City as early as 1831, when he exhibited his sculpture *Chanting Cherubs* as a fundraiser for one of the earlier proposals for a Washington monument. Presumably, Colonel Lee or some of his associates invited Greenough to join the commission because the sculptor's experience and reputation would benefit the project. This invitation was very discrete. Tuckerman described,

⁸⁰ HKB to E.P. Prentice, Brooklyn, 17 March 1850, HKBB 588.

⁸¹ Lydia Brown first mentioned the Washington monument a letter, 2 May 1851, HKBB 600. By 29 May 1851, Brown had cast in plaster a section of the model, HKB to Lydia Brown, HKBB 603. On 7 June 1851, Brown wrote to Lydia Brown, "It is raining this morning or I should expect Mr. Lee over to see my Washington... have placed it in a good light, and it looks well. The changes which I made in it after you left here improve it very much. Shall soon send it over to N.Y. 'For victory or death,' " HKBB 606.

⁸² Among those who joined Lee on the visit was Brown's friend and patron, Charles M. Leupp. Later the same day, another member of the commission, Jonathan Sturges, who was also a friend and patron of Brown, visited the studio and complimented Brown on his model of Washington. HKB to Lydia Brown, 8 June 1851, HKBB 609-610.

⁸³ HKB to James Lee, Brooklyn, 23 April 1852, HKBB 625-626.

⁸⁴ Among the reasons for Greenough's return at this time was the completion of his sculpture *The Rescue* which Congress had commissioned for the steps of the Capitol. Other factors that may have influenced Greenough's decision to return to the United States may have been the increasing opportunities for artists in America and the political turmoil in Italy during the 1850s. Henry T. Tuckerman, *A Memorial of Horatio Greenough* (New York: G.P. Putnam & Co., 1853), 37.

“[Greenough] whispered the result of his visit among the leading commercial men of New York, in behalf of a statue of Washington designed to ornament Union Square.”⁸⁵ At the end of March 1852, Greenough wrote to his friend Senator Charles Sumner, “I am nearly ready to begin a colossal equestrian Statue for Union square [sic] here. I beg you not to mention it yet.”⁸⁶ Greenough had good reason to keep his involvement with the commission a secret until he had secured Brown’s commitment to work together. Greenough needed to include Brown for his knowledge of bronze casting and his ties to the Ames Manufacturing Company.⁸⁷ Greenough, who had worked predominantly in marble, became more interested in working in bronze upon his return to the United States. Forging a partnership with Brown was the most efficient way for Greenough to immerse himself in America’s burgeoning bronze art casting industry.

Brown was reasonably shocked by the arrival of Greenough to the project. He feared losing a commission into which he had already invested time and money.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ibid., 38.

⁸⁶ Horatio Greenough to Charles Sumner, New York, 30 March 1852, printed in Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor*, 408.

⁸⁷ Although he sculpted in marble for most of his career, Greenough took an interest in bronze after returning to the United States in the fall of 1851. In addition to the Washington monument for Union Square, Greenough had planned to cast a monument to James Fennimore Cooper in bronze. This monument was never completed. A European visitor to Greenough’s studio in Brooklyn mentioned seeing the “colossal bust of Cooper” and described “the studio of Mr. Greenough is connected with a brass foundry, and I was astonished to find the casting as perfect as in Munich or Paris.” Francis and Theresa Pulszky, *White, Red, Black: Sketches of American Society in the United States During the Visit of Their Guests*, 2 vols. (New York: Redfield, 1853), 2:237.

⁸⁸ Brown compared the risks involved in the Washington commission to his “Philadelphia affair” of 1849. Brown had prepared models at his own expense for a monument to [?] Burd for a statue in St. Stephens Church in Philadelphia. In the end he lost the commission to Thomas Crawford. Brown compared these two commissions in his letter to Lydia Brown, 8 June 1851, HKBB 610.

Ultimately, as the more novice sculptor, Brown had no choice but humbly to accept Greenough's invitation to collaborate on the monument. By 12 April 1852, Greenough wrote to his brother, "I have associated Mr. Brown with me in this task. He has a set of French bronze-workers in Brooklyn."⁸⁹ In this letter, Greenough's tone and language clearly indicate that he regarded Brown's contributions to the project as more technical than artistic.⁹⁰ Greenough had also met with James K. Mills, one of the underwriters of the Ames Manufacturing Company. Mills described this meeting to Ames and seemed to caution him against including Brown:

I do not know how far you have gone with Mr. Brown or what place Mr. B fills in this matter if he is neither designer, sculptor, moulder or the person to do the casting. But I presume he is one of these industrious persons who mix themselves up in such matters... for the sake of making a little money out of it.⁹¹

Brown probably did not know about Greenough's meeting with Mills, but he surely sensed that he was being slighted and expressed his resentment to Colonel Lee, confidentially asking him to explain "the understanding between you and [Greenough], as to the position which I am to hold in the matter,-whether I am to share equally with him in the responsibility, labor, profit and honor of the work,-and whether this position is to be publicly understood."⁹² The Colonel was about to leave New York for the season and wrote to Greenough on April 24, ostensibly to clear the matter before departing. Greenough replied to the Colonel by offering a detailed schedule of payments for the \$25,000 commission. Although Greenough

⁸⁹ Horatio Greenough to Henry Greenough, New York, 12 April 1852, reprinted in Francis Boot Greenough, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough to His Brother Henry Greenough* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1887), 238.

⁹⁰ Greenough refers to the monument as "my statue" and "my horse figure."

⁹¹ J.K. Mills to James T. Ames, Boston, 16 April 1852, Stearns-Ames Papers, reel 3828, frame 44, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.

⁹² HKB to James Lee, Brooklyn, 23 April 1852, HKBB 625.

did not elaborate on the division of labor and money between himself and Brown, he assured the Colonel that he would be open to “adjusting any difference which may arise between Mr. Brown in the progress of this work.” He wrote that Brown was “one of the few men with whom I would associate myself. I have always found him a fair right minded and generous colleague... I have that sense of his genius and skill that I expect to do more and better in company with him than I will do alone.”⁹³ Ironically, Greenough seemed to have ensured that Brown remained a partner in the project.

In late April, newspapers publicly announced that Colonel Lee’s committee had jointly commissioned Greenough and Brown to sculpt an equestrian monument of Washington that would stand fourteen feet high (not including the pedestal), at the southeast corner of Union Square.⁹⁴ The announcement stated that the monument would take three years to design and cast in bronze. The plan was announced with greater confidence than any preceding proposals for a Washington monument in New York. No doubt this confidence was bolstered by the funds that the Colonel had already raised from over fifty subscribers, whose names were publicly announced.⁹⁵

By July 1852, Greenough had acquired a studio at 151 Atlantic Street, Brooklyn, in close proximity to Brown’s studio. By the end of the summer, he claimed to have modeled

⁹³ Horatio Greenough to James Lee, New York, 28 April 1852 in Stearns-Ames Papers, reel 3828, frame 48.

⁹⁴ Greenough announced the commission in a letter to the editor of the New-York Evening Post (30 April 1852), reprinted letter no. 229 in Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor*, 416. See also *Literary World*, 8 May 1852, 333; “Bronze Statue of Washington,” *Albion*, 15 May 1852, 237; “Equestrian Statue of Washington,” 2; “Statue of Washington,” *New York Daily Tribune*, 8 May 1852, 9.

⁹⁵ *New York Daily Tribune*, 12 May 1852, 7.

the horse for the monument.⁹⁶ It is unclear how the two sculptors worked together. For his part, Brown was still unhappy about the “farce about the Washington statue” and cautioned his apprentice, John Quincy Adams Ward, that “too many cooks spoil the broth.”⁹⁷ Greenough and Brown’s relationship was probably both amicable and tense. The complexity of their friendship and professional alliance can be best understood by considering their contact over the decade that preceded this commission. The two artists first met in Paris in 1842 when Brown was en route to Florence.⁹⁸ Greenough and Brown remained on cordial terms throughout Brown’s sojourn abroad, corresponding occasionally.⁹⁹ Brown later wrote that he admired Greenough as the first American sculptor to study abroad and deemed him “the pioneer [among American sculptors]... whatever may be said of his merits as an artist, his learning and varied accomplishments have shed a dignity upon our profession which is worthy of admiration.”¹⁰⁰ Yet the two artists took very different approaches to public art, as evidenced by Brown’s criticism of Greenough’s monument *George Washington* (1841). Upon seeing Greenough’s statue on the grounds outside the Capitol in 1849, Brown wrote, “it is not mean, nor is it fine,—it as a work of art is of that disgusting mediocrity which is too good to condemn in toto, and too insipid to

⁹⁶ Nathalia Wright, *Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), 275.

⁹⁷ HKB to John Quincy Adams Ward, 17 June 1852, Ward Papers, Albany Institute of History and Art, quoted in Lewis I. Sharp, *John Quincy Adams Ward, Dean of American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 33.

⁹⁸ Horatio Greenough to Hiram Powers, between 25 August and 28 September 1842, Paris, reprinted in Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor*, 317.

⁹⁹ For example, Greenough wrote to Brown, who was living in Rome, and complimented him on his statue *Ruth*, Florence, 1 January 1845, reprinted in *Ibid.*, 353.

¹⁰⁰ HKB to Daniel Huntington, Brooklyn, 24 December 1852, HKBB 641.

admire.”¹⁰¹ What really disturbed Brown was how Greenough’s monument directly borrowed from antiquity:

... the absurd idea of its being treated in a classic costume, for nothing can seem more to me of an outrage upon every principle of taste than to place a head modeled from an individual... upon a classically modelled figure... Take the head from Washington’s statue, and what is there left to excite our national interest in it, or to identify it with the person of Washington;--not that winding sheet thrown about him without use,--not the bare legs and sandals,--there is no trace of Washington’s humanity or that he was a being who lived and moved among us... it is not even the shadow of the substance.¹⁰²

Such a design was out of the question for the New York commission. By mid-century, as H. Nichols B. Clark has observed, “interpretations of Washington in various media were becoming decidedly less heroic.”¹⁰³ Artists now depicted Washington as a mortal rather than a demigod. Colonel Lee’s committee had prescribed that the monument depict Washington in military dress, and Brown agreed that “none other can be introduced with any degree of propriety.”¹⁰⁴ Greenough’s roughly drawn pencil sketch of 1851-1852, showing the president wearing a general’s uniform rather than a toga, reflected the committee’s wishes [Figure 3.14]. However, Greenough’s sketch also included a very dynamic, theatrically rearing horse.¹⁰⁵ Below the horse, Greenough had planned to add four subordinate figures

¹⁰¹ HKB, Washington, D.C., to Lydia Brown, New York, 17 May 1849, HKBB 566-567.

¹⁰² Ibid., 563-567.

¹⁰³ H. Nichols B. Clark, “An Icon Preserved: Continuity on the Sculptural Image of Washington,” in *George Washington: American Symbol*, ed. Barbara J. Mitnick (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1999), 44.

¹⁰⁴ “Draft of contract for Washington statue in hand of L.L.B.” No date, HKBB 636.

¹⁰⁵ Three ink on paper sketches that Greenough made for this commission are in the Rinhart Collection which is on loan to the Middlebury College Museum of Art in Vermont, (collection numbers 93.8.134, 98.8.132, 98.8.040). Saunders, *Horatio Greenough: An American Sculptor's Drawings*, 97-98; Wright, *Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor*, unnumbered page.

representing Washington's generals, including the traitorous Benedict Arnold.¹⁰⁶ This complex, baroque-style monument was nothing like Greenough's neoclassical *Washington* of the 1840s, but neither was it in keeping with Brown's more naturalistic aesthetic.

Whatever differences Greenough and Brown may have had soon became moot. Greenough quarreled with Lee and the committee about unknown matters, causing a "dissolution of the whole affair" and the transfer of the contract to Brown.¹⁰⁷ In September 1852, Brown and the committee signed a contract identifying Brown as the sole sculptor.¹⁰⁸ The contract enumerated three designs of increasing cost allowing for a more elaborate monument if subscriptions continued to be added as Brown built the monument. The simplest design, which is the one that was built, called for a bronze monument of Washington riding a horse. The more elaborate versions would have included a bronze base and bas-reliefs.¹⁰⁹ In reaction to Greenough's exit, several subscribers withdrew their support of the project, diminishing the available funds to \$22,500. Greenough's unexpected death on December 18, 1852, left the project decisively in Brown's hands.

Contemporary newspapers claimed Brown began working on the monument on Washington's birthday, 22 February 1853, but he probably began modeling the monument earlier than that, since he wrote to Daniel Huntington on Christmas Eve 1852, "I am now

¹⁰⁶ Greenough describes his design and defends his inclusion of the traitorous Arnold in a letter to George Bancroft, New York, 7 May 1852, reprinted in Wright, ed., *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor*, 418.

¹⁰⁷ HKB to Daniel Huntington, Brooklyn, 24 December 1852, HKBB 640.

¹⁰⁸ Lee, *The Equestrian Statue of Washington*, 6. HKB to James Lee & Co., HKBB 636-638 shows a draft of a contract, noted by Henry Kirke Bush-Brown to be written by Lydia Brown. This contract is undated but stipulates that Brown finish the monument within two years of 1 May 1853 implying that the contract of September 1852 was revised.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

preparing to commence the work.”¹¹⁰ Most likely, Brown resumed working from the model he had prepared for the committee in May 1851. An early model of the monument is preserved at the Yale University Art Museum [Figure 3.15].¹¹¹ This model shows Washington in full military uniform, wearing a cape and general’s hat. In revising the model to create the monument, Brown removed the cape and hat, which sharpened the overall silhouette and made Washington’s head and face much more visible.¹¹² Removing Washington’s hat was of utmost importance in portraying the uniformed general as a man of the people. As one critic wrote reviewing the model in 1854, “He uncovers his head in a token of deference to his country.”¹¹³ This modified design satisfied both elite and populist interests. Indeed, the enduring success of this monument lies in its honoring Washington as a leader while simultaneously celebrating the democracy that he helped to found.

Aesthetics

That Colonel Lee and his group of sponsors wanted a monument that would rival those of Europe is clear from their consultation with Marochetti, Rauch, and the Count

¹¹⁰ HKB to Daniel Huntington, Brooklyn, 24 December 1852, HKBB 640.

¹¹¹ It is very likely that this was the composition that Brown showed to the committee in May 1851. Brown gave a plaster cast of this early model to the family of Edmund Terry and Anna Prentice Terry of Brooklyn because their saddle horse had served as the model for the equestrian monument. Their descendent, Marion Terry gave the plaster model to Yale University around 1930 in memory of Edmund Terry, Edmund Roderick Terry, and Eliphalet Bradford Terry. In 1932 Yale made a mold of the plaster model and had a bronze cast poured because the plaster had deteriorated by that time. Letter from Theodore Sizer (Associate Director of the Yale University Gallery of Fine Arts) to Henry Kirke Bush-Brown, 23 October 1933, HKBB 601.B; Jennifer A. Gordon, *Cast in the Shadow: Models for Public Sculpture in America* (Williamstown, MA: Clark Art Institute, 1985), 24-27; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Archives; Michael Edward Shapiro, “The Development of American Bronze Foundries, 1850-1900” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1980), 58.

¹¹² Octavia Hughes, “The Early Work and Development of Henry Kirke Brown” (master’s thesis, Columbia University, 1960), 55.

¹¹³ “Brown’s Colossal Equestrian Statue of Washington,” *Crayon* 2 (3 January 1855): 5.

d'Orsay before commissioning Brown. The Colonel had purportedly talked of displaying Brown's model alongside that of Baron Marochetti's *Washington* "in some suitable and accessible place in New York, for public inspection."¹¹⁴ It was equally important that the sculptor of the monument be an American. While preparing for Lee's review of the model, Brown optimistically wrote "An American Washington did conquer once did he not?"¹¹⁵

Brown's training in Italy gave him first-hand knowledge of the iconic monuments of ancient Rome and the Renaissance and enabled him to provide the committee with what it wanted. The most obvious source for the composition of *Washington* is the ancient Roman bronze sculpture of *Marcus Aurelius*, located atop the Eternal City's Capitoline Hill [Figure 3.16]. Brown's figure of Washington, like that of the emperor, is on horseback, steadfastly focused ahead, his arm extending a paternal benediction from his powerful seat of authority to an imagined crowd. Brown's ability to employ the European source reflected that a properly-trained American sculptor could successfully create fine art of a European caliber.

Brown's *Washington* also appealed to the vast majority of New Yorkers who had never been to Rome and never seen the *Marcus Aurelius*. It did so in three principal ways: It commemorated a historical event specific to New York; its portrait of Washington lived up to the public's vision of what the first president ought to have looked like; and its use of bronze celebrated a technological independence from European foundries and marked the success of a new industry in this country. These three qualities deserve closer assessment.

The monument recalled a historic moment that actually took place at Union Square and was important to New York City's history, as well as to the founding of the early

¹¹⁴ HKB to Lydia Brown, 8 June 1851, HKBB 609-610.

¹¹⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 7 June 1851, HKBB 606.

republic.¹¹⁶ In the words of Colonel Lee, Union Square was “classic ground, since it occupies nearly if not the identical spot, where Washington was received on 25th November, 1783 by the citizens of New York, on its evacuation by the British.”¹¹⁷ Even though the war ended at the surrender of Yorktown in October 1781, Evacuation Day, as it was commonly called, was popularly celebrated as the end of the Revolutionary War well into the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸ Brown hoped his monument would resurrect the memory of a fifty-one-year-old Washington addressing New Yorkers at the end of the war. To modify the term history painting, this was history sculpture. Significantly, Brown chose a moment when Washington was about to relinquish his power in exchange for his civilian life at Mount Vernon. While we know that Washington went on to serve as the first president, at this point in history, he appeared to be retiring from public life. The art journal *The Crayon* noted this and described the monument as capturing Washington in “the moment when he took his position with regard to his country, and drawing back from the carnage, became ‘first in peace’... Washington in no office was so great as Washington the man, and that moment proved it.”¹¹⁹ The article went on to compliment “Brown’s choice of this moment [as] no small proof of his genius.” Where Greenough gave us a portrait of an elite Roman, Brown gave us a servant of the people. Another article said the monument depicted the “Prudence of Washington... a Father rather than Soldier, General, President...[it is] moral and

¹¹⁶ At least one of the earlier efforts in New York to erect a monument to Washington considered doing so at Union Square, *Broadway Journal* 1(11 January 1845): 22.

¹¹⁷ Lee, *The Equestrian Statue of Washington*, 6.

¹¹⁸ The war did not officially end until the sealing of the Treaty of Paris in September 1783.

¹¹⁹ “Brown’s Colossal Equestrian Statue of Washington,” 6. For the subsequent letter to the editor and editorial response prompted by this article see “Brown’s Washington,” *Crayon* 2 (17 January 1855): 44.

instructive.”¹²⁰ In this way, Brown’s monument is the antithesis of the equestrian monuments in Europe that aimed to establish the absolute authority of their riders.

Brown did not try to abstract Washington as a quixotic ideal or paradigmatic leader, but rather showed him as the hero of a particular historical day. If Greenough’s Washington was meant to be immortal and transcend time, Brown’s was meant to affix Washington in an actual moment. Brown relied on several references to capture impeccably Washington’s likeness. He had seen “a suit of clothes, sword, and cane worn by Gen. Washington,” when he had visited the Patent Building in Washington, D.C. in 1849.¹²¹ He probably also looked at the wide range of painted portraits of Washington in preparing the face. An undated, hastily drawn pencil sketch on paper shows that he studied Trumbull’s portrait of Washington in New York’s City Hall. [Figure 3.07 and 3.17] The drawing shows the left side of Washington’s body from the shoulder to the waist. His left hand holds his general’s hat next to the hilt of the sheathed sword. On the lower right corner of the drawing are the words “Trumble [sic] 1852.”

Accurately rendering Washington’s face was of tremendous importance. Brown used a cast of Houdon’s life mask of Washington as the model for the face.¹²² Brown’s papers contain a handwritten note, identified as an excerpt of a letter from Emmanuel Leutze, the artist who had painted the famous icon *Washington Crossing the Delaware*, who cautioned Brown against relying too heavily on Houdon’s model:

¹²⁰ “The Fine Arts,” *Putnam’s Monthly*, March 1855, 334-335.

¹²¹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, 19 May 1849, HKBB 572.

¹²² One period article stated that Brown had access to a cast of Houdon’s bust of Washington that was in the collection of a Mr. Rogers, “Equestrian Statue of Washington,” *Home Journal*, 9 December 1854, 2.

I have observed by a close study of all the heads of Washington, at Houdon's time, the type of the French nobility was very similar, in a very retreating forehead, the whole facial angle inclining backward... Houdon has been misled by the character of his time... Washington's head was essentially perpendicular, and Houdon's busts differ from the portraits in the want of the wedge, so far has he thrown the head back... tell Brown to please compare all good portraits and see if I am right.¹²³

On the note is a tiny sketch of Washington's profile showing two versions of the slope of the forehead, one representing the brow as he thought Houdon had captured it and a corrective line showing what Leutze believed was a more accurate and "perpendicular" slope of the head.¹²⁴ [Figure 3.18] Leutze's comment illustrates the tension American artists faced in relying on European aesthetics and wanting to establish a new democratic, non-aristocratic art tradition.¹²⁵

Production

Building the monument on American soil without the help of European marble quarries or foundries was important to Brown and imbued the project with a patriotic pride. The completion of the monument, an enormous technological undertaking at the time, was a victory for American industry. It signaled a new era for bronze casting in America and was recognized as such even in Brown's day. As discussed in Chapters I and II, Brown had been collaborating with John Tyler Ames of the Ames Manufacturing Company to cast his work

¹²³ E. Leutze to (unknown), 17 February 1854, HKBB 669.

¹²⁴ The description of the shape of Washington's head also reflects the period's popularity of phrenology, a pseudo-science that maintained that the shape of one's head reflected one's intelligence. Leutze also relied on a version, perhaps a secondary cast, of Houdon's mask of Washington as the model for his epic painting *Washington Crossing the Delaware*. The so-called Leutze-Stellwagen mask was given to the Corcoran Gallery of Art and is discussed in Eisen, *Portraits of Washington*, 3:783-784.

¹²⁵ For a more extensive discussion on the struggle to train American artists without relying on European models see Paul J. Staiti, *Samuel F.B. Morse* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

in bronze since July 1851.¹²⁶ Choosing to execute a sculpture in bronze was seen as a nationalistic act. Brown's success with casting *Washington* proved that, "There is now no necessity to have works of art in bronze cast in Europe, and it is almost unpatriotic to have them sent there."¹²⁷ It was a testimony to American ingenuity and resourcefulness that the nation no longer needed to rely on the technical prowess of Europe to build its monuments.

The process required many hands. By the 1850s, Brown's reputation had also attracted the attention of the next generation of American sculptors. John Quincy Adams Ward and Larkin Mead, his apprentices, worked closely with Brown to complete the *Washington* statue. Their letters document the final production of the bronze monument and give a sense of the excitement that filled Brown's studio during the end of the project.

From the autumn of 1852 to the summer of 1854, Brown built the full-scale model for the monument. Typically, a sculptor would build the model in clay, taking care to wrap it in damp cloths to keep the material pliable and to prevent moisture from unevenly evaporating and cracking the clay. When the sculptor finished modeling the design, he built a mold in order to cast a plaster version of the statue. For the *Washington* monument, Brown worked directly in plaster.¹²⁸ A faded photograph from February 1854 shows the sculptor

¹²⁶ The first documentation of contact between Brown and James Tyler Ames is a letter dated 25 July 1851, which is now in the Stearns-Ames Papers, Archives of American Art, cited in Michael Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 50.

¹²⁷ "The Washington Statue," *Crayon* 3 (July 1856): 216.

¹²⁸ Ibid. Clark Mills also modeled his equestrian, *Andrew Jackson*, in plaster, and Brown perhaps got the idea from seeing Mills' statue in the plaster, HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, 18 May 1849, HKBB 569. By 1850, Powers and Greenough were also modeling directly in plaster, see Richard P. Wunder, *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805-1873*, 2 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 1:164; Hiram Powers, "The New Method of Modelling in Plaster for Sculpture," *Putnam's Monthly, A Magazine of Literature, Science and Art* 2 (August 1853): 154-155.

standing next to the full scale plaster model [Figure 3.19].¹²⁹ A sketch in his notebooks shows the design for an armature for a sculpture of a horse that closely matches the frame that holds the plaster model seen in the photograph [Figure 3.20].¹³⁰ Working directly in plaster had several advantages. It saved money and time, since it meant eliminating the process of building molds and casting a plaster copy from a clay original. The white plaster was also easier to see in the dark studio, “affording the sculptor an opportunity to study effects... for which the dark colored clay is not so well adapted.”¹³¹ There were some drawbacks as well. It was harder to modify the overall composition, and if the plaster broke on its way to the foundry, there were no intermediary molds from which to rebuild the model.

In a democratic spirit, New York professionals made countless in-kind donations, from the cement foundation to the sail cloth that hid the sculpture before its unveiling, which made the dedication truly a community project.¹³² Brown shared the spotlight with his apprentice, now “in the fiery enthusiasm of his youth” and about to embark on his own career, by magnanimously signing the monument, “Henry Kirke Brown/ Sculptor/J.Q.A. Ward, Asst.”¹³³ With this gesture, Brown acknowledged the tremendous group effort necessary to build the finished work.

¹²⁹ The photograph is in LC, Manuscript Division, HKBB 690 A.

¹³⁰ The drawing is in LC, Prints and Photographs, HKB Sketchbook L, plate 81.

¹³¹ “The Washington Statue,” 216.

¹³² Lee, *The Equestrian Statue of Washington*, 6-14.

¹³³ “Address of Herbert Adams,” in *John Quincy Adams Ward: Memorial Addresses at the Century Association Delivered before the Century Association November 5, 1910* (New York: Century Association, 1911), 11. The monument is signed near the rear end of the proper left side of the bronze base.

Once Brown completed the full-scale plaster model, he cut the enormous plaster sculpture into sections and shipped it piecemeal to the foundry in straw filled crates.¹³⁴ There, the sections were used to make impressions in hard-packed sand that captured the form and surface details of the model and that would be used to cast the bronze.¹³⁵ In the summer of 1854 Brown anticipated sending sections of Washington's figure to the foundry in September.¹³⁶ In December, his friend Linus Yale wrote to their mutual friend William Morris Davis, "I suppose Brown is cutting down his Washington by this time."¹³⁷ He sent the figure to the foundry before sending the more complicated body of the horse. Bronze sections of Washington's figure returned to Brooklyn in April 1855, just as Brown began sending plaster sections of the horse to the foundry for casting.¹³⁸ Larkin Mead wrote, "I have been finishing one of Washington's boots. This represents one of W's legs in bronze. It makes a noise tremendous when you strike upon it with a hammer."¹³⁹ As the cast bronze pieces returned to Brooklyn, Brown and his studio hands refined and chased the surface of

¹³⁴ The shipment was probably accompanied by apprentices or employees of the studio. On one occasion, Larkin Mead wrote, "I may go to New Haven tomorrow with the horses [sic] body," Mead to Mary Jane Noyes Mead [mother], Brooklyn, 29 May 1855, William Rutherford Mead Papers (Ac 1867, Series a, Folder 14), Amherst College Library, Archives and Special Collections, Amherst, Massachusetts.

¹³⁵ The sand casting process is thoroughly explained in Chapter I of Shapiro, "The Development of American Bronze Foundries, 1850-1900."

¹³⁶ HKB to William Morris Davis, Brooklyn, 14 August 1854, HKBB 690.

¹³⁷ Linus Yale to William Morris Davis, Newport, New York, 10 December 1854, HKBB 715.

¹³⁸ Ames Manufacturing Company listed how the monument was divided into sections for the purpose of casting. The plaster was divided into at least 18 sections. The sections and the cost of casting them are itemized in Shapiro, "The Development of American Bronze Foundries, 1850-1900," Appendix 11, Appendix 12.

¹³⁹ Mead to Mary Jane Noyes Mead [mother], Brooklyn, 29 May 1855, William Rutherford Mead Papers (Ac 1867, Series a, Folder 14).

the metal, a process commonly known as finishing. In the same letter, Mead also stated, "We are demolishing the horse pretty rapidly now. He is left with three legs and no tail... We shall send the tail to the foundry tomorrow I think. It is seven feet long... Monday morning we shall commence cutting off the horses [sic] head."¹⁴⁰ Thus Brown and his studio proceeded to work on plaster and bronze parts simultaneously.

Cutting the plaster model of the horse into pieces was a major ordeal. Before it was cut down, the horse measured fourteen feet long, eight inches thick, and was estimated to weigh five tons. To make it lighter for shipping, Larkin Mead chopped away excess plaster from the inside of the model. The young apprentice expressed the fears that everyone in the studio must have felt when he wrote, "We have had some little anxiety (about the getting down of the body) the past week, but as we have proceeded all obstacles have vanished. Comparatively speaking, all chances for accident have passed. Everything is pretty sure sailing now, though I wish the horses [sic] body was safe in Chicopee."¹⁴¹ One month later, "the body of the horse arrived in Chicopee in safety."¹⁴² The fervor expressed by this fifteen-year-old apprentice from Brattleboro, Vermont, parallels the excitement the nation as a whole was experiencing. America celebrated the eightieth anniversary of the Revolutionary War the year the monument was dedicated. Attempting to cast a bronze monument of this size and complexity was a great undertaking.

¹⁴⁰ Larkin Mead to Albert Mead, Brooklyn, April 1855, Ibid. One article in the press said that some smaller pieces of the monument were cast by late April 1855 and that the remaining pieces were expected to be cast by autumn, see "Domestic Art Gossip," *Crayon* 2 (25 April 1855): 268.

¹⁴¹ Larkin Mead to Mary Jane Noyes Mead [mother], Brooklyn, 3 May 1855, William Rutherford Mead Papers (Ac 1867, Series a, Folder 14).

¹⁴² HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 3 June 1855, HKBB 779.

The quality and pace of production pleased Brown, who wrote, "We are at work on the body of Washington, and get on fast with it. It is a beautiful cast... Mr. Ames thinks that the whole thing will be cast during the Summer."¹⁴³ Much of the monument was, in fact, cast by the end of the summer of 1855, but not as easily as Brown and Ames had hoped. In his comprehensive history of early bronze casting in the United States, Michael Shapiro wrote, "As had occurred with Clark Mills' casting of the *Jackson* statue three years before, the casting of the horse's body was not without difficulty."¹⁴⁴ Shapiro recounts the disastrous first attempt to cast Brown's horse at Chicopee, when the molten bronze flowed uncontrollably, burning the workmen with "a shower of liquid fire," inciting hysteria in the foundry.¹⁴⁵ Subsequent attempts proved successful, and the bronze pieces arrived in the Brooklyn studio for patination and finishing.

Brown devised an unusual procedure to patine the bronze, the process by which the surface color of the bronze is modified through a chemicals and heat. He excavated a pit in his studio that served as "a bath, for horse & rider."¹⁴⁶ Larkin Mead described it as "an enormous box to put underground for pickling the statue."¹⁴⁷ Brown's friend William Morris Davis wrote inquisitively, "What's the idea, to clense [sic] the surface, or to bronze?

¹⁴³ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, [no date] April 1855, HKBB 769.

¹⁴⁴ Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture*, 58.

¹⁴⁵ "Grand Bronze Casting at Chicopee," undated newspaper clipping, Ames Papers, Stearns Collection, quoted in *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ William Morris Davis to HKB, Philadelphia, 17 October 1855, HKBB 809.

¹⁴⁷ Larkin Mead to George Fuller, microfilm roll 608, Frame 1003, George Fuller Papers, Archives of American Art, quoted in Shapiro, "The Development of American Bronze Foundries, 1850-1900," 58.

Can you anticipate the effects of time in giving the rich bronze?"¹⁴⁸ There is no record of Brown's reply, but his intention, that of most artists who work with bronze, was to give the metal a pleasing color that would create the right lights and darks to highlight the modeling of the sculpture. It is puzzling that Brown bathed the entire sculpture because it probably gave the sculpture a uniform color. It is now more common to stipple patina chemicals onto the bronze surface with a hand-held brush. We do not know how long the bronze remained in the "bath" but the content of the liquid may have been one of the chemical patina formulas Brown shared with Ames.¹⁴⁹ Brown also described a recipe for coloring metals in a handwritten page in one of his undated notebooks.¹⁵⁰ Essentially, this recipe called for soaking the metal in a mixture of *acqua forte* (an acid used to make etchings), oil of vitriol (sulfuric acid), ink, and shavings until the metal blackened, then rinsing the piece with a mixture of nitric acid and vitriol and then with hot water and sawdust. The resulting color after burnishing the metal was a "brassy glow" that would tone down after several months of exposure to the elements.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ William Morris Davis to HKB, Philadelphia, 17 October 1855, HKBB 809.

¹⁴⁹ Two letters from Brown to Ames dating from 1852 and 1859 describing patina formulas are printed in Shapiro, "The Development of American Bronze Foundries, 1850-1900", Appendix 8, Appendix 9.

¹⁵⁰ LC, Manuscript Division, HKBB Papers, box 4, thin black leather-bound notebook, circa 1859, no page numbers.

¹⁵¹ William Morris Davis, who had seen the monument at its unveiling and again in August, described this color change, Davis to HKB, Philadelphia, 23 August 1856, HKBB 867. One reporter describes the color of the monument just after its dedication, "The statue as it now stands, is of a warm bright yellow, the color of gold. This color will remain of the same tint for a short time only, gradually changing towards a nut-brown hue by exposure to the atmosphere, until it finally becomes quite dark," "The Washington Statue," 216; Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, Superintendent of the United States Capitol similarly described it, "The new bronze is of a golden color," *Meigs Journal*, 16 July 1856, B-228, 1300.

By October 1855, many of the bronze pieces sat in Brown's studio. One visitor noted, "The various parts of this colossal work were lying about the pavement not yet put together, thought the entire upper portion of Washington was quite advanced."¹⁵² By March 1856, *The Home Journal* dramatically described the monument still in pieces, "Here and there on the ground are the ponderous brazen limbs of the 'Father of his Country'... When all the parts are received... they will be riveted together."¹⁵³ Riveting the sections into a whole statue proved to be a labor problem when the French foundry men quarreled with Brown over trade privileges and went on strike. The bulk of the work fell to Ward, who claimed he spent "more days inside that horse than Jonah did inside the whale."¹⁵⁴

With larger sections assembled, they moved the three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle from the studio to Union Square on June 4th 1856, just one month before the dedication of the monument.¹⁵⁵ A horse-drawn truck carried the pieces from the studio to South Ferry, but the statue ultimately crossed the East River at Fulton Ferry, because it was difficult to find a boat with a gangway that could accommodate its size. The following day, the riggers hoisted the horse onto the granite base before an inquisitive crowd of spectators. The architectural firm Upjohn & Co., with which Brown had collaborated on a number of other projects, designed the base.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵² "Letter to the Editor," *Crayon* 2 (30 October 1855): 330.

¹⁵³ "Studios of American Artists," *Home Journal*, 1 March 1856, 1.

¹⁵⁴ Quoted in Sharp, *John Quincy Adams Ward, Dean of American Sculpture*, 34.

¹⁵⁵ On 28 October 1855 Brown wrote to William Morris Davis, "I am very busy arranging for the base of my statue, and my prospects for getting it up on the 22nd do not flatter my wishes," HKBB 815. This suggests that Brown had hoped to have at least the base if not the monument installed for Washington's Birthday 1856.

¹⁵⁶ The senior partner in this firm, Richard Upjohn lived at 256 Clinton Street, close to Brown's home and studio. Brown may have designed a lion's head ornament for

Brown and Ward labored for two days, literally building the monument on the spot. The pieces included the bronze base, the head and tail of the horse, Washington's body, and his arms.¹⁵⁷ Standing atop the horse's head as he fastened it, Brown described the din of the city, "the turmoil and uproar of the whole city was vibrating in that head, every part seemed to feel it."¹⁵⁸ The scene drew quite a crowd; according to Brown some 4000 bystanders stood in the park, eager to see one of the city's first public monuments. The monument, which stood, at that time, facing northwest on a traffic triangle at the southeastern corner of Union Square, was not yet dwarfed by the tall buildings and chaos that surround it today.¹⁵⁹

Upjohn's Trinity Building at 111 Broadway, built 1851-1852, Everard M. Upjohn, *Richard Upjohn, Architect and Churchman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 130. At Upjohn's request, Brown also designed "six figures, all expressing different sentiments" to surmount the double arch of what seems to have been an ecclesiastical monument that Upjohn was designing, it is not know if this was ever built, HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 29 May 1851, HKBB 602 and 8 June 1851, HKBB 611. Upjohn also designed the Mechanics' Bank at 33-35 Wall Street, 1855-1856, for which Brown sculpted an overdoor relief of an arm and hand holding a hammer, Larkin Mead to Mary Jane Noyes Mead [mother], Brooklyn, 29 May 1855 in William Rutherford Mead Papers (Ac 1867, Series a, Folder 14)., the building was destroyed and there is no other record of this sculpture. Incidentally, the President of Mechanics' Bank, Shepherd Knapp, was one of the subscribers of Brown's Washington monument. He visited Brown's studio to review the early model with Colonel Lee, HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 8 June 1851, HKBB 609.

¹⁵⁷ Today monuments are usually assembled entirely at the foundry and installed "whole." Brown described the installation of the monument in a letter to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 5 June 1856, HKBB 846-848.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ The monument remained at its original location, facing northwest in a traffic triangle in the middle of Fourth Avenue at the southeast corner of Union Square until the 1930s when it was moved to its present location to accommodate the construction of the subway. For early discussion on the relocation of the monument see "Sculptors Approve Union Square Plan," *New York Times*, 21 May 1922, 39; "Removal of Statue Bares Old Roster," *New York Times*, 11 July 1930, 15. Bush-Brown suggested moving his uncle's monument to Washington Square Park, "Art Commission of the City of New York, Forms Requesting Approval to Relocate the George Washington Monument by Henry Kirke Brown within Union Square," (1929); "Washington Square Seeks to Get Statue," *New York Times*, 2 June 1929, 21; Henry Kirke Bush-Brown, "The Washington Statue in Union Square," *Art and Archaeology* 26(July-August 1928): 53.

Yet, just two days before the dedication of the monument, Brown complained that “there was no concert of action between the city authorities and military.”¹⁶⁰ Colonel Lee disliked Mayor Fernando Wood, and it fell to Brown to call upon his friend Henry Marquand to smooth relations between the parties. In absolute disgust, the sculptor wrote, “How humiliating. This is the hardest work I ever undertook to prevent a pack of harpies from poluting [sic] this work with their touch.”¹⁶¹ Finishing the monument was also financially and emotionally trying for Brown. He estimated that he lost about \$2000 in producing the monument.¹⁶² The sculpture occupied so much physical space in the studio that Mead poignantly remarked when the model was shipped out to the foundry, “How strange the studio looks and seems without the monstrous horse. We shall feel lost without him for a time.”¹⁶³ The sculpture also occupied a large space in Brown’s psyche. He found it difficult to sign over the sculpture to the commission. The day before the dedication ceremony, Brown wrote to his wife:

This morning I bid [the monument] farewell with a sad heart... I see no point in the future around which my soul can center,-my hands fall idle by my side... I am oppressed by the feeling of relinquishing all control over the work which has so long absorbed me... I am separated from it forever.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁰ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 2 July 1856, HKBB 853.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² HKB to William Morris Davis, Brooklyn, 16 March 1856, HKBB 834. For details of the cost of casting the monument see Shapiro, “The Development of American Bronze Foundries, 1850-1900,” 58-59, Appendix 10, Appendix 11.

¹⁶³ Larkin Mead to Mary Jane Noyes Mead, Brooklyn, 3 May 1855, William Rutherford Mead Papers (Ac 1867, Series a, Folder 14).

¹⁶⁴ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 3 July 1856, HKBB 8

The dedication itself was a major public event that lasted several hours and was attended by thousands of people. It consisted of speeches by prominent New Yorkers, including the Unitarian orator Henry W. Bellows, and a large military procession. In a comical moment the fire department assisted in unhitching the shroud which had become wedged on the statue as the crowd tensely waited.¹⁶⁵ The monument prevailed as an example of the talent of an American artist and New York's support of public art. The names of the subscribers were inscribed on the bronze self base and are still there today.

Brown's monument, with its democratic overtones and ambitious use of technology speaks to larger currents in American culture in the early 1850s. At the same time, Walt Whitman wrote and self-published *Leaves of Grass* only a few streets from Brown's studio. As discussed in Chapter I, the relationship between Whitman and Brown is difficult to document, but the artist and the poet shared a hope that American culture would flourish and be an egalitarian one, encouraging the participation of the average person. While Whitman was celebrating individuality and the common man, Brown struggled to find a sculptural language suitable for monuments to heroes of our democracy. Brown's monument to Washington celebrated him as a man of the people. One magazine complimented it on its, "common-sense view of heroism," arguing that the artist sculpting a monument to Washington, "should never forget that he was a man first, and only a hero because he was a *true* man."¹⁶⁶

As much as Whitman may have enjoyed the spirit of Brown's studio and admired his artwork, he questioned the value of monuments in general, which extended to Brown's Washington. In the poem *Song of the Broad Axe*, a section of *Leaves of Grass*, he wrote, "What

¹⁶⁵ "Inauguration of the Statue of Washington," *New York Tribune*, 5 July 1856, 1.

¹⁶⁶ "Brown's Colossal Equestrian Statue of Washington," 6.

do you think endures?/Do you think a great city endures?," and offered that the ideal city is one, "Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds."¹⁶⁷

Whitman described the unveiling of Brown's monument in a brief account, "New York Amuses Itself—the Fourth of July." He devoted just a few lines to the event:

Union Place 8 ½ [8:30 AM]. The statue of Washington is unveiled [sic], with applause and military salutes. The great commander and statesman is represented sitting on horseback, extending one arm as if in command, with the well-known look of firm and grave benignity upon the composed features, and the characteristically upright posture.¹⁶⁸

He went on to question the value of such ceremonies, "The anniversary has fallen to be a mere powder-puff; an occasion of aimless parades and noise and tumult; of tiresome empty ceremony, and wasteful expenditure," calling for a more spontaneous public affair, without the "chilly management of squabbling civic authorities."¹⁶⁹

Regardless of Whitman's criticism, the commission regarded its gift to the city as democratic. At its elaborate unveiling on the 4th of July 1856, the monument was dedicated to:

... citizens of the Union... in the name and by the authority of this who have erected this statue, I give it, before God and our country to the People of the United States!...And you, people of New York, individually and collectively, and not by any delegation of the trust, but as a democracy, shall be its guardians.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ "Song of the Broad-Axe" in *Leaves of Grass* in Malcolm Cowley, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman as Prepared by Him for the Deathbed Edition* (New York: Pellegrini & Gudahy, 1948), 190-191.

¹⁶⁸ Walt Whitman, *New York Dissected* (New York: Rufus Rockwell Wilson, 1936), 84.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ This quote from the speech made by Rev. Dr. George W. Bethune was printed in "Equestrian Statue of Washington," *United States Magazine* 3 (August 1856): 176.

James Lee, the committee's chairman, hoped the project would effect a change beyond this Union Square, beyond Brown's *Washington*. Lee wrote, "May we not hope that this successful effort will lead to the employment of our nation's artists in transmitting to posterity the memory of our country's honored sons?"¹⁷¹

The press widely and positively reviewed the dedication of the monument. One article titled, "Our First Statue," claimed the monument heralded "the era of public statuary," and spoke of the absence of monuments since the destruction of Wilton's colonial statues of King George III and William Pitt.¹⁷² Another article said the statue would "inaugurate a new era of art among us" and make the city "as famous for its monuments of Art as it has heretofore been notorious for its apparent neglect of such necessary things in a great city's existence."¹⁷³ Another daily asserted that Brown's "native genius, has nobly achieved the highest duty patriotism could demand of art."¹⁷⁴

After decades of competitions, New York had finally succeeded in erecting a monument to Washington. The monument was a huge popular success and made a tremendous impact on the city and the history of American sculpture. It proved that an equestrian monument could be entirely designed and produced on American soil, that bronze could be cast in the United States, that European models could be used without compromising the integrity of a national subject. A group of citizens had found a common voice and collectively made a civic contribution to their city. Befitting its new identity as the

¹⁷¹ Lee, *The Equestrian Statue of Washington*, 14.

¹⁷² "Brown's Equestrian Statue of Washington," *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 19 July 1856, 86; "Our First Statue," *New York Daily Times*, 23 July 1856, 4.

¹⁷³ "Studios of American Artists," 1; "Brown's Equestrian Statue of Washington," 86.

¹⁷⁴ "The Glorious Fourth," *New York Daily Times*, 5 July 1856, 1.

cultural capital, the Empire City boasted a locally-crafted civic monument that set a new standard for American monuments.

Brown's unique solution to the aesthetic challenge provided a new American visual idiom that appealed to both his elite sponsors and the city's general public. For the sculptor, his achievement in casting a complicated equestrian monument reinforced his earlier success in casting the *De Witt Clinton*. In just three years, Brown had produced two bronze monuments for a city that, until recently, had had none.

Ironically, this commission also marked Brown's departure from New York City. He and Lydia Brown had long wanted to return to the rural life that marked their youth in New England. Shortly after the dedication of the monument, Brown moved his studio and home up the Hudson River to Balmville, near Newburgh, New York. Ward acquired the studio in Brooklyn.¹⁷⁵

Brown remained in touch with cultural institutions and exhibition venues in New York and even had a studio in the city, in the famous Tenth Street Studio Building for a brief time in 1872.¹⁷⁶ But he would never again enjoy the spotlight that shone on him when the *Washington* monument was unveiled. In the decades that followed, he was forced to seek commissions outside of the New York area, in Washington, D.C., and South Carolina. As shall be discussed in the next chapters, he became increasingly involved with convincing the federal government to hire American sculptors for the decoration of the Capitol and helped shape the sculpture profession in new ways.

¹⁷⁵ Brown kept the title to his studio in Brooklyn for some time after moving to Newburgh, HKB to William Morris Davis, Newburgh, 4 September 1856, HKBB 869.

¹⁷⁶ Annette Blaugrund, *The Tenth Street Studio Building, Artist-Entrepreneurs from the Hudson River School to the American Impressionists* (Southampton, NY: Parrish Art Museum, 1997), 133.

Chapter IV: Beyond New York, Henry Kirke Brown in Washington, D.C.

The popular success of the *George Washington* in Union Square brought Henry Kirke Brown recognition but not financial stability. In fact, he lost money completing the statue, having underestimated the cost of casting the bronze. To make matters worse, the North was suffering financial trouble that came to a head in the Panic of 1857, which in turn had an adverse affect on the private sponsorship of public monuments.¹ Brown looked to Washington, D.C. and the federal government in search of monumental commissions.

At this time, the Capitol—the nation's most important civic building—was undergoing extensive renovations and plans were in place to commission large decorative sculpture components. One man, Captain Montgomery C. Meigs (1816-1892), Superintendent of the Capitol, had the authority to distribute these commissions and grant final approval. Recognizing the magnitude and significance of these commissions Brown sent multiple proposals to Meigs but repeatedly failed to secure a federal contract. This chapter closely examines the various proposals which Brown sent Meigs between the fall of 1855 and the spring of 1856. It places Brown's proposals in the context of those which Meigs had solicited earlier from Hiram Powers, Thomas Crawford, and Randolph Rogers. The chapter documents the process by which sculptors tried to secure federal commissions under Meigs. By bringing together Brown's correspondence and Meigs's letters and journal entries, this study provides both sides of the contentious relationship between the sculptor and his potential patron.

¹ The Panic of 1857 was driven by the high speculation that accompanied the quick expansion of the United States in the decade following the Mexican War. The East and West were most affected while the South remained relatively stable, L.C. Helderman, "Panic of 1857," in *Dictionary of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 207.

It was Brown's failure to win a commission from Meigs that drove him to join the fight for artists' rights and recognition. Brown temporarily relocated to the capital in 1857 and joined the local artists' club, the Washington Art Association, where he met many artists who shared his anger for the federal government's lack of support of the arts and Meigs's seemingly absolute authority over Capitol commissions. By now, Meigs was criticized by the national press for favoring foreign artists with commissions to decorate the Capitol. This section shows how Brown became active in the Washington Art Association's effort to replace Meigs with the country's first National Art Commission. It provides a history of this movement, which mobilized artists from across the nation, and discusses Brown's position as a liaison between artists and congressmen. It traces Brown's rise to power within the Washington Art Association, which won him the chairmanship of the National Art Commission to which President James Buchanan appointed him in 1859.

While the Washington Art Association and Brown had achieved their goal, the Art Commission proved largely ineffective; it could only make recommendations to Congress. The Commissioners, all of whom were artists, lacked the political savvy and power to produce anything more than a report cataloguing the art in the Capitol. Faced with an imminent civil war, Congress abolished the Art Commission in 1860. After providing an account of the Commission's report, this chapter considers how Brown's tenure on the Art Commission was a mixed blessing for the artist, as he was ill-compensated for his services while prevented from pursuing sculpture commissions for over a year.

The chapter concludes by considering the consequences of Brown's time in Washington, D.C. His sojourn away from New York left him worse off than ever. Within ten years of the dedication of the *George Washington*, Brown's professional life was in shambles. Although it would seem that he had accomplished little and that his career as a

sculptor was stymied, his time in Washington led to future commissions, and his dedication to the rights of American artists had a lasting effect on the federal government's support of the arts. Congress became aware of the importance of the art in the Capitol and took a more active stance in planning for additional commissions. To this end, the chapter argues that the establishment of National Statuary Hall by Congress in 1864 was influenced by the Art Commission of 1859 and by advice congressmen received from Henry Kirke Brown.

H.K. Brown, Montgomery C. Meigs, and the Commission for the House Pediment

With the *George Washington* nearly complete, Brown looked to Washington, D.C., hoping to acquire a commission for a sculpture for the federal Capitol. The Capitol was the nation's most important public art project. The oldest section was designed by William Thornton in 1793. With the addition of new states throughout the nineteenth century, the building continued to expand under the direction of several subsequent architects. Upon first seeing the Capitol in 1849, while sculpting a portrait of President Zachary Taylor for an Indian peace medal, Brown said:

... the Capitol was very imposing. It impressing me different from anything I have seen in America... It is a magnificent building... from all views of, and from it, you would fancy yourself in and about some splendid edifice in Europe... [it has] magnificent stair cases, porticoes, pediments and columns,-but not statuary.²

While most American artists aspired to win a federal commission, for Brown this dream had exceptional significance because he was so devoted to promoting the arts in America. Having established a reputation in New York, it seemed natural to Brown that he

² HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, 17 May 1849, HKBB 564. Examples of the Taylor peace medals are in the collection of the American Numismatic Society, New York, and the New-York Historical Society.

would win a commission for the Capitol, whose new design offered countless opportunities for artists.

In 1851, President Millard Fillmore appointed American architect Thomas Ustick Walter (1804-1887) to oversee the construction of a new cast iron dome and new Senate and House wings that more than doubled the size of the building giving it the overall appearance that it has today. In March 1853, President Franklin Pierce shifted authority over the construction to the War Department.³ Secretary of War Jefferson Davis in turn appointed Captain Montgomery Cunningham Meigs (1816-1892) of the Army Corps of Engineers, Superintendent of the Construction of the Extension and New Dome.

Captain Meigs had trained at West Point, where he had studied drawing under the American painter Robert Walter Weir. Although he came to be criticized as untrained in the arts and ill-suited to oversee the aesthetics of the Capitol, Meigs, an engineer with a personal interest in art, argued for extensive mural and sculpture programs for both the interior and exterior of the building.⁴ In fact, it was he who added orders for two sculptural pediments, instead of balustrades, as capstones to the new wings.⁵ Meigs turned to Edward Everett, former congressman and Secretary of State, for recommendations for American sculptors capable of executing these demanding commissions. Everett recommended Hiram Powers,

³ For a more complete history of the Capitol Extension project see Pamela Scott, *Temple of Liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Thomas P. Somma, *The Apotheosis of Democracy, 1908-1916: The Pediment for the House Wing of the United States Capitol* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995).

⁴ For an excellent account of Meigs' role in commissioning art see Barbara Wolanin, "Meigs the Art Patron," in *Montgomery C. Meigs and the Building of the Nation's Capitol*, ed. William C. Dickinson, Dean A. Herrin, and Donald R. Kennon (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001).

⁵ Somma, *The Apotheosis of Democracy, 1908-1916: The Pediment for the House Wing of the United States Capitol*, 17.

who was living in Florence, and Thomas Crawford, who was living in Rome. Meigs wrote to both of these artists in August 1853 to solicit proposals for the pediments and designs for bronze doors for the new wings.⁶ Powers declined to submit any proposals since he mistakenly believed that Meigs had interfered with the acceptance of his sculpture *America*, which the sculptor had hoped Congress would commission in marble.⁷ Crawford, on the other hand, sent Meigs designs by October 1853 for the Senate pediment and for a set of doors illustrating the life of Washington. Crawford's work and professionalism impressed Meigs who awarded the sculptor additional commissions. Between his first contact with Meigs in 1853 and his death in 1857, Crawford would complete designs for *The Progress of Civilization*—the Senate pediment, the House bronze doors, the Senate bronze doors, the Senate over door figures *Justice* and *History*, and the statue *Freedom* on top of the dome [Figure 4.01].⁸ Yet, despite his satisfaction with Crawford's work, Meigs did not award him the commission for the pediment for the House in deference to Everett Edward, who hoped to convince Powers to reconsider Meigs's invitation to submit a design. While Crawford progressed with his models for the Senate pediment between 1853 and 1855, other sculptors

⁶ Montgomery C. Meigs to Thomas Crawford and Hiram Powers, 18 August 1853, Montgomery C. Meigs, Letterbooks, Office of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D.C. (hereafter AOC), excerpt of the letter reprinted in Scott, *Temple of Liberty*, 103-104.

⁷ For more on the letters between Powers, Everett, and Meigs regarding *America* and the solicitation for a pediment proposal see Richard P. Wunder, *Hiram Powers: Vermont Sculptor, 1805-1873*, 2 vols. (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991), 1:282-297.

⁸ After Crawford's premature death in 1857, William H. Rinehart, an American sculptor living in Rome, executed the models for the Senate and House bronze doors between 1863 and 1868, according to Crawford's original designs. For a history and description of Crawford's designs for the Capitol see *Art in the United States Capitol* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1978), 346-349, 354-355, 363.

approached Meigs in pursuit of the commission for the House pediment.⁹ Even the great French sculptor Antoine Etex (1808-1888), who had sculpted two high reliefs for the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, contacted Meigs about this commission. It was much too expensive and visible a commission to award to a European artist, and Meigs wrote in an early draft of his reply to Etex, “the field for art in America has hitherto been so limited that it would be perhaps hardly generous to our young and struggling artists to give to a foreigner one of the first two Pediments ever decorated under the auspices of the Government.”¹⁰ Meigs believed that, among the Americans, no one other than Powers or Crawford would do the project justice and so he kept the commission open with the hope that Powers would eventually submit a proposal, which he never did.

Seeing himself as professionally competitive with his old acquaintances Powers and Crawford, Brown traveled to Washington to meet Meigs in November 1855. By this time he had proved himself locally as a sculptor of monuments in New York, yet he still coveted national recognition and a federal commission. Meigs probably knew of Brown’s reputation through James T. Ames, the proprietor of the Ames Manufacturing Company, where Brown cast his sculptures. Ames visited Meigs just one week before Brown’s arrival, hoping to convince the Superintendent to hire his foundry for the numerous casting projects generated by the Capitol Extension. In his journal, Meigs wrote, “[Ames] wishes to do some things in

⁹ This history of the commissions for the pediments is summarized from Somma, *The Apotheosis of Democracy, 1908-1916: The Pediment for the House Wing of the United States Capitol*.

¹⁰ Meigs to E. Etex, Washington, D.C., 6 August 1855, file “Pediments, House, Sculptors Requesting Commissions,” AOC.

the Capitol in the way of bronze cast. I showed him the designs for the doors. He said he would be much pleased to make one of them.”¹¹

Brown arrived just after Ames and presented Meigs with letters of introduction from the author Thaddeus Norris and the painter Daniel Huntington.¹² Huntington, who had known Brown since their time together in Italy, wrote of Brown as “my friend... the sculptor with whose reputation you are already well acquainted.”¹³ Brown brought examples of his work, including a daguerreotype of a bas-relief from the *Clinton* monument. Meigs’s first impression of Brown was, “He talks like an artist. Wished a commission.”¹⁴ Cautious to select the best sculptor for the Capitol’s enormous and expensive commissions, Meigs “told him I could not give a commission for a statue and that I might perhaps venture to give one for a bas relief in the stairway.”¹⁵ Brown toured the building with Meigs in search of possible locations to place sculptures.¹⁶ They looked at stairways and again discussed the House pediment and the “possibility of making a bronze door in the north end of the old

¹¹ 1 November 1855, (A-729), Book A, vol. II, p. 945, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers* (Washington, D.C.: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress).

¹² Brown likely acquired Norris’s letter while stopping in Philadelphia enroute from New York to Washington. Norris and Brown had been mutual friends of William Morris Davis since June 1853, HKB first mentions Norris in a letter to Lydia Brown, 12 June 1853, HKBB 644. In his letter to Captain Meigs, Norris wrote, “Besides the Fine Arts and Mechanics my friend Brown knows something of fishing. And if a man’s a good angler what more can I say in his favor,” Thaddeus Norris to Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, Philadelphia, 6 November 1855, file “Sculptors, Henry Kirke Brown,” AOC.

¹³ Daniel Huntington to Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, 31 October 1855, Record Group 43, Capitol Extension 1851-1874, “file Sculptors, Henry Kirke Brown,” AOC.

¹⁴ 7 November 1855, (A-735), Book A, vol. II, p. 953, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 7 November 1855, HKBB 816.

building where it communicates with the Senate, and for this I [Meigs] have promised him tracings.”¹⁷ According to Brown, this would have been an eight paneled bronze door.¹⁸ Earlier that same year, in March 1855, Meigs had solicited from Randolph Rogers (1825-1892) designs for the doors for the eastern entrance to the Capitol Rotunda. Rogers won the commission and sculpted the bronze doors, which consisted of the tympanum *The Landing of Columbus in the New World* and an elaborate series of panels and figures depicting the life of Christopher Columbus. An American sculptor who spent most of his life living in Florence and Rome, Rogers based his composition for the Rotunda doors on Lorenzo Ghiberti’s famous fifteenth-century doors for the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence.¹⁹ If Meigs really intended to commission Brown for a separate set of doors, Brown was certainly expected to produce a design that was at least comparable to those by Rogers. In addition, Meigs “promised to give [Brown] a tracing of the stairs and one of the pediment.”²⁰ At the conclusion of this visit, Meigs warily assessed that Brown “seems to be an artist of promise, but he has not yet the reputation of Crawford or Powers.”²¹

By November 14, Brown had returned to his studio in Brooklyn, eager to begin designing proposals for Meigs’s consideration. He had received the “tracings of Section

¹⁷ 7 November 1855, (A-735), Book A, vol. II, p. 954, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*.

¹⁸ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 7 November 1855, HKBB 815.

¹⁹ For a complete history of Rogers’s doors see “The Columbus Doors: 1855-1860,” in Millard F. Rogers, Jr., *Randolph Rogers: American Sculptor in Rome* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1971), 41-68; *Art in the United States Capitol*, 343-345.

²⁰ 7 November 1855, (A-735), Book A, vol. II, p. 954, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

through Main Stairways, Elevation Projections, etc.” from Meigs, but wrote to the Captain that he still awaited a tracing of the door. Cautious to integrate his proposals with the existing art of the Capitol, Brown asked Meigs for “a list of the subjects being treated, including statues and bass (sic) reliefs for the Capitol, as I would not like to tread upon any one else’s ground.”²² Meigs sent him the tracings for the door and invited him to submit a bid for masks to decorate the keystones of the Post Office, which was also under Meigs’s purview.²³ Brown promptly replied, proposing to sculpt the models for the bronze masks for the keystones for \$300 each, his “price for a life size bust.”²⁴ Meigs balked at the figure and wrote in his journal, “As there are nine of them, this would be \$2,700 for the modeling alone, and I cannot think of putting them at any such price.”²⁵ Meigs argued that Brown’s bid was out of proportion with the \$4,500 salary of Walter, the Architect of the Capitol Extension, as well as with Meigs’s own salary of \$1,800. Meigs concluded, “As long as American artists ask such prices, they must blame themselves if they do not find much patronage. I must try Butti, the Italian... I think he would make the models each in 3 days at \$6 per day.”²⁶

This exchange illustrates how differently Meigs and Brown regarded the task of “decorating” federal buildings. Whereas Brown saw the masks for the keystones as nine

²² HKB to Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, Brooklyn, 14 November 1855, AOC, Ford Archives.

²³ HKB to Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, Brooklyn, 7 December 1855, AOC, Ford Archives.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ 8 December 1855, Book A, vol. II, p. 996, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*.

²⁶ Ibid.

faces, each comparable to a unique portrait bust, Meigs saw them as so many square feet of space that should be tastefully ornamented at a reasonable rate of so many square feet per hour. Indeed, Meigs once wrote, "The works of art in the Capitol extension are decorations, not pictures, generally."²⁷ Meigs was an engineer, and his primary responsibility was to see to the completion of the exterior and interior of the Capitol. Because he took a personal interest in the arts, he devoted much effort to refining the aesthetic appearance of the Capitol. Indeed, had it not been for Meigs, the Capitol would have far fewer sculptures and murals than it does. He had a major impact on what even today's visitor to the Capitol sees. Nevertheless, Meigs wanted the art to be produced efficiently and at a reasonable cost. Artists were important to the completion of the Capitol, but they offered a skill that Meigs would have liked to have been able to measure and price in the manner that he could do with services rendered by a stone mason or bricklayer.

Perhaps testing Brown's efficiency or to get a sense of his aesthetics, Meigs sent him a bas-relief for framing, for which the sculptor designed a wooden foot.²⁸ But this small order did little to diminish the growing tension between Brown and Meigs. Brown wanted assurance that he was not wasting his time building costly models if he was unlikely to win a major commission.

In spite of his lukewarm reception from Meigs, Brown designed a proposal and asked for an appointment to display his model reticently, stating he wanted to "let the design

²⁷ 15 January 1859, (C-655), p. 2440, Ibid.

²⁸ HKB to Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, Brooklyn, 15 December 1855, AOC, Ford Archives.

speak for itself.”²⁹ He visited Meigs on Christmas Eve 1855, bringing with him photographs of his models [Figure 4.02]. The composition consisted of a central allegorical female figure, *America*, wearing a cloak with stars and supplicated by a naked, kneeling, male figure [Figure 4.03]. Flanking her on both sides were genre figures that stereotypically represented different aspects of American life. On her proper left side were a capitalist, a sailor with a globe, a boy with a toy boat [Figure 4.04], an African American slave sitting on a bale of cotton [Figure 4.05], and a trapper with his dog. On her proper right side were a pair of army and a naval officers, a farmer with a plow, a fisherman repairing a net [Figure 4.06], and a hunter spearing a bear. In Brown’s eyes, one of this composition’s strengths was that its subject did not “in any way conflict with those (sculptures) already adopted [for the Capitol],” by which he must have meant Crawford’s pediment for the Senate.³⁰

Upon seeing the model, Meigs said little to Brown directly but harshly criticized the work in his journal. He was not impressed with Brown’s modeling abilities, but his biggest condemnation was that the figures were not connected with each other, “They merely fill up spaces as so many separate statues.”³¹ Meigs was greatly frustrated by the lack of American talent. Brown’s formulaic composition was not strong enough to merit a prominent location on the exterior of the most significant building in the country. This was Brown’s first attempt at a sculpture in-the-round composition of more than two figures, and the pediment was a large space to fill. In trying to distance his work from European precedents, Brown

²⁹ HKB to Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, Brooklyn, 7 December 1855, AOC, Ford Archives.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ 24 December 1855, (A-780), Book A, vol. II, p. 1016, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*.

struggled to invent an American allegory. He presented the sculptural equivalent of American genre painting; each figure represents a “type” or character from American life. However, his composition lacked both the mythology that successfully carried most European allegories and the narrative quality that brings together the characters in a genre painting. Brown’s composition paled in comparison to that of Powers, but there were no other sculptors in the United States who in a better position to compete. Rather than accept Brown’s mediocre composition, Meigs left the pediment vacant during his tenure. Meigs allowed Brown to revise and resubmit his proposal, though he doubted after seeing this first composition that that Brown would succeed. With few American sculptors to choose from, he noted in his journal, “I think I must write to Crawford and ask him to submit a design... that I may have some things to fall back upon.”³²

The only comment Meigs made to Brown was to remove specific figures from the composition, namely, the slave and the officers. Although not an active abolitionist, Meigs was against slavery and even went on to serve as Quartermaster General in the Union Army during the Civil War. However, Meigs knew that he could not expect Jefferson Davis to even consider a design that included a slave. As Curator of the Capitol Barbara Wolanin has pointed out, Meigs “was sensitive to the need for his superior’s approval.”³³ Sectionalist debates about the legality of slavery in new territories and states divided Congress and the nation in the 1850s. Davis and Meigs tried to avoid even the slightest references to slavery in selecting art for the Capitol. In fact, Davis asked Crawford to remove the liberty cap from his sculpture *Freedom*, fearing that it might be misconstrued as a comment on slavery in

³² 24 December 1855, (A-780), Book A, vol. II, p. 1018, Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

³³ Wolanin, “Meigs the Art Patron,” 143.

America.³⁴ In his journal Meigs wrote, “I told Mr. Brown that his Negro must absolutely go out. The feeling of the country at this time is such as to lead to innumerable squibs if it is put in.”³⁵ Brown’s notes on the meeting recorded that Meigs, “placed his finger on the (figure) of the slave... [and said] ‘I do not think it would do to represent a slave in the pediment, it is a sore subject upon which there is a good deal of feeling and I think no southerner would consent to it’.”³⁶ Brown left Washington “feeling a little as though I had also kneeled to slavery.”³⁷

Brown remained under the impression that Meigs liked the composition except for the slave figure and wrote in January 1856 to William Morris Davis, an abolitionist friend and a future member of Congress, assessing that Meigs “was acting under a restraint” and forced to “skulk and dodge” because “friends of slavery and their opponents are more numerically even now than formerly.”³⁸

While revising his proposal for the pediment, Brown tried to stay in touch with Meigs by inquiring once again about the commission for the doors, asking if they would have bas-reliefs on both sides.³⁹ Meigs replied tersely, as if to discourage Brown from

³⁴ For more on the removal of the liberty cap from Crawford’s first design for Freedom see Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 193-195.

³⁵ 24 December 1855, (A-780), Book A, vol. II, p. 1017, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*.

³⁶ HKB, undated [circa December 1855], HKBB 826.

³⁷ Ibid., 826-A.

³⁸ HKB to William Morris Davis, Brooklyn, 7 January 1856, HKBB 832.

³⁹ HKB to Montgomery C. Meigs, Brooklyn, 21 January 1856, AOC, Ford Archives.

offering additional proposals, that the doors would almost always be open and that their south side would not be well lit when the doors were closed.⁴⁰

By January, Brown had modified his design for the House pediment and expected to send photographs of it soon to Meigs.⁴¹ The sculptor regarded his new composition as more developed and noted that he had replaced the slave figure with a miner and replaced the military officers with a figure casting his vote into a ballot box [Figure 4.07]. Brown wrote that the ballot box was “a very distinguishing feature of our country and the symbol of equal rights.”⁴² He explained to his friend Davis, “if [the ballot box is] regarded aright, [it] will alarm our brethren of the South more than my poor sleeping Slave.”⁴³ Voting therefore was intrinsically bound to the issue of slavery, and the ballot box was a more abstract nod to the legislature of slavery. In the decades prior to this composition, seven territories became states. In each case, voting, either by popular sovereignty or by Congress, determined the status as a slave or free state. The voting figure was strategically placed just next to the crouching, bedraggled figure supplicating the allegorical *America*. Brown identified the kneeling figure as “a poor and distressed foreigner,” but perhaps it also represented the slave. After all, many abolitionists regarded the black population as “foreign” and advocated the exportation of freed slaves to Liberia. Thus, reading from left to right, this section of the pediment paired a figure in distress with a figure acting to change the cause of this trauma.

⁴⁰ Montgomery C. Meigs to HKB, Washington, D.C., 22 January 1856, Transcribed from Meigs Letterbooks, Letters Sent 1856, AOC.

⁴¹ HKB to William Morris Davis, Brooklyn, 27 January 1856, HKBB 831.

⁴² HKB to Montgomery C. Meigs, Brooklyn, 12 February, 13 February 1856, AOC, Ford Archives.

⁴³ HKB to William Morris Davis, Brooklyn, 27 January 1856, HKBB 832.

Brown finally sent the photographs to Meigs in February 1856, attributing its delay to inclement weather that prevented his photographer making a print of the new model. Uncharacteristic of his earlier policy of letting his design speak for itself, Brown included a lengthy descriptive letter, perhaps since he could not personally present his revised model to Meigs.⁴⁴ Not only did Brown identify each figure, he also offered his general philosophy on the role of the American artist. Most important to Brown was avoiding the blind imitation of European art and the wholesale borrowing from classical mythology. He wrote:

... my country is no myth in my eyes and ... I had no course to use unfamiliar symbols to express my ideas of it. But have sought the America of today. Surrounded with the natural interests which stimulate our [citizens?, illegible] to action... My feeling is that all Art to become of any national importance or interest must grow out of the feelings and habits of the people and that we have no need of the symbols or [conventions ?, illegible] of other nations to express ourselves. Our country has a rich and beautiful history to illustrate... and every American artist should endeavor to infuse into his work all the vitality and national feeling in his power. That when future generations shall look back upon his work they may see that he has expressed himself with truthfulness and honesty.⁴⁵

In Brown's mind, America was a collective of labors, industries, and professions. He thought his pediment captured "this pacific idea of America... as showing favoritism to no class. She holds out no prizes to any but distributes equal helping to all trades and professions."⁴⁶ Essentially, the figures in the pediment composition represented geographically specific professions across the nation including the California and Appalachian miner, the Midwestern or Eastern Indian fur trapper, and the East Coast fisherman. Had Brown included the slave, the composition would have depicted men from

⁴⁴ HKB to Montgomery C. Meigs, Brooklyn, 12 February 1856, 13 February 1856, AOC, Ford Archives.

⁴⁵ 12 February 1856, Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

three races. The theme of discovery, expansion, and conquest was explicitly represented by several of the figures, most innocently by the, “American boy, frank and brave with his little boat which he evidently intends to launch upon the first convenient sheet of water. He is the promise of commerce and navigation, the perpetual renewal of the hope of all.”⁴⁷ Next to the boy is the “old weather beaten navigator and discoverer demonstrating with globe and maps the characteristics and resources of the countries he has found and exhibiting a specimen of [animal ?, *illegible*] to the statesman who stands attentively considering his propositions.”⁴⁸ If the boy exemplifies curious exploration, then the weather-beaten navigator speaks to the interest of manifest destiny, which, with the annexation of Texas and the southwest through the Mexican War of only eight years prior, was an issue of contemporary importance. Hand in hand with exploration, expansion, and manifest destiny is the idea of progress through industry. Surrounding the image of *America* are an anvil, a wheel, and a hammer, which, according to Brown, stood for the “representation of the mechanic arts.”⁴⁹ It is worth noting that this homage to industry includes the artisan, probably a reference to Brown’s commitment to developing the industry of bronze casting.

Brown sent the photographs and description with Ames, who was once again on his way to show the Captain examples of his foundry’s casting work, including “several of an eagle, a bear, a dog and some others by H.K. Brown.”⁵⁰ Meigs commented in his journal that the casting examples were impressive and the works “well done, though not with quite

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ 20 February 1856, (B-75), Book B, vol. III, p. 1102, Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

so much spirit as I think might be given to such works.”⁵¹ Indeed, Meigs criticized Brown’s work on several other occasions. After seeing a photograph of Brown’s *De Witt Clinton*, Meigs harshly wrote, “It is well cast but a bad statue.”⁵² While visiting New York, Meigs said of Brown’s *Washington*, “I think it is a good figure, but I do not find in it any of the moving effect which the efforts of great genius are expected to produce.”⁵³ We can therefore appreciate Meigs’s hesitation to open Brown’s second pediment design, “I do not like to take it up to examine, as I do not believe I should like it. He could not so change what he had before as to put into it the spirit and the connected story it wanted.”⁵⁴

Meigs delayed a full month before showing Brown’s revised proposal and descriptive letter to Jefferson Davis. When he finally did send the material to Davis, Meigs included his own opinion, “I regret to say, that I do not think it is of such preeminent merit that I can advise its execution in marble.”⁵⁵ On March 26, Davis instructed Meigs to decline Brown’s proposal, “in terms most acceptable to the artist.”⁵⁶ By April, Brown had still not heard from Meigs. With his *Washington* monument scheduled for dedication in Union Square on July 4th, Brown was eager to secure a commission for the Capitol and quite bluntly asked

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² 1 November 1855, (A-729), Book A, vol. II, p. 945, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*.

⁵³ 16 July 1856, (B-228), Book B, vol. III, p. 1300, Ibid.

⁵⁴ 20 February 1856, (B-75), Book B, vol. III, p. 1102, Ibid.

⁵⁵ Montgomery C. Meigs to Jefferson Davis, Washington, D.C., 20 March 1856, Architect of the Capitol, Ford Archives.

⁵⁶ Jefferson Davis to Montgomery Meigs, Washington, D.C., 26 March 1856, HKBB 832-D, and Architect of the Capitol, Ford Archives.

Meigs about the pediment, “Shall I have it to do?”⁵⁷ Though penned on March 31, 1856, Meigs’s reply of a non-negotiable “no,” had yet to arrive.⁵⁸

Emotionally overwrought by this rejection, Brown wrote to his friend Brownley Brown, referring to himself in the third person:

H.K.B. is not to figure nor highfallute [sic] in the Capt'l of his country... at all this poor Brown pulls his hat down entirely over his eyes— and looks inwardly and outwardly, at his own soul and at other men’s souls and he weighs things in the true balance and adjusts relative values in his own mind.⁵⁹

Brown was shocked that he did not receive the commission. Because he had always been such a fervent and outspoken advocate of an American sculpture tradition, he could not understand why he was not best suited for a commission at the Capitol. The fact that Meigs continued to favor Powers and Crawford, both of whom were still living in Italy, reinforced Brown’s belief that sculptors in America needed more support, especially from their federal government.

The Washington Art Association’s “Memorial to Congress”

Brown still hoped to make a professional debut in Washington, although he never again contacted Meigs on this matter. Other projects drew him back to Washington and,

⁵⁷ HKB to Montgomery Meigs, Brooklyn, 1 April 1856, file “Sculptor, Henry Kirke Brown,” AOC.

⁵⁸ Meigs refers to his reply letter in his journal, 25 May 1858, (C-254), Book C, vol. V., p. 2154-2155, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*. Although Meigs immediately solicited Thomas Crawford again for a proposal for the pediment, the House pediment would remain vacant until 1916 when Paul Wayland Bartlett’s *Apotheosis of Democracy* was installed. He wrote to Crawford on this matter 3 May 1856, (B-189), Book B, vol. III, p. 1248, *Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers*, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

⁵⁹ HKB to Brownley Brown, [circa] April 1856, HKBB 841-841a.

eventually, further south, to Columbia, South Carolina. Around October 1857, Brown's New York patron, Charles Leupp, introduced the artist to Thomas Green Clemson (1807-1888), who was looking for someone to sculpt a monument of his father-in-law, John C. Calhoun for South Carolina.⁶⁰ Perhaps in pursuit of the Calhoun commission, or perhaps because of the scarcity of monument commissions in the North due to the economic Panic of 1857, Brown temporarily moved to Washington, D.C., in early February 1858.⁶¹ While he did not win a commission for a monument to Calhoun, he became friends with Clemson, who lived in Bladensburg, Maryland, near Washington, D.C., and other politicians in the capital.⁶² [Figure 4.08]

As he had done in New York, Brown joined the local artists' organization—the Washington Art Association (WAA), founded in 1856 under the leadership of the sculptor Horatio Stone (1808-1875).⁶³ Brown met with Stone soon after arriving in Washington in February 1858 and accepted a position on the Board of Management of the WAA.⁶⁴ Although this was an organization local to Washington, it attracted national support from artists. In one speech to the WAA, Stone said, "Our constitution provided that artisans and

⁶⁰ Brown wrote "I shall expect to go to Washington in the course of a few weeks to see about making a statue of Calhoun, for the chivalrous of South Carolina," HKB to William Morris Davis, Newburgh, 27 November 1856, HKBB 874. Clemens stayed at Leupp's home while visiting New York and met with Brown during his stay, HKB to William Morris Davis, Newburgh, 12 October 1857, HKBB 913.

⁶¹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 5 February 1858, HKBB 928.

⁶² "Thomas Green Clemson," Allen Johnson, Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* vol. II (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 200-201.

⁶³ For a history of the WAA, which survived only from 1856 to 1860, see Josephine Cobb, "The Washington Art Association: An Exhibition Record, 1856-1860," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society*, (1969, ?): 122-190.

⁶⁴ M.I. McCleny to HKB, Washington, D.C., 9 February 1858, HKBB 939.

citizens of every profession and vocation throughout the Union... shall be eligible to election as members of the Association."⁶⁵ The WAA held annual exhibitions, more importantly it was an activist group that lobbied Congress to do more for American artists.

The WAA's main grievance was the federal government's practice of commissioning foreign artists to decorate the Capitol, a policy of which Meigs was a major proponent. This practice increasingly came under fire from the press. When the congressional Joint Committee on the Library hired the French artist Horace Vernet "to execute a battle-piece for the new Capitol Extension in 1857," the *New York Evening Post* recommended the commission instead go "to an inferior American painter [because] his work will at least serve to mark a stage in the progress of American art."⁶⁶ The *New York Times* suggested, "It is because the Capitol is an affair of national pride that none but men of our own nation should be employed in embellishing it."⁶⁷ The *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* criticized Meig's authority specifically: "he has not the taste nor the cultivation which might entitle him to absolute and unquestioned direction of the decorations of the buildings."⁶⁸

It is interesting that the criteria identifying an artist as American—a non-recent immigrant of Anglo descent—are xenophobic by today's standard. In an article in the *New York Express*, the Washington correspondent classified dozens of artists as either American or foreign based on the phonetics of their "euphonious names." Of seventy-four names, the

⁶⁵ Horatio Stone, *Inaugural Address, Delivered February 24, 1857, and an Address on National Art before the Washington Art Association by Horatio Stone, February 10, 1858* (Washington, D.C.: Cornelius Wendell, 1858), 30.

⁶⁶ "Do We Want French Pictures for the Capitol," *Evening Post*, 12 January 1857, 2.

⁶⁷ "How to Encourage American Art," *New York Times*, 4 March 1857, 4.

⁶⁸ "Art-Desecration of the Capitol," *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* (March-June 1858): 134-136.

correspondent argued, “but twelve can, by possibility, be pleaded as Americans.”⁶⁹ Brown and his wife subscribed to the same opinion on foreign artists and their place in the Capitol. Ironically, Brown had included a figure of a foreigner, in supplication at the feet of America in his proposal for the House pediment, but he did not want to compete with foreign artists for commissions. Lydia Brown supported her husband’s opinion and scoffed at Constantino Brumidi (1805-1880), the leading muralist in the Capitol, who was born in Italy but became a naturalized United States citizen.⁷⁰ Of Brumidi she wrote, “this whitewashed ‘American Citizen’ is still an Italian scene painter.”⁷¹ She criticized his work as too colorful and flamboyant, “This gilding [sic] and paint and paint in endless profusion belongs not (to) America, it is barbaric. Sobriety is the instinctive preference of the American mind—look at the absence of color in dress... in fact everything which an American touches, he simplifies.”⁷²

Enraged Anglo-American artists found their public voice in the WAA, which Stone stated had “a high and patriotic purpose to accomplish” in convincing Congress to hire more American artists for federal commissions. He bemoaned the damage Meigs had done by decorating the Capitol, “It is a most lamentable consideration that this great opportunity, which occurs but once in the lifetime of nations, should have been so nearly thrown away

⁶⁹ “American Artists at the New Capitol,” *New York Express* [dates and page unknown] copied in Meigs Journal Clippings, C221, Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers, Manuscript Division, LC.

⁷⁰ For a comprehensive biography of Brumidi and his murals in the Capitol see, Barbara Wolanin, *Constantino Brumidi: Artist of the Capitol* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998).

⁷¹ Lydia Brown to HKB, Newburgh, 16 February 1858, HKBB 948.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 952.

... by placing the decoration of the public works in charge of engineers instead of artists.”⁷³

To draw national support for their cause, the WAA planned a Congress of Artists in the late spring of 1858, to which it invited American artists and delegates from all “the Art Institutions of the United States.”⁷⁴

Though new to the WAA, Brown offered valuable access to and support from the much larger and more established artist communities in New York City and Philadelphia. He wrote to his old friend Henry Peters Gray, asking him to organize a contingent of New York artists to support the Congress of Artists.⁷⁵ Gray replied that he had shown Brown’s letter to Asher B. Durand and that the National Academy of Design planned to hold a council to determine how best to represent the New York art community at the Congress of Artists.⁷⁶ Brown feared “the Artists of N.Y. will not help [the WAA] much. If a half a dozen of them had joined together and sent me on their views, well expressed, it would have done more than all the cumbersome [sic] respectability of the Academy.”⁷⁷ Eventually, many artists from New York joined the cause.

⁷³ Stone, *Inaugural Address, Delivered February 24, 1857, and an Address on National Art before the Washington Art Association by Horatio Stone, February 10, 1858*, 27.

⁷⁴ Brown signed the invitation, along with fourteen other artists including Matthew Brady, George P. Healy, and Brown’s protégé Larkin Mead. A copy of the WAA’s resolution to hold the convention is found on HKBB 961 A.

⁷⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 13 February 1858, HKBB 941, and 18 February 1858, HKBB 953.

⁷⁶ Henry Peters Gray to Henry Kirke Brown, New York, 21 February 1858, HKBB 956.

⁷⁷ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 5 March 1858, HKBB 976.

The WAA held its first Congress of Artists— also called the National Artists Convention— at the end of March 1858.⁷⁸ Brown served as the WAA's Vice President during this important meeting.⁷⁹ American artists from around the nation convened and attended a lecture series at the Smithsonian Institution that included speeches by Brownlee Brown, Henry Bellows, and Rembrandt Peale.⁸⁰ The most important outcome of this convention was the "Memorial" to Congress, a letter explaining the grievances of American artists regarding the commissioning of art for the Capitol. Over one-hundred twenty-seven artists, collectors, printers, and American art enthusiasts from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations signed it. The names included the Philadelphia painters Thomas Sully and Rembrandt Peale, the Hudson River School painters Albert Bierstadt and Sanford Gifford, and the Philadelphia architect William Furness, Jr.⁸¹ According to Brown it included "almost all the Artists in the U.S."⁸²

The "Memorial" began by lamenting the lack of attention American art had thus far received from federal legislation and upholding that national history could provide rich material for illustration by American artists. It argued that the time was ripe for the United States to "assume a position in the world of art as enviable and exalted as that which we have attained in our social and political relations."⁸³ The "Memorial" was a self-proclaimed

⁷⁸ The convention began on 20 March 1858, HKBB 961 A.

⁷⁹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 24 March 1858, HKBB 979-980.

⁸⁰ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 21 March 1858, 979.

⁸¹ The "Memorial" is reprinted on HKBB 988-991.

⁸² HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 28 March 1858, HKBB 983.

⁸³ "To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States," HKBB 986.

coming of age of American artists.⁸⁴ The art journal *The Crayon* hailed the convention as “an indication that Art is to be a power in the land.”⁸⁵

The artists proposed that Congress establish a national art commission, “who shall be the channels for the distribution of all appropriations to be made by Congress for art purposes; and who shall secure to artists an intelligent and unbiased adjudication upon the designs they may present for the embellishment of the national buildings.”⁸⁶ The WAA had specific ideas about the structure of the proposed commission. In February 1858, Brown wrote to his friend William Morris Davis:

... we want a committee appointed by the President of five persons who shall form a separate Bureau, a Bureau of the fine Arts where all works of art, and designs shall be submitted and considered, adopted if worthy, and rejected if not worthy, so that the Government shall be rid of imposters, of any sort. Capt. Meigs I find, seeing this thing will eventually be accomplished is now trying to get himself in as one of the Board of Managers, or Committee... but we are not to be cheated this time I hope by getting any of the old broom into the soup.⁸⁷

American artists might have agitated Congress to oust Meigs, but only Congress itself had the power to pass the legislation effectively to remove Meigs from his position and

⁸⁴ Stone expressed this in one of his speeches, “If the time has come for the beginning of a more consistent, harmonious, and expressive national art; if the national attainments and sentiments have reached the maturity requiring it, then the national artists who may claim to have participated in the general development will feel disposed to exercise the privilege... of suggesting how the national sentiments should be imbodyed [sic], as well as sharing in the labor thereof,” “Inaugural Address” in Stone, *Inaugural Address, Delivered February 24, 1857, and an Address on National Art before the Washington Art Association by Horatio Stone, February 10, 1858*, 26.

⁸⁵ “Art on the Capitol, Washington, D.C.,” *Crayon* 5 (October 1858): 296.

⁸⁶ House of Representatives, 35th Congress, 2nd Session, Report No. 198, “American Artists,” 3 March 1859, Appendix A reprinted as “To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States,” HKBB 986.

⁸⁷ HKB to William Morris Davis, 25 February 1858, Washington, D.C., HKBB 969-970.

establish a national art commission. The effort became a two-pronged one led simultaneously, but separately, by American artists under the aegis of the WAA/National Artists Convention and Meigs's political enemies in Congress. Brown endeared himself to both camps and became one of the key figures in the endeavor to oust Meigs.

Establishing a National Art Commission⁸⁸

Meigs's control of the Capitol began to slip after the election of President James Buchanan, whose term began on March 4, 1857. Buchanan replaced Meigs's supervisor, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis, with John Floyd. Davis moved to the Senate where he continued to support Meigs until 1861, when his state, Mississippi, seceded from the Union.⁸⁹ While Davis had shielded Meigs from criticism from politicians, Floyd left Meigs vulnerable to attack.

The first blow came from New York Representative George Taylor, who introduced a bill to the House in February 1858 calling for the removal of Meigs.⁹⁰ Unfortunately, the artists and the politicians did not, at this point, communicate with each other despite their

⁸⁸ This history of the Art Commission is synthesized from three primary sources: the Congressional Record, Brown's correspondence, and Meigs' journals. For an early history of the Art Commission see "The Artists' Protest" in Lillian B. Miller, *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966; reprint, 1974), 79-84.

⁸⁹ Ironically, Floyd and Davis both went on to serve the Confederacy, while Meigs served the Union Army.

⁹⁰ House Proceedings of 9 February 1858 in the Congressional Globe, 35-1 p. 638 printed in "Documentary History of Art Commissions 1858-1911, Compiled for the Office of the Superintendent of the U.S. Capitol," AOC. Taylor's bill broadly proposed, "no Army officer shall hereafter be detailed for civil duty except where directed by law," and was defeated in the House of Representatives 126 to 56 votes, 28 May 1858, (C-289), Book C, vol. 5, Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs, p. 2162.

common goal to drive out Meigs. In a letter to his wife, Brown criticized Taylor for introducing the bill “without consulting the artists or waiting to know anything of their wishes.”⁹¹

Despite Brown’s opinion of Taylor, the two became closely acquainted, and Taylor became an ardent supporter of Brown, helping him to obtain a studio in the Capitol during the spring of 1858 and procure several commissions for portrait busts of congressmen.⁹² Although Brown would have preferred to sculpt major public commissions, he quickly realized the benefits of modeling portraits of members of Congress and used these sessions to promote his and Taylor’s cause. While sitting for their portraits, these politicians were obliged to listen to Brown’s arguments about the federal support for American artists. For example, between 19 February and 24 February 1858, Vice President John Cabell Breckinridge visited Brown’s studio in the Capitol to model for a portrait bust, a commission that Taylor had arranged [Figure 4.09].⁹³ Brown cleverly took advantage of this encounter with Breckinridge to explain how American artists, like himself, had been robbed of Capitol commissions because Meigs had hired foreign artists. Breckinridge responded by saying he had “never thought of it before, but it was great injustice to the artists of the country” and asked Brown to compile a petition of signatures of the aggrieved American artists.⁹⁴ Brown

⁹¹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 28 March 1858, HKBB 982.

⁹² Among these commissions were busts of the Speaker of the House James Lawrence Orr and Vice President John Cabell Breckinridge, HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 13 February 1858, HKBB 939, 941 and 18 February, HKBB 953.

⁹³ George Taylor also arranged a subscription to raise the money to have the bust cut in marble; he gave the marble bust of John C. Breckinridge to the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1873 (accession number 73.1). The bust is presently on permanent exhibit in the main entrance hall of the museum.

⁹⁴ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 24 February 1858, HKBB 968.

became a strong link between the artists and the politicians, a role that would later make him a natural candidate for the National Art Commission. He expressed his hopes to his wife, “the artist of the country shall be recognized by the Government as a profession, that they shall have a voice, like all other good citizens.”⁹⁵

Taylor’s bill faltered in the legislature but it prepared Congress to consider the WAA’s “Memorial to Congress” and placed Meigs under greater scrutiny. By the end of March 1858, Brown could write that congressmen had “signified their wish to give us a hearing (that is) myself and the Dr. [Stone] and as soon as they find it convenient we shall appear before them and present our Memorial & Resolutions, together with the names of almost all the Artists in the U.S. and they will doubtless report on our Bill instead of that of Mr. Taylors [sic].”⁹⁶ Ultimately, the artists had to rely on Humphrey Marshall, a Representative from Kentucky to present “The Memorial” to the House on May 31, 1858.⁹⁷ Marshall also presented a revised version of Taylor’s bill. Several days of lively congressional sessions followed, in which the Representatives voiced their personal opinions on the aesthetics of the Capitol. Brown’s friend, Horace Maynard, a House Representative from Tennessee spoke on the importance of hiring Americans, “It may be that American artists are not equal to the artists of the Old World; but at least they are such as we have. They are

⁹⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 30 May 1858, HKBB 1009.

⁹⁶ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 28 March 1858, HKBB 982-983.

⁹⁷ “The Memorial” was written in March 1858 and addressed to both the House and the Senate. Its presentation to Congress is described in “Artists’ Commission,” *Congressional Globe*, 31 May 1858, reprinted in HKBB 984.

the best we have.”⁹⁸ Taylor took the opportunity to criticize Meigs publicly as “unfit to direct the decoration of this Capitol.”⁹⁹ The House appointed a Select Committee on Art on June 1, 1858, to further consider the “Memorial” and the appropriateness and manner of establishing an Art Commission. Speaker of the House Laurence Massillon of South Carolina, appointed to the committee Humphrey Marshall of Kentucky, Lawrence W. Keitt and George Taylor of New York, Edward Joy Morris of Pennsylvania, and George H. Pendleton of Ohio.¹⁰⁰

Immediately, Taylor and Maynard, blocked further expenditure on the decoration of the Capitol in the appropriations bill for the Capitol extension.¹⁰¹ Taylor called much of the art of the Capitol “insignificant tinsel work,” bemoaning that they should not feel “compelled to employ the poorest Italian painters to collect scraps from antiquity to place upon these walls... Captain Meigs is unfit to direct the decoration of this Capitol. He has neither taste nor skill, and I hold that this committee would do a wrong to the Treasury, to the artists, and to the country, if they furnished him with further funds.”¹⁰² Maynard, at whose home Brown lived when he was in Washington, spoke to the vision that “this Capitol

⁹⁸ Horace Maynard, House Proceedings of 7 June 1858, *Congressional Globe*, 35-1, p. 2759, reprinted in “Documentary History of the Capitol,” 694.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 692.

¹⁰⁰ Meigs Journal clippings C304, article number 2. House of Representatives, 1 June 1858. Also in House of Representatives, 35th Congress, 2nd Session, Report No. 198, “American Artists,” 3 March 1859, 1.

¹⁰¹ *Daily Globe* (7 June 1858), 35th Congress, 1st Session, Meigs Journal clippings C339.

¹⁰² *Ibid*.

is eventually to become a vast museum of art, in which paintings and statuary will be the two prominent features.”¹⁰³

The House’s Select Committee on Art had a good rapport with the Washington Art Association and solicited advice and information from Brown and other artists. Marshall, the committee member from Kentucky, supposedly spent the summer of 1858 in his home state reading about “Art commissions in the Old World,” material that Brown collected for him.¹⁰⁴ In January 1859, the committee continued its dialogue with the WAA by meeting with the second National Artists Convention, which included a large exhibition of American art.¹⁰⁵ In March, several politicians attended a banquet hosted by the Washington Art Association and listened to rousing speeches about national art.¹⁰⁶ The Committee did a thorough job investigating the sobriety of appointing an art commission and of hiring exclusively American artists for Capitol projects and even solicited the opinions of several art authorities in England.¹⁰⁷

Nine months after its formation, the Committee presented its finding to the House on 3 March 1859.¹⁰⁸ The report began by defending national art, claiming “Painting and

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ To “Friend” from [HKB?], Washington, D.C., 17 June 1858, HKBB 1028.

¹⁰⁵ “The Congress of Artists. Decorating the Capitol— The Employment of American in Preference to Foreign Artists,” Washington, 12 January 1859, [probably *New York Evening Post*] (C655), Article Number One, Meigs Journal Clippings, AOC.

¹⁰⁶ “Domestic Art Gossip, Washington,” *Crayon* 6 (May 1859): 160.

¹⁰⁷ The committee included the opinions of Sir Martin Archer Shee, C.L. Eastlake, and Right Honorable Viscount Mahon as appendices to their Report No. 198 to the 35th Congress, 3 March 1859.

¹⁰⁸ House Of Representatives, 35th Congress, 2nd Session, Report No. 198, “American Artists,” 3 March 1859. This happened to be the last day of assembly of the 35th

sculpture are the handmaidens of history to record the traits and characteristics of national life.”¹⁰⁹ It admitted that American symbols could be found throughout the Capitol but thought their meaning had been muddled with European myths and symbols:

An eagle and the national flag may be discovered occasionally amidst the confusion of the scroll-work and mythological figures presented to the eye; but the presence of conventional gods and goddesses, with meaningless scrolls and arabesques, albeit they may be wrapped in ‘red, white, and blue,’ will never suggest to the American... any idea to touch his heart or to inspire his patriotism.¹¹⁰

The committee wholeheartedly recommended the appointment of “an Art Commission which shall suggest a general plan of decoration and embellishment,” and urged, “The statesman and the artist should join in this noble work and permit no profanation of it. We are writing now a history which should be true, as it will be handed to posterity. Let it illustrate American life.”¹¹¹

All that remained was for President Buchanan to appoint the members of the Art Commission. The Washington Art Association played an astonishingly important role by pre-selecting the three commissioners for the President’s appointment. As delegates of the National Artists Congress, the sculptor Horatio Stone, the portrait and landscape painter John Mix Stanley, [?] Buff, and Crauch [possibly John Cranch or Christopher Pearse Cranch] met on April 25 with President Buchanan and formally requested an art commission.¹¹² Stone wrote to Brown in May 1859 summarizing the meeting with the President, which

Congress. All five members, excepting George Taylor, were re-elected to the 36th Congress and could follow through on the establishment of an art commission.

¹⁰⁹ 35th Congress, House of Representatives, Report No. 198, 3 March 1859, 1.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹² Horatio Stone to HKB, Washington, D.C., 3 May 1859, HKBB 1086-1.

closed with the artists nominating their choices for the commission. Stone explained that Samuel F.B. Morse, the founder of the National Academy of Design, was their first choice for commissioner but was not available for the position. Instead, Stone and the others nominated Brown, who was identified as sculptor from Washington, D.C., James R. Lambdin, a painter from Philadelphia, and John F. Kensett, a painter from New York; together they represented three major urban centers of American art.¹¹³ Stone later clarified that Brown would be the chair of the Commission. Buchanan's letter of 18 May 1859, appointed the commissioners and decreed, "all designs for sculpture or paintings for the decoration and embellishment of the United States Capitol Extension shall undergo the examination of a committee of distinguished artists not to exceed three in number to be selected by the President."¹¹⁴

The art press applauded the establishment of the Commission and the selection of these three artists, who were at the top of their fields.¹¹⁵ The establishment of the National Art Commission signaled the professionalization of American artists, the acknowledgement of sculptors as an accomplished part of the artists' community, the ability of artists to organize for their common good, and the government's recognition of artists' political leverage and cultural significance if not their talent.

Brown, Kensett, and Lambdin accepted the appointments with some reservations. Each artist took on an administrative position of great responsibility and public scrutiny that

¹¹³ Ibid., HKBB 1086-2.

¹¹⁴ The letter was accompanied by a letter from E.R. Drinkard, Acting Secretary of War, 19 May 1859, AOC, Ford Archives.

¹¹⁵ "Domestic Art Gossip," *Crayon* 6 (July 1859): 160.; "The Art Commission," *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 3 (June 1859): 134-135.

required him to forgo commissions and neglect his studio. Kensett wrote to Brown, "I finally tho' with considerable reluctance accepted the appointment... I say reluctantly accepted because I fear'd or rather doubted my ability to serve satisfactorily on the Commission, I was apprehensive of the loss of time in my Professional labors."¹¹⁶ Likewise, Lambdin wrote to Brown with "misgivings with regard to the propriety of my accepting the post."¹¹⁷ He worried about "compensation for services" and, more significantly, questioned to what authority the commission was to answer and what real power it would have besides making suggestions.

Despite their hesitations, the three commissioners convened soon after their appointment in the House of Representatives' Room of the Committee on Territories. Inevitably, one of their first tasks was to contact Meigs to determine the status of the commissions that he had awarded and to "understand what portions of the Building have been allotted to the works of sculpture of Messrs. Crawford and Rodgers [sic]," since these commissions remained outside of the jurisdiction of the new Art Commission.¹¹⁸ Meigs probably never expected to lose control over the decoration of the Capitol and had several conversations with members of Congress trying to persuade them to vote against Marshall and Taylor's proposal in June 1858.¹¹⁹ He certainly did not suspect Brown to be so central

¹¹⁶ John Kensett to HKB, Waverly House, New York, 27 May 1859, HKBB 1086-10 to 1086-11.

¹¹⁷ J. R. Lambdin to HKB, Philadelphia, 26 May 1859, HKBB 1086-11.

¹¹⁸ J. R. Lambdin to Captain M. Meigs, Washington, D.C., 21 June 1859, file "Art Commission of 1859-60," AOC.

¹¹⁹ Meigs summarized his concerns in a letter to his former supervisor, Jefferson Davis, shortly after the Committee was formed, Washington, D.C., 8 June 1858, Capitol Extension and New Dome Letterbook, 1858, pp. 2400-2407, file "Superintendents of the Capitol, Meigs," AOC.

to the effort to oust him. In fact, although Meigs had had reservations about awarding Brown grander projects, such as the sculptures for the doors or the House Pediment of the Capitol, he had nevertheless recommended Brown to Congress's Joint Committee on the Library in May 1858, which was looking for artists to decorate the Capitol and the Library of Congress.¹²⁰ Later that same month, Meigs finally realized how instrumental Brown had been in agitating Congress to form an Art Commission and asked Brown, through Taylor, if he would visit his office. Brown replied to Taylor, "[I] should not call upon him [Meigs], or rather did not wish to call upon him. His scurrilous attacks upon the artists had cut him off entirely from my personal respect and consideration."¹²¹ Surely there was incredible tension when the Art Commission had to rely on Meigs for information about the status of commissions in the Capitol. Meigs obliged their request with information with a promptly written reply and a tour of the Capitol.¹²²

Although Meigs remained Superintendent of the Capitol until November, he quickly understood that he no longer wielded control over the decoration of the building and sent all art related matters to the Commission.¹²³ He was dismayed at his loss of power because he not only had devoted so much attention to its building in his six years as superintendent but

¹²⁰ 25 May 1858, (C-254), Book C, p. 2154-2155, Journals, Montgomery C. Meigs Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

¹²¹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 30 May 1858, HKBB 1008-1009.

¹²² J.R. Lambdin to Captain M. C. Meigs, Washington, D.C., 23 June 1859, file "Art Commission of 1859-60," AOC; 24 June 1859, Journals, Montgomery Meigs Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division.

¹²³ Meigs directed Col. J.J. Albert's offer to sell portraits to the Capitol to the Art Commission, Washington, D.C., 25 August 1859, file "sculptors, Henry Kirke Brown," AOC.

also sincerely believed that selecting art for the Capitol through an official committee would mire the completion of the Capitol in bureaucratic delays. In some ways he was proved right.

The Art Commission also obtained summaries from Captain Walter B. Franklin, who succeeded Meigs as Engineer in Charge of the Capitol Extension, for the cost to the government for the decoration of the Capitol, including not only sculptures by Crawford and Rogers but also paintings by Brumidi and decorative bronze railings.¹²⁴

After nine months of inspecting the Capitol and compiling information, the Art Commissioners issued their report to the President on February 22, 1860; the report was made public with its printing in full in *The Crayon* in April 1860.¹²⁵ The Secretary of the Interior sent it to John B. Floyd, Secretary of War, who in turn sent it on March 7 to the Speaker of the House, William Pennington, who presented it to Congress.¹²⁶ It reiterated the importance of displaying the work of national artists in the Capitol and criticized the commissions awarded by the government in the previous six years. The Commission explained that “Art, like nations, has its heroic history” and distinguished between a “refined and manly history” and “the effeminate and sensuous history—the sure presage of national decay.”¹²⁷ It warned against displaying the latter kind, which was emblematic of “an effete

¹²⁴ Crawford’s pediment for the Senate wing, including the models, cost \$46,000. The two sets of bronze doors by Crawford and Rogers cost \$19,000 each. W. B. Franklin to L.R. Lambdin, Washington, D.C., 20 January 1860, “Letters— U.S. Capitol Extension. Nov. 1859 to January 1862, Book 9, pp 1675-1678.

¹²⁵ “Report of the Us Art Commissioners, Washington, Feb. 22, 1860,” *Crayon* 7 (April 1860): 106-109.

¹²⁶ “Art Commission,” 36th Congress, 1st session, Ex. Doc. No. 43, reprinted in HKBB 1086-22.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

and decayed race.” It advocated that art for the Capitol should depict American subjects and that the commissioned artists should be “imbued with a high sense of the nature of the institutions of the country, and should have a certain assimilation with its habits and manners,” in other words, not be recent immigrants.¹²⁸ It suggested that foreign art would be better placed in a national gallery or the Executive Mansion and criticized the use of gaudy colors and the application of bronze accessories to wooden doors. It made a few specific recommendations, chiefly that there should be more paintings and sculptures of colonial history subjects and early statesmen, like Jefferson and Washington, and there should be an effort to improve the artistic quality of nation’s coins and currency. The report discussed the pediments and doors several times and praised the work of Rogers and Crawford as exemplary. Had they the chance to commission the pediment they would have recommended high-reliefs instead of sculptures in-the-round and argued that these would have better integrate with Walter’s Corinthian columns. The most substantive recommendations proposed that all the remaining commissions could be delayed rather than compromised in the interest of time or expense. It discouraged holding competitions to distribute the commissions, since this practice often did not appeal to the best and most accomplished artists. The report closed with the Commissioners justifiably complaining that “their functions and powers [were] not sufficiently defined.”¹²⁹ To rectify this they reiterated the “Memorial to Congress” of 1858, proposing that the Commissioners be:

... accepted as the exponents of the authority and influence of American art; who shall be the channels for the distribution of all appropriations to be made by Congress for art purposes, and who shall secure to artists an intelligent and unbiased

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid, 8.

adjudication upon the designs they may present for the embellishment of the national buildings.¹³⁰

Without the power to distribute specific commissions and choose artists, as Meigs had done, the Art Commissioners could expect to effect little change in the aesthetics of the Capitol. The Commissioners wanted control of the purse strings for art and assumed that Congress would continue to finance artwork as it had in the previous decade. It made a final note of fourteen locations in the building where paintings and sculptures could be installed and estimated that the art for these locations would total \$166,900.

This last part of the report made the deepest impression on Congress, which found the sum ludicrously high, especially since the Art Commission itself discouraged any immediate action to distribute more commissions. The artists' candid report critiquing the aesthetics of the building made few specific recommendations that would appeal to a pragmatic politician. They naively assumed that Congress was sincerely interested in decorating the Capitol or promoting American artists. In complimenting Brown on the report, William T. Walters, the art patron whose collection became the Walters Gallery in Baltimore, applauded Brown's efforts on the Commission and sympathized with the Commissioners' frustration, "In a popular form of Government like ours-without popular education upon the subject of art-I have seen one of the great difficulties you are obliged to encounter."¹³¹

The Art Commission and the WAA failed to appreciate that the Art Commission may never have been founded had Meigs not been the Superintendent of the Capitol Extension. They underestimated how much art Meigs had introduced to the building. It

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ W.T. Walters to HKB, Baltimore, 7 April 1860, HKBB 1091.

was he who proposed adding sculptural pediments to the East façade— as Thomas Walter’s architectural plans had called for none. Defending himself to John Durand, editor of *The Crayon*, Meigs wrote, “When I took charge of the Extension of the Capitol there was not a place provided for a single statue. I have been the instrument of giving commissions for a group to decorate the Pediment of one of our wings, containing 12 statues and for five other statues all life size or colossal.”¹³² Proponents of the Art Commission did not have to lobby for the inclusion of art in the construction of the Capitol, Meigs had done that for them, rather, they petitioned Congress to place control of the commissions in the hands of artists and art experts. Artists and critics, however, are seldom ideal bureaucrats. Horatio Stone reported that Meigs thought “the Art Commission will never be appointed and if it should be, there could not be found any artists capable of filling it.”¹³³ As Meigs had predicted, the Art Commission was doomed.

Congress formally suspended the Art Commission on 20 June 1860, by an amendment to a civil appropriations bill.¹³⁴ The amendment was introduced by a group of men in the Senate who had always supported Meigs: Jefferson Davis of Mississippi, John Slidell of Louisiana, Robert Toombs of Georgia, J.A. Pierce of Maryland, and R.M.T. Hunter of Virginia. Although they sought its permanent abolishment, a proviso allowed for the reestablishment of the Art Commission at the next session of Congress.¹³⁵ However, the

¹³² Meigs to John Durand, Washington, D.C., 11 October 1856, file “Superintendents of the Capitol, Meigs,” AOC.

¹³³ Horatio Stone to HKB, Washington, D.C., 17 June 1858, HKBB 1027. Meigs also wrote in his journal, “who is to sit upon the commission of Mr. Marshall, how much are they to be paid, and how many hours’ work will they have in one year?,” 15 January 1859, (C 655), p. 2440.

¹³⁴ HKB to Congress, Washington, D.C., no date [circa June 1860], HKBB 1088.

sectional tension leading to the Civil War soon became the single priority of Congress. It could not have been a more inopportune time to ask politicians to focus on the art of the Capitol.

Lambdin wrote to Brown and proposed a meeting to rally the support of the National Art Association.¹³⁶ The meeting never took place, and there was little protest, considering how much public support there had been to found the Art Commission. A few art publications denounced the dismantling of the commission.¹³⁷

The Commissioners were disillusioned by their experience. Brown later spent countless months awaiting word from Congress as to whether he, Lambdin, and Kensett would ever receive the \$3000 allotted to each as payment for the thirteen months of service on the Commission.¹³⁸ Brown's financial situation was bleak since, in addition to not being paid for his service as a Commissioner, he had not actively searched for commissions during this time.

Consequences of Brown's Time in Washington, D.C.

At first glance, Brown's time in Washington seems like an utter waste of time and a series of professional failures. He had made several fruitless bids for the House Pediment

¹³⁵ Ibid, 1089.

¹³⁶ Lambdin to HKB, Washington, D.C., 22 June 1860, HKBB 1103-1104.

¹³⁷ See for example, "The Abolishment of the Capitol Art-Commission," *Cosmopolitan Art Journal* 4, no. 3 (September 1860): 119-120. "Domestic Art Gossip," *Crayon* 7 (October 1860).

¹³⁸ Brown's papers refer to efforts by Representative Jason H. Campbell to amend House Bill 37th Congress 2nd Session, No. 393 which passed in the House on 18 April 1862, and provided for payment of \$3000 to each of the art commissioners, HKBB 1090. Brown spent most of 1862 living in Washington awaiting payment.

and other commissions. While he had quickly won the faith of his colleagues and was chosen officially to represent their interests to Congress, his commission failed to effect any immediate changes. Some congressmen had been awakened by Brown and the Washington Art Association and came to see art as an important part of the country's history. This awareness cut across party lines and the sectional divisions that defined American politics in the few years before the Civil War. Indeed, the congressional committee appointed in June 1858 to consider the need for an Art Commission consisted of representatives from northern and southern states who agreed to recommend the establishment of an Art Commission. The promotion of American art was one of the few issues that had united the country in these contentious years, although the war itself would interrupt the work of the appointed commission.

One consequence of the short-lived Art Commission was the establishment in 1864, during the Civil War, of National Statuary Hall in the old chamber of the House of Representatives. This space became a gallery that was filled with figurative sculptures of civic and military heroes given by each state. Statuary Hall was a common ground after the civil war for northern and southern states to showcase local heroes on a federal stage. The concept of the Hall appealed to Congress, because it distributed the financial burden of decorating the Capitol to the state governments, each of which could donate two statues. It was a boon to sculptors across the nation and created new commission opportunities in each state.

Brown probably had a greater influence on the founding of National Statuary Hall than is commonly recognized. The Art Commission certainly forced Congress to considering more carefully how it would decorate the Capitol. Although there is no explicit

link between the Art Commission and National Statuary Hall, the heated Congressional discussions on art and the Art Commission before 1864 certainly informed its creation.

Even greater evidence for Brown's influence on Statuary Hall is his contact with Justin S. Morrill, the representative from Vermont who first proposed legislation for it in January 1864.¹³⁹ Around this time, Morrill invited Brown to meet the Committee of Public Buildings and Grounds.¹⁴⁰ Before meeting the committee, Brown wrote to Morrill and outlined his recommendations for the Hall, including adjusting the light, arranging the statues with equal prominence, and removing unrelated statues from the Hall. Brown eventually won four commissions from states to sculpt statues for the Hall. One of these, *Nathaniel Greene*, given by Rhode Island in 1870, was the first one Congress received for National Statuary Hall and set a standard that other sculptors closely followed [Figure 4.10].

¹⁴¹ Brown also won three other commissions for Statuary Hall: *George Clinton*, given by New York in 1873; *Philip Kearny*, given by New Jersey in 1888; and *Richard Stockton*, given by New Jersey in 1888.

Brown further influenced the character of Statuary Hall in 1874 when he spoke with Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts and "formed a project with him to have the statue of Jefferson by David D'Anjou [sic] removed from the President's grounds to the old House

¹³⁹ For more on the establishment of Statuary Hall see H. A. Vale, *Legislation Creating the National Statuary Hall in the Capitol with the Proceeding in Congress Relating to the Statues Placed in the National Statuary Hall by the States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916).

¹⁴⁰ HKB to Justin S. Morrill, [no date] 1864, HKBB 1718-1720.

¹⁴¹ For example, *Ethan Allen* (1876), contributed to the Hall by Vermont, was sculpted in a similar style by Brown's former apprentice Larkin Mead.

of Representatives, where it should be.”¹⁴² This bronze statue of Jefferson by eminent French artist David d’Angers was cast in the 1830s and had been on view outside the White House since about 1846. As sculpture scholar Thomas P. Somma has noted, “David’s *Thomas Jefferson* was the first and most characteristic example of a historical portrait type invented by David in which traditional allegory is rejected in favor of naturalism, modern dress, and readable, commonsense attributes,” qualities with which Brown imbued his own work.¹⁴³ Brown’s selection of this statue instead of, say, Greenough’s Washington— which was also outdoors in Washington, D.C. at this time— was a conscious choice to promote a specific aesthetic for the statues in the Hall. Brown’s astute perception of the value of David’s sculpture helped preserve *Jefferson* and place it where it could be admired by all and serve as a model for sculptors commissioned to submit work for Statuary Hall. Through Statuary Hall, Brown’s expertise in the field and his access to politicians had a real and lasting impact on this large collection of statues in the Capitol.

While Brown’s contributions to federal sculpture are evident in these few examples, his own benefit from his time in Washington, D.C. is more difficult to gauge. After thirteen months on the Art Commission, he had a more realistic view of the relationship between government and artists. His salary as a commissioner was never guaranteed and indicated the risk in accepting government work. The artist did, however, build a powerful network of friends while in Washington.

¹⁴² HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, D.C., 30 January 1874, HKBB 2040. For more on the *Jefferson* see Thomas P. Somma, “‘Lost in America’: David D’Angers’s Bronze Statue of Thomas Jefferson, 1832-1833,” in *American Pantheon: Sculptural and Artistic Decoration of the United States Capitol*, ed. Donald R. Kennon and Thomas P. Somma (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), 90-110.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 90.

Brown's new political allies helped him win a number of commissions, which are beyond the scope of this dissertation. Most notably, Thomas Ustick Walter recommended Brown to John Niernsee, who was supervising the building of the South Carolina State House in Columbia. Niernsee hired Brown to sculpt two portrait medallions and a one-hundred-foot long pediment for the State House. In 1860, Brown moved to Columbia to sculpt the pediment. While the Civil War interrupted his work and destroyed his models, this pediment was the largest commission Brown had ever received.¹⁴⁴ Thanks to his time in Washington, Brown also acquired congressional commissions for two equestrian monuments: *General Winfield Scott* and *Nathanael Greene*. Congress commissioned the *Scott* for Scott Circle at Massachusetts Avenue and 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. Anticipating the commission, Brown sculpted from life a bust of the Civil War hero Scott, while the two were in Washington in 1858.¹⁴⁵ It took Brown years to complete. In 1867, Congress voted \$35,000 for the monument and in 1872 Brown completed the model in 1872; the monument was installed without fanfare in 1874.¹⁴⁶ Congress commissioned *Nathanael Greene* from Brown and voted in 1874 to set aside \$45,000 for the project, but this too took many years

¹⁴⁴ Brown lived in Columbia with his wife until the summer of 1861. His perplexing design for the pediment celebrated the economic wealth of the state's slave-based economies and depicted several slave figures laboring in cotton and rice fields. This commission is beyond the scope of this dissertation but discussed in Karen Lemmey, "Building a Monument to a Lost Cause on the Eve of Destruction: Henry Kirke Brown's Pediment to Slavery for the South Carolina State House," presented at the panel, "Monuments to Losses and Lost Causes," College Art Association Annual Conference, held in Atlanta, Georgia, February 2005.

¹⁴⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, 28 November 1858, HKBB 1040; illustration of plaster, HKBB 1042-A.

¹⁴⁶ Kathryn Allamong Jacob, *Testament to Union, Civil War Monuments in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 99-101.

to complete. In the end Brown came to see that the coveted, long-awaited state and national projects were often more trouble than they seemed and entailed endless bureaucratic reviews, unpaid invoices, and decades of patience.

By 1860 when the Art Commission disbanded, Brown was evermore an expert and authority in his field. Earlier in his career, his casting experiments and effort to establish art foundries in this country had provided sculptors with a technology that became indispensable to their art. Now he had done his part to bring their profession to the attention of Congress. He had not attained his goal to achieve national recognition as an American sculptor. Fortunately, more opportunities awaited him in New York.

Chapter V: A Tale of Two Lincolns

Between 1865 and 1870, Brown sculpted his last civic statues for New York, two monuments of Abraham Lincoln. One was commissioned by the Union League Club of New York and installed in Union Square in 1870 [Figure 5.01]. The other, ordered by the War Fund Committee of Brooklyn, was installed near Prospect Park in 1869 [Figure 5.02]. These two commissions demonstrate significant changes that occurred in the monument industry in the two decades following Brown's first monuments for Brooklyn and New York, *De Witt Clinton* (1853) and *George Washington* (1856).

It is remarkable that, by the 1870s, there was enough public interest and wealth in Manhattan and Brooklyn to support two simultaneous commissions for monuments to Lincoln—it had taken New York over fifty years to fund and erect a single monument to Washington. One reason for this was the Civil War (1861-1865), which precipitated a conscious public effort to remember and honor individuals and the war effort that endured into the next century. Abraham Lincoln's assassination, so soon after the war, added momentum to this new interest in monuments. Other changes characterized the post-war monument scene as well. By 1865, when Lincoln died, there were more trained American sculptors, some of whom spurred by Brown's success with *Clinton* and *Washington*, were encouraged to build a career in the United States. A number of new bronze art foundries, which had benefited from Brown's early experiments with the Ames Manufacturing Company, supported this burgeoning monument industry. The choice of foundries allowed sculptors to work more quickly. Indeed, Brown completed both *Lincoln* monuments in three years, whereas it had taken him seven years to produce *De Witt Clinton*.

The expansion of the industry and the increased number of monument commissions brought American sculptors both opportunities and new tribulations. With more sculptors

to choose from, commissioning bodies became more selective and bureaucratic. Design competitions became more common, and contracts between the artists and the sponsors more complicated. For the two *Lincoln* commissions, Brown had to compete formally with fellow sculptors and financially guarantee one of his contracts by placing a lien on his home. Reacting to these new challenges, sculptors played a more active role in writing and contesting commission contracts and communicated amongst themselves to circumvent the design competitions. These professional concerns foreshadowed the establishment of the National Sculpture Society, an artist organization founded in 1893 which sought to standardize competitions and juried design committees.¹

This chapter uses Brown's two commissions for monuments of Lincoln monument as a way of studying these changes in the field of American sculpture. It first considers Brown's *Lincoln* for the Union League Club, which the Club paid for through private donations from its members. After giving a close account of the commission's history, this section looks at how the Union League Club hoped for a monument that would complement Brown's earlier monument to Washington, which was located in the same park. The parallel drawn between Lincoln and Washington was commonly made in the North after the Civil War. Although many saw them as ideological and political equals, visual representations of these presidents—including Brown's monuments of them—projected them as very different historical figures. Notably neither of these monuments were official, governmental efforts sponsored with municipal, state, or national funds. This section closes

¹ The formation and activities of the National Sculpture Society is well documented and discussed in the important book by Michele H. Bogart, *Public Sculpture and the Civic Ideal in New York City, 1890-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

by considering what the negative reception of Brown's *Lincoln*, compared to his *Washington*, says about changes in the way monuments were regarded by 1870.

The chapter then turns to the Lincoln monument for Brooklyn, which was raised through public subscriptions that were limited to \$1 per individual. It was the first monument to a president who would be immortalized by countless memorials over the next decades, supported by public subscription.² Among the issues introduced by this commission are its explicit reference to the Emancipation Proclamation and its success as a neighborhood monument. After outlining the history of this commission and the difficulties it presented for Brown, this section considers the exuberant dedication ceremony of this monument, as compared to the non-event that characterized *Lincoln* in Union Square. It also considers the placement of the monument in Prospect Park— a picturesque retreat that was not designed to display sculpture.

The chapter closes by considering why neither of these Lincoln monuments made the impact that Brown's earlier sculptures did and discusses what this signified for monuments in American society at large.

Abraham Lincoln and the Union League Club of New York

With the Civil War only recently ended, the murder of Abraham Lincoln on April 15, 1865, shocked the nation. As the first American president to be assassinated, he became an instant martyr. Lincoln's presidency, however, had been marred by heavy public criticism. He won the presidential election of 1860 with only forty percent of the popular vote, this heavily concentrated in the North. In New York City Lincoln received only one-third of the

² For a thorough but early study of monuments to Lincoln see, F. Lauriston Bullard, *Lincoln in Marble and Bronze* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1952).

vote, an especially weak showing for a northern city. One reason was that local merchants relied on the intricate trade network between the South and Europe and feared the catastrophic financial loss that a divisive civil war would bring. Mayor Fernando Wood had proposed an extreme measure in 1861, suggesting "New York should be prepared to declare herself a free city, independent alike of the National and State Governments."³ During the war, anti-Lincoln sentiments reached its climax in July 1863 in riots, as many New Yorkers violently protested the Union's military draft.⁴

It was in this antagonistic atmosphere that the Union League Club of New York City was founded in 1862, with the aim of rallying moral and private financial support for Lincoln, the Union, and the war effort. Similar associations, using the same name, were formed in other cities, including Philadelphia and Boston.⁵ The Club was an outgrowth of the United States Sanitary Commission, which New York orator and activist Henry W. Bellows organized to provide privately funded medical support for the Union Army. The Club continued to support this cause and also organized and funded New York State's African American regiments and raised money after the war for southern schools.

When Lincoln died in 1865, the Club sent thirteen of its most prestigious members to participate in the funeral in Washington, D.C.⁶ The shock of Lincoln's murder all but

³ As recounted by John Jay in his speech at the Union League clubhouse on March 26, 1868, quoted in Henry W. Bellows, *Historical Sketch of the Union League Club of New York* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1879), appendix.

⁴ For a history of the draft riots see Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵ Will Irwin, Earl Chapin May, and Joseph Hotchkiss, *A History of the Union League Club of New York City* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1952), 3-5.

⁶ Bellows, *Historical Sketch of the Union League Club of New York*, 84.

erased his unpopularity as a president. After his body lay in state in the Capitol from April 19 to 21, 1865, it traveled by railroad to various northern cities where enormous crowds mourned him with public funeral processions, finally coming to rest in Lincoln's hometown of Springfield, Illinois. Even New York expressed its grief: "The great metropolis,--whose mob that hated him,... now pours from every street and lane the intent and sad procession of his mourners."⁷ When the funeral cortège passed through the city, it drew a multitude of thousands. The Union League Club played a central role in the New York reception of Lincoln's body by erecting a bandstand along the route of the procession in front of its clubhouse on the north side of Union Square. From this podium, George Bancroft, the famous American historian and Union League Club member "delivered a funeral oration charged with apprehension."⁸ The Club also "secured the admission of a respectable representation of colored citizens," who were initially prohibited from joining the procession.⁹

The day following the president's death, the Union League Club resolved to erect a what was likely the earliest commission for a Lincoln monument.¹⁰ Cautious to avoid

⁷ Richard S. Storrs, Jr., *An Oration Commemorative of President Abraham Lincoln; Delivered at Brooklyn, N.Y. June 1, 1865 at the Request of the War Fund Committee, Brooklyn* (Brooklyn: "The Union" Steam Presses, 1865), 6.

⁸ Irwin, May, and Hotchkiss, *A History of the Union League Club of New York City*, 50. Bancroft's speech is published in *Our Martyr President, Abraham Lincoln, Voices from the Pulpit of New York and Brooklyn* (New York: Tibbals & Whiting, 1865), 383-392.

⁹ Bellows, *Historical Sketch of the Union League Club of New York*, 87.

¹⁰ Immediately following Lincoln's death, the Union League Club of New York adopted a resolution to form a committee to "obtain from the proper municipal authorities permission to erect a monument to the memory of Abraham Lincoln on Union Square." The committee members were: George Bancroft, Theodore Roosevelt, Jackson S. Schultz, Horatio Allen, Issac H. Bailey, Orison Blunt, F.C. Howe, Josiah Heddon, James Kelly,

conflict at this volatile time, the Club wanted a monument that would not underscore the North's victory over the South or inflame the public rage that had fueled the draft riots. Six months later in October 1865, John Church Hamilton, the Chairman of the Union League's Lincoln Monument Fund Committee and a son of Alexander Hamilton, wrote to Brown asking him to submit a design for the monument. In his letter, he stated that the monument should have a "National not a sectional character" and warned "all embellishments indicting the subjection of the South is to be avoided."¹¹ Hamilton asked Brown to contact Timothy G. Churchill, the president of the Columbia Fire Insurance Company and treasurer of the Lincoln Monument Fund Committee if he was interested in the commission.

By February 1866, the Lincoln Monument Fund had raised \$15,000 through bonds bought by its members and had formed a joint committee "appointed by the Union League Club... [and] by the citizens."¹² Churchill expressed his hope that Brown would receive the commission and sent him a list of committee members, noting, "You will doubtless know most of the gentlemen composing the Committee, and many of them [are] your friends."¹³ Churchill also identified the members responsible for approving the design of the

Stephen Hyath, *Minutes of the Executive Committee Union League Club of New York*, 1:138-39. One newspaper article stated, "the idea originated with the late Capt. Marshall and Messrs. J.C. Hamilton and Timothy Churchill," the joint committee formed to unite these three men with others in the Club who shared the idea of erecting a monument, "History of the Lincoln Monument," *New York Times*, 2 October 1870, 6.

¹¹ John C. Hamilton to HKB, New York, 19 October 1865, HKBB 1764.

¹² The committee members were John C. Hamilton, Timothy G. Churchill, William K. Strong, William A. Hall, Jackson S. Schultz, Elliot C. Cowdin, Frank E. Howe, Le Grand B. Cannon, David Van Nostrand, John A. Weeks, Richard M. Hunt, William H. Lee, "The Lincoln Monument Fund Committee. To the subscribers of the Lincoln Monument Fund," HKBB 1777. Brown later claimed to have received \$20,000 for sculpting and casting this statue, HKB to A.O. Evans, Newburgh, 23 January 1869, HKBB 1904.

¹³ Timothy G. Churchill to HKB, New York, 20 February 1866, HKBB 1778.

monument. They were Churchill, Richard Morris Hunt, William A. Hall, and John A. Weeks.

Of these, Brown was probably most familiar with the architect Richard Morris Hunt. Although Hunt had trained at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and worked in a different aesthetic than Brown's realist style, the two had already collaborated on a design for a monument to Robert Fulton commissioned by Trinity Church early in 1864.¹⁴ This commission was never completed, but Hunt would go on to collaborate on many monuments with Brown's apprentice, John Quincy Adams Ward.

Although Brown had allies like Hunt on the monument committee, he knew that only a contract could guarantee him the commission. Throughout his life, Brown tried to avoid the risk of investing his time designing models for commissions he was not yet assured. In spite of the risk, Brown submitted a design to the Union League Club's committee around this time. In February 1866, after Churchill expressed that he "did not wholly like the design," Brown offered to alter it to meet the committee's criteria, but only if he could be certain of receiving the commission.¹⁵

At this point, Churchill told Brown that he would call the design committee together to decide how to proceed. Instead of granting Brown a contract, the design committee sent out a call for proposals in April 1866, inviting six American sculptors to submit ideas by June

¹⁴ The design on which Hunt and Brown collaborated was exhibited at the offices of the Pacific Mutual Insurance Company in Trinity Building in 1863, "The Fulton Monument," *Evening Post*, 26 December 1863, 2. The Fulton monument is mentioned in Brown's correspondence in letters beginning on the following pages, HKBB 1681, 1682, 1684, 1692, 1692 a. Brown and Hunt's collaboration on the Fulton monument is also discussed by Lewis I. Sharp, "Richard Morris Hunt and His Influence on American Beaux-Arts Sculpture," in *The Architecture of Richard Morris Hunt*, ed. Susan R. Stein (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 125.

¹⁵ HKB to Lydia Brown, New York, 24 February 1866, HKBB 1779.

1 for a monument with a maximum budget of \$30,000.¹⁶ The sculptors— Brown, John Quincy Adams Ward, Launt Thompson, Erastus D. Palmer, William Rimmer, and Richard Saltonstall Greenough— were each offered \$50 to participate in this competition. The invitees represented a variety of backgrounds, styles, experience, and training. Brown and Greenough, the brother of Horatio Greenough, had both trained in Europe but worked in America for many years; each had sculpted public monuments before. Palmer and Ward had not studied in Europe, but had been competitive and had won monument competitions. Thompson and Rimmer were both born in Europe, but raised in America. Thompson studied with Palmer in Albany and Rimmer was largely self-taught. The diversity of their backgrounds and training indicates how much the field of American sculpture had expanded since the beginning of Brown's career.

Having already submitted a plan, Brown presumably objected to competing with his fellow sculptors. Design competitions, according to Brown, were a sculptor's nemesis. Brown once explained to a monument committee in New Orleans that he despised competitions:

I, as well as every other artist, knows that there is not a body of men to be found... who ... have been able, so far, to familiarize themselves sufficiently with Art to be able to judge of the capabilities of a sketch. There are very few artists who can... do justice to themselves by a sketch, while others, on the contrary, have neither power or knowledge to go beyond; hence you will see how unfair it is to bring them together in the manner of competition.¹⁷

¹⁶ Frank E. Howe [secretary of the design committee], New York, 28 April 1866, HKBB 1783.

¹⁷ This letter refers to a competition for a monument of Henry Clay in New Orleans to which Brown sent a model that he claims cost him \$400 to produce, HKB to E. Parmalee, Brooklyn, 5 March 1857, HKBB 881.

He further argued that building a model for a competition often put “an artist to an expense which he can ill-afford.”¹⁸ Above all, Brown knew that “friendships, to say nothing of other influences,” often determined who won the competitions.¹⁹

Five months after the competition deadline for the *Lincoln* had passed, Churchill wrote to Brown, asking him to resubmit his original design for consideration. He explained that Richard Greenough’s design, a seated figure of Lincoln, would not be approved and assured Brown, “you will have no competitor and I hope you will model the form and figure of Mr. Lincoln somewhat after or in accordance with previous conversations, **as early a date** as possible. Your friends here are anxious to have you commence the work.”²⁰ One month later Ward, who also had not yet submitted designs, wrote to Brown encouraging his old mentor to participate in the contest. Even though Ward was in a position to compete with Brown, he remained loyal and devoted to his teacher. As a member of the Union League Club, Ward had a privileged view of the situation and intuited that the committee would not give the commission to Brown outright and wrote, “Committees like to do their own work and are not willing that artists should apportion commissions among themselves.”²¹ Ward feared the committee’s solicitation of designs from European sculptors because it had not received sufficient proposals from the American sculptors it had invited to participate in the competition. He cautioned Brown, “invitations have been sent abroad

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ T.G. Churchill to HKB, New York, 11 October 1866, HKBB 1806-1807.

²¹ J.Q.A. Ward to HKB, 212 Fifth Avenue, New York, 6 December 1866, HKBB 1810 A.

for designs and some sculptors will respond.”²² Hoping to speed the committee in Brown’s favor, Ward encouraged his mentor to submit a design and planned to submit a design himself, reasoning that “chances for [Brown receiving] the commission will be better than if I did not [participate in the competition].”²³ As had been the case early in the nineteenth century, American artists still risked losing commissions to foreign artists.

Although there had always been design competitions, this method of awarding commissions was becoming the norm in the 1860s. Indeed, Ward had competed in a call for proposals in 1866 for *William Shakespeare* statue in Central Park.²⁴ This process of selecting designs meant that sculptors faced more formal procedures as they competed for commissions. These changes solved some earlier problems sculptors faced in obtaining commissions and created new ones. For example, while working on the *Washington* for Union Square, Brown initially was required to share the commission with Horatio Greenough. Their partnership was basically imposed on them by the committee and proved inefficient and problematic. In the 1850s in Washington, D.C., Brown and other artists lamented that one person, Captain Montgomery Meigs, distributed commissions for the congressionally-funded decoration of the Capitol. Earlier commissions often required sculptors like Brown to accept disagreeable terms or wait indefinitely as powerful individuals awarded commissions based on personal taste.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ For a discussion of the competition between Ward and Launt Thompson for the *Shakespeare* monument see Lewis I. Sharp, *John Quincy Adams Ward, Dean of American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 178-181.

The Union League Club's call for designs for a monument created a legitimate forum for a select group of talented American sculptors to compete for a prestigious commission. However, based on Ward's letter to Brown, it seems that some American sculptors were building their own professional network and attempted to circumvent the design competitions and amicably distribute commissions amongst themselves. A letter from Erasmus Dow Palmer to Brown regarding a later commission corroborates this hypothesis. Writing seven years after the design competition held by the Union League Club, Palmer wrote to Brown:

How would you like to enter into a pledge with [Launt] Thompson & myself that we will not in any way offer competition with each other— that in case of application for a work no design or price should be furnished if any of the other three had contracted to furnish either. We are not paupers, and have no need to pick out each others eyes. Let us maintain the dignity of our positions. We are all friends, and I desire that we may always remain so. When one inclines to a certain commission, let the other three help to secure it for him. And above all, let us maintain a noble, generous defense of each other under all circumstances if we would respect ourselves, or gain & keep the respect of the world. Don't let us emulate the brotherhood of sculptors in Rome, where each one deems it his duty to kill all the rest. Write to [J.Q.A.] Ward on the subject. I have talked to Thompson and he is strong for the unity.²⁵

This early, informal alliance between friends also foreshadowed the founding of the National Sculpture Society in 1893, seven years after Brown's death.

While it is unclear if Brown ever resubmitted his design proposal, by October 1867 he knew he had received the commission for the *Lincoln* monument when Churchill wrote that a special committee had been formed to make a contract with Brown.²⁶ The new committee consisted of Hamilton, Hunt, Le Grand B. Cannon, Timothy G. Churchill, and

²⁵ E.D. Palmer to HKB, Albany, 18 March 1873, HKBB 1998-1999.

²⁶ Timothy G. Churchill to HKB, New York, 31 October 1867, HKBB 1853.

William T. Blodgett, who was the chairman.²⁷ This committee was far less bureaucratic than its predecessor and even asked Brown to draft his own contract, which does not survive.²⁸

From this point on, the project moved forward quickly and easily. Brown developed an excellent rapport with the committee and even became a member of the Union League Club around this time.²⁹ He became friends with William Tilden Blodgett (1823-1875), who took a great interest in American art and was a founder of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.³⁰ On one occasion, Blodgett invited Brown to a quiet dinner at his home and, instead, surprised the artist with "a party of [Brown's] old friends... and... a splendid dinner."³¹ By the time Brown joined the Union League Club, his social circle already overlapped with those of the Club's members.³² For example, the Union League Club's first presidents, Robert Minturn and Jonathan Sturges, were members of the Century Club, which Brown had helped to found.³³ In spite of his interlude in South Carolina, where he had sculpted a

²⁷ William T. Blodgett to HKB, 13 November 1867, HKBB 1856.

²⁸ William Blodgett to HKB, 23 November 1867, HKBB 1856.

²⁹ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brookside, 11 May 1868, HKBB 1870. *Reports of Executive Committee and Treasurer. By-Laws and Roll of Members*. (New York: Union League Club of New York, 1868-1871), August 1868, 40.

³⁰ For more on Blodgett see R[obert] W. de F[orest], "William Tilden Blodgett and the Beginnings of the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 1 (February 1906): 37-42; Stephen H. Tyng, *In Memoriam William Tilden Blodgett, Address of Rev. Stephen H. Tyng, D.D., on the Occasion of the Funeral of William T. Blodgett, in St. George's Church, Stuyvesant Square, New York, November 8, 1875* (New York [?]: 1875).

³¹ HKB to Lydia Brown, 15 May 1868, HKBB 1872.

³² For a larger discussion on the development of elite culture in New York City, see, Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City from 1750 to the Beginning of Our Own Time* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 169-205.

³³ Irwin, May, and Hotchkiss, *A History of the Union League Club of New York City*, 55.

pediment celebrating the state's slave labor-based economy, Brown always had been an abolitionist like the members of the Union League Club and had been an officer in the pro-Union Sanitary Fairs.³⁴

The members of the Union League Club, like the merchants who had organized to erect Brown's monument to *George Washington*, regarded their sponsorship of a public monument to Lincoln as a civic duty. Hamilton hoped that the monument would, "not only perpetuate the name and memory of Mr. Lincoln, but [also] do credit to our City and the gentlemen engaged in the enterprise... [and] be a monument to the fame of its author."³⁵

Brown's *Washington* had informed the Club's vision for a Lincoln monument. The Club's first headquarters on the north side of Union Square overlooked the *Washington*. From the beginning, the Club saw the *Lincoln* as a pendant to the *Washington* and selected a site at the southern end of the park, on axis with the earlier monument and, like it, facing north [Figure 5.03]. This pairing of Lincoln with the founding father was typical of the time. Many people saw Lincoln's attempts to preserve the Union as a continuation of Washington's efforts to unite the individual states as a nation.³⁶ Orations and pamphlets connected the two presidents, referring to Lincoln as "our country's deliverer" and Washington as "the Father of his Country."³⁷ Henry W. Bellows, one of the original members of the Union League Club, had said in a sermon that Lincoln was "the heir of

³⁴ Ed Folsom, "Walt Whitman at Iowa," *Books at Iowa* 39 (November 1983): 11.

³⁵ Timothy Churchill to HKB, New York, 20 February 1866, HKBB 1778.

³⁶ For modern interpretations of the historical comparison of Washington and Lincoln see Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

³⁷ *Services and Addresses at the Unveiling of the Statue of Abraham Lincoln, Brooklyn, N.Y. October 21st 1869* (Brooklyn: Brooklyn War Fund Committee, 1869), 6.

Washington's place at the hearths and altars of the land... His name will match Washington's, and go with it laden with blessings down to the remotest posterity."³⁸ Others noted Lincoln's international fame: "No other American name since Washington's has become so familiar, or has won such esteem, among the progressive peoples of Europe."³⁹ In his death, Lincoln had risen to the pantheon of great Americans, "He is with the fathers and founders of the Republic."⁴⁰

In many respects, however, Lincoln was a poor match for Washington. While the first president had been a victorious general of the War of Independence, Lincoln was not noted for his military prowess and was even challenged by one of his own generals, George B. McClellan, in his second presidential election of 1864. Washington was legendary for his horsemanship, whereas Lincoln often arrived on foot, as he had at Richmond, Virginia, at the end of the war. A pedestrian monument of Lincoln would, inevitably, leave his disproportionately long body unmodified. Lincoln's expressive face, famous for ageing rapidly during the war, bore nothing of the stoic, formal, practiced grin commonly seen on sculpted representations of Washington.

The photographic age placed new demands on sculptors. Unlike Washington, Lincoln was famously documented by Mathew Brady. No sculptural representation of Lincoln could escape the shadow of this new technology, which had so clearly captured Lincoln's physical awkwardness, making it readily known to the public. Brown's monuments

³⁸ Reverend Henry W. Bellows, "Sermon III" in *Our Martyr President, Abraham Lincoln, Voices from the Pulpit of New York and Brooklyn*, 56, 59.

³⁹ Storrs, Jr., *An Oration Commemorative of President Abraham Lincoln; Delivered at Brooklyn, N.Y. June 1, 1865 at the Request of the War Fund Committee, Brooklyn*, 8.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 64.

to Lincoln were built so soon after the president's death that their audience saw them through its recent memory of his physical appearance and character. Walt Whitman once wrote of Lincoln's face: "Of technical beauty it had nothing— but to the eye of a great artist it furnished a rare study," and criticized contemporary portraits of Lincoln as "failures— most caricatures."⁴¹

The Club was aware that Lincoln's lanky, inelegant body posed a problem as the subject of a figural sculpture, and Hamilton recommended wrapping the figure in a cloak, "As the person of Mr. Lincoln was not graceful."⁴² The idea of dressing a historical figure in contemporary clothing was still comparatively new, and so adding the more classical drapery, even if only in the form of a cloak, may have helped the figure look more stately. Rather than casting Lincoln in a heroic light, Brown suggested that the monument express "great simplicity of character to correspond with Mr. Lincoln's life and habits."⁴³ Brown was speaking from experience, having met Lincoln in 1862, when he visited Washington seeking payment for his service on the National Art Commission.⁴⁴

In a culture where portraits of great men were intended to inspire others to live great lives, Lincoln's body did not correspond to the ideal vision of what a great man should look like. Given these problems with Lincoln's physical appearance, it was critical that the

⁴¹ Mark van Doren, ed., *The Portable Walt Whitman* (New York: Viking Press, 1945; reprint, 1973), 469.

⁴² John C. Hamilton to HKB, New York, 19 October 1865, HKBB 1764.

⁴³ HKB to [no addressee], New York, undated (circa 1866), HKBB 1786.

⁴⁴ HKB to Lydia Brown, Washington, 10 January 1862, HKBB 1409. On this visit, Brown also saw his friend Christopher Arms, with whom he had worked surveying the railroad in Ohio and Illinois in the late 1830s. Arms told Brown that they had both met Lincoln years before in Illinois. Brown did not recall his alleged early encounter with the future president.

monument included references to Lincoln's actions. The most consequential decree of Lincoln's presidency was the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. In an early letter, Chairman Hamilton stated that the monument should show Lincoln holding the Proclamation.⁴⁵ Brown also regarded the depiction of the Proclamation as essential to the monument and wrote, "the great act of [Lincoln's] life and the culminating point in our late war – the Emancipation of Slavery. For however that act may be regarded today, the future will see in it the great event of this epoch."⁴⁶ Brown suggested including a bas-relief that would "further illustrate the emancipation proclamation."⁴⁷ The treasurer of the committee, Churchill, liked the idea of an "ornament in bas-relief or alto-relief in such a manner as will best commemorate the peculiar characteristics of Mr. Lincoln."⁴⁸

In his first model for the committee, Brown did more than depict Lincoln holding the Proclamation. The composition explicitly referred to emancipation by showing a standing figure of Lincoln and a kneeling figure of a black man [Figure 5.04]. Most likely this model dated from April 1867, when Brown ambiguously wrote to his wife, "I am glad I delayed the sketch of Lincoln in expectation of seeing that thriving 'nigger' again."⁴⁹ While his personal politics on races represented the prejudices of his day, Brown had long advocated for the depiction of African Americans in sculpture. As Kirk Savage has

⁴⁵ John C. Hamilton to HKB, New York, 19 October 1865, HKBB 1764.

⁴⁶ HKB to [?], New York, undated [circa 1866], HKBB 1786.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Timothy G. Churchill to HKB, New York, 31 October 1867, HKBB 1853-1854.

⁴⁹ HKB to Lydia Brown, 30 April 1867, HKBB 1840. Henry Kirke Bush-Brown assigned a date to the model in his caption that appears with its photo, "First Sketch for N.Y. Lincoln April 30 1867 rejected on account of Negro," Bush-Brown family papers.

observed in his book, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, Brown thought that by depicting the African American body in civic sculpture, he could lead his audience to think about slavery and confront its injustices.⁵⁰ Before sculpting the model for the Lincoln monument, Brown sculpted figures of African Americans in his designs for both the pediment of the House building of the United States Capitol (1855) and the pediment of the South Carolina State House (1859) [Figure 5.05]. Brown's model for the South Carolina pediment depicted slaves working with cotton and rice crops, suggesting that the slave labor was responsible for the South's agricultural prosperity.⁵¹ Brown had also included an African American figure on the bas-relief depicting the Erie Canal below the front of the Clinton monument. Brown's interest in depicting African Americans reflected not only his belief in abolition but also his fascination with race. He regarded African Americans in the same way that many nineteenth-century artists saw Native Americans— as distinctly American subjects.⁵²

Brown was not the only one to depict Lincoln in these manumission scenes. Several nineteenth-century artists discussed in Savage's book paired a standing white male, often representing Lincoln, with a kneeling black man. One sculpture that closely resembles Brown's first for *Lincoln* is Thomas Ball's *Emancipation Group* [Figure 5.06]. Ball, an American sculptor who lived in Florence, claimed he sculpted a statuette of Lincoln

⁵⁰ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 31.

⁵¹ A discussion and illustrations of Brown's pediment designs may be found in *Ibid.*, 32-39.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 31.

manumitting a slave after hearing of the president's assassination.⁵³ In 1869, Ball was granted a commission to enlarge his statuette for a monument commissioned by African Americans, many of whom were formerly slaves. The monument was unveiled in Lincoln Park, Washington, D.C., in 1876.⁵⁴ It explicitly connected Lincoln to the first president; Lincoln leans on a column that displays a portrait relief of Washington. In both Ball's and Brown's compositions, the black man crouches in subordination to the standing Lincoln. But on closer examination, there are major differences between Ball's *Emancipation* and Brown's first model for the *Lincoln* for the Union League Club that are not mentioned by Savage.

The African American figure in each composition refers to men with different positions in society. In Ball's sculpture, he is a barefoot, barely-clothed ex-slave, whose hands are still encircled by the manacles of a broken shackle. He hesitantly looks up but not at Lincoln, who is a kind of surrogate master, and waits to be freed. In contrast, Brown depicted quite a different man in his plaster sketch for the Union League Club. This African American is partially bare-chested, but he also wears tailored trousers and a canteen strap. He may have been a slave once, but now he is a soldier in a position of strength and dignity. As such, he is already free and has knelt down of his own will and raises his face, matching Lincoln's gaze with his own.

This soldier figure specifically referred to an important event in the Club's recent history, its drive to enlist black regiments during the Civil War. Similar to the way that

⁵³ For more on Ball see Thomas Ball, *My Fourscore Years: Autobiography by Sculptor Thomas Ball (1819-1911)*, ed. Epilogue by Greta Elena Couper (Los Angeles: Tre-Cavalli Press, 1993).

⁵⁴ Kathryn Allamong Jacob, *Testament to Union, Civil War Monuments in Washington, D.C.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 24-25.

Brown hoped to make African Americans visible in his art, the Club hoped to make African Americans visible in New York public life. After the draft riots, which killed several African Americans, the Union League Club recruited and sponsored New York State's only African American troops, since the state itself enlisted only white men. The Club hoped that the public would see these men as dignified citizens. In 1863, with \$18,000 collected from its members, the Club created the "20th Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops" of one thousand men; it subsequently funded two more such troops.⁵⁵ The troops paraded through lower Manhattan, where the riots had taken place. When the procession reached the Bowery, where the tension was the highest, two hundred and fifty distinguished members of the Club marched with the troops to deter the public from attacking the regiment.⁵⁶ What the Club said by their actions, they hesitated to illustrate in the permanent medium of bronze, however. Brown's innovative and radical plaster model never made it out of his studio. According to Henry Kirke Bush-Brown, the Club rejected the design " 'because of fear that the figure of a Negro in a public monument would arouse the resentment of the Irish citizens.' "⁵⁷ The final composition for the Union League Club's monument to Lincoln is stripped of any reference to the Club's recruitment of black soldiers. The problem of how to depict appropriately the figure of the slave, the contraband, or the freedman is obviated by the depiction of an idea, the abolition of slavery symbolized by a scroll of paper. In his final design, Brown left Lincoln standing alone, holding a roll of paper meant to be the

⁵⁵ Bellows, *Historical Sketch of the Union League Club of New York*, 54-57. For a full account see William Seraile, *New York's Black Regiments During the Civil War*, ed. Graham Russell Hodges, *African American History and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

⁵⁶ Irwin, May, and Hotchkiss, *A History of the Union League Club of New York City*, 34.

⁵⁷ Editor's note by Henry Kirke Bush-Brown, HKBB 1856 a. This is also stated in Brown's obituary "Henry Kirke Brown," *Studio, Journal of the Fine Arts* 2 (August 1886): 31.

Emancipation Proclamation in his left hand. Although this scroll looks rather generic today, in the 1860s, it would have clearly symbolized the Emancipation Proclamation. In the final plaster model, we can even see the pointed seal showing from the bottom roll in Lincoln's hand, indicating that this was not a speech or ordinary paper [Figure 5.07].

Brown began sculpting the full-scale model in December 1867, at which point it was still undecided if the base would include bas-reliefs.⁵⁸ Lydia Brown described her husband's diligence, "Henry has been very busy in his studio modeling the large statue of Lincoln for N.Y. He has been more absorbed in it than in anything he has done for a long time."⁵⁹ By March 1869, Brown's full-scale model of the monument was complete. The figure of Lincoln stood in a long cloak, much as he often wore in life. The cloak also served to disguise his awkward proportions and to add a historic, formal quality to the monument. A friend of Brown's later commented, "The dress I regard as a necessity, and to it the cloak, with its drapery, is a great relief."⁶⁰ Ironically, at this point, the project seemed to lose momentum. By now, erecting a monument to Lincoln was no longer a priority of the Union League Club. Churchill, the treasurer of the Committee, congratulated Brown on completing the monument but regretted to report that none of the committee members could spare the time to visit Brown's studio in Newburgh and approve it. Even Brown's friend Blodgett regretted not being able to visit and said he was "perfectly satisfied with what he had seen."⁶¹ By the close of that year, the monument still had not been installed, and

⁵⁸ HKB to Mr. Todd, Newburgh, 2 December 1867, HKBB 1859.

⁵⁹ Lydia Brown to her mother, Newburgh, 2 January 1869, HKBB 1895.

⁶⁰ W.P. Prentice to HKB, New York, 29 September 1870, HKBB 1941.

⁶¹ Thomas Churchill to HKB, New York, 18 March 1869, HKBB 1911.

Churchill expressed that he had hoped to see Brown to talk about “the Lincoln Monument affair— as some of the Committee think it high time to close up so far as the details are concerned.”⁶²

By the end of 1869, Brown cast the work at the Robert Wood & Co. in Philadelphia, a new foundry that had formerly specialized in casting ornamental iron. The foundry first began casting bronze around 1866 when it won the favor of John Quincy Adams Ward.⁶³

Robert Wood & Co. wrote to Brown in January 1870:

The Lincoln Statue has attracted much attention and given very general satisfaction as a faithful & uncommon likeness of the man it memorializes, & has provoked many complimentary notices of the sculptor’s skill in delineating ‘the features & character’ ... as well as our success in casting and finishing. Awaiting yr [sic] decision as to its shipment.⁶⁴

Chairman Hamilton saw the statue at the foundry while visiting Philadelphia in February 1870 and gave it “high praises... not only as a fine likeness but in every respect entirely satisfactory.”⁶⁵

At this time, the committee passed a resolution arranging for Brown and Hunt, his fellow clubman and supporter, “to prepare a design for a base and ascertain the cost of the same and placing the statue in position.”⁶⁶ A scaled drawing and watercolor wash of the

⁶² Thomas Churchill to HKB, New York, 20 December 1869, HKBB 1926.

⁶³ For more on the Robert Wood & Co. foundry, see Michael Shapiro, *Bronze Casting and American Sculpture* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1985), 62-69.

⁶⁴ Robert Wood & Co. to HKB, Office of the Philadelphia & New York Ornamental Iron Work, No 1136 Ridge Ave., Philadelphia, 24 January 1870, HKBB 1931-1932.

⁶⁵ Thomas Churchill to HKB, New York, 16 February 1870, HKBB 1935.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

statue and its pedestal's found in Hunt's papers [Figure 5.08].⁶⁷ The pedestal consisted of three granite stones that gradually tapered from five feet across at the base to three feet across where the stone and the bronze statue meet. The base stone was purportedly the largest one ever quarried in America; the whole base added ten feet to the overall height of the monument.⁶⁸ Matching the simplicity of Brown's figure of Lincoln, the pedestal is unadorned. There are no inscriptions, the only decoration were thirty-six stars cut into the granite to symbolize the thirty-six states once again united under Lincoln's presidency at the close of the Civil War. This was one of Hunt's earliest designs for a monumental pedestal. In 1868, just two years before working on this pedestal for the *Lincoln*, he had designed the pedestal for Ward's *Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry* for Newport. Hunt would go on to collaborate frequently with Ward on other monument commissions.⁶⁹

It took a year for the pedestal and site to be prepared, during which time the bronze was kept in a warehouse in Manhattan.⁷⁰ Without any fanfare or public event, the bronze monument and granite pedestal were installed at the southwest corner of Union Square, in line with the *Washington* monument, in mid-September 1870. It faced a different direction

⁶⁷ The watercolor drawing is with the Richard Morris Hunt Papers, American Institute of Architects, The Octagon Museum, Washington, D.C., and is illustrated in Sharp, "Richard Morris Hunt and His Influence on American Beaux-Arts Sculpture," 125.

⁶⁸ "The Lincoln Monument in Union Square," *New York Times*, 11 September 1870, 1. "The Lincoln Statue, the Work of Art Placed in Position at Union Square-How It Looks," *New York Times*, 17 September 1870, 2.

⁶⁹ For more on the collaborations of Hunt and Ward see Sharp, "Richard Morris Hunt and His Influence on American Beaux-Arts Sculpture," 121-149.

⁷⁰ One article claims it was kept at South Street, "The Lincoln Statue, the Work of Art Placed in Position at Union Square-How It Looks," 2. Another article states that it was at Fourteenth Street and the North River, "The Lincoln Monument in Union Square," 1.

than the *Washington*, but plans were immediately made to realign it.⁷¹ Even the Club only mentioned the monument in passing in its Annual Report for 1870.⁷²

The two monuments were unequally matched, in spite of Brown's best efforts to make them "correspond in mass or quantity of material to prevent [the *Lincoln*] appearing meager by contrast."⁷³ Once in situ, the monument of Lincoln looked awkward compared to that of Washington. The press harshly criticized the work, as it never before had with Brown's earlier civic sculptures. The Lincoln was called "ugly, ungraceful, undignified," "a frightful object... the embodiment of those terrible visions of 'Bogey' which affright the juvenile mind."⁷⁴ The *New York Daily Tribune* noted the inherent problem of depicting Lincoln in sculpture, "Mr. Lincoln had no grandeurs of an external kind: and the grandeur of his soul was not such as bronze or marble can express. He was a remarkably homely man... a masterpiece of ungracefulness, long, awkward, angular, and loose-jointed."⁷⁵ One reviewer especially disliked the figure's clothes and wrote, "the mind has not conceived such a pair of pantaloons as that which the artist has put on this statue... [Brown] has clapped a Roman toga over the upper part of the figure, thus combining the costume of the past and

⁷¹ W.P. Prentice to HKB, New York, 29 September 1870, HKBB 1941.

⁷² "In looking back on the duties assumed and the work accomplished since the last Annual Report, the Committee recall with no small degree of satisfaction the erection, under the auspices of the Club, of the bronze statue of ABRAHAM LINCOLN," Report for 1871, *Reports of Executive Committee and Treasurer. By-Laws and Roll of Members*, 11.

⁷³ HKB to [?], New York, no date, HKBB 1786.

⁷⁴ "The Lincoln Statue on Union Square," *Daily Tribune*, 1 October 1870, 12:1; *New York Times*, 21 September 1870, 4.

⁷⁵ "The Lincoln Statue on Union Square," 12:1.

present in a manner never yet dreamt of by caricaturists.”⁷⁶ The criticisms soon subsided as news of the new monument was overshadowed by the death and public funeral of the Civil War hero Admiral David Farragut.⁷⁷

The Union League Club and Brown thought the Lincoln monument would be a success. Together they had selected a design to emphasize the somber simplicity of Lincoln. Some of the differences between Brown’s *Washington* and *Lincoln* monuments can be attributed to the ways the public regarded and remembered these two presidents. But changing tastes also made Brown’s monument aesthetically seem out of fashion.

In 1871, Jacob Wrey Mould, Architect-in-Chief of the Department of Parks, designed an ornamental quatrefoil granite enclosure measuring twenty-four feet in diameter and two feet five inches high to build around the monument [Figure 5.09].⁷⁸ It was thought that this decorative enclosure would “dissipate... the dreariness about the pedestal which supports the bronze statue.”⁷⁹ The idea was to correct for the unpopularity of the monument by adding an extremely elaborate outer base, more reflective of contemporary Victorian taste. The granite enclosure that was actually built was only a part of a design that

⁷⁶ *New York Times*, 21 September 1870, 4.

⁷⁷ Farragut’s elaborate funeral took place on 30 September 1870, *New York Times*, 29 September 1870, 8. Only a few years later, Ward was selected by the New York Farragut Monument Commission to sculpt a public monument of the admiral. Ward declined the commission and recommended the young sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. In December 1876 Saint Gaudens was awarded this commission and collaborated with the architect Stanford White to create the monument located in Madison Square Park, Manhattan. It was Saint-Gaudens’s first civic monument commission and paved the way for a rich career in public art.

⁷⁸ Drawing, Jacob Wrey Mould, *Enclosure to Lincoln Union Square*, 1871, Parks & Recreation, New York.

⁷⁹ “The Lincoln Statue to Be Improved,” *New York Times*, 18 July 1871, 2.

called for a bronze railing, a multicolored granite flooring, gasoliers, and the inscriptions "Veritas, Fidelas, Potestas, Integritas."⁸⁰ The stone was inscribed with the words, "with charity for all, with malice towards none."⁸¹ Granite vases designed "to be kept with living flowers, as a perpetual offering to the object of respect and veneration," and "an appropriate sentimental offering in memory of the deceased martyr," were part of the enclosure.⁸²

With these additions, the somber monument took on a decidedly funerary tone, even further distancing it from the heroic quality that imbued the nearby equestrian *Washington*. Perhaps this was inevitable, since no other president had been so closely and so recently associated with death.⁸³ Lincoln was the first American president to be assassinated, but death had also pervaded his personal life. When Lincoln's young son, Willie, died in the White House, Lincoln's wife, Mary Todd, fell into a deep depression and took solace in spiritualism, a belief in contact with the dead. Mary Todd held séances in the White House

⁸⁰ "The Lincoln Statue," *New York Times*, 12 July 1873, 2.

⁸¹ This quote is from the close of Lincoln's second inaugural address in which Lincoln encouraged the nation to heal the wounds caused by the Civil War and to establish an enduring peace.

⁸² *First Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Public Parks for the Year Ending May 1, 1871* (New York: William Cullen Bryant and Co., 1872), item Nc 41; "The Lincoln Statue to Be Improved," 2.

⁸³ The monument remained at the southwest corner of Union Square until 1930, when the park was remodeled to accommodate the subway. At that time, Mould's elaborate stone enclosure was discarded and the monument displayed on its simplified granite pedestal, as Hunt and Brown had originally envisioned. The Department of Parks relocated the monument to the interior of the park, near the comfort station at the north end, away from the traffic and away from its pendant, the *Washington, Annual Report of the Department of Parks, Borough of Manhattan* (New York: Department of Parks, 1930), 69.

that the President was thought to attend on occasion.⁸⁴ The whole decade had been marked by death and loss, with more Americans dying in the Civil War than during any other war.

There was a real difference in the dynamism between Brown's *Lincoln* and *Washington*, as there was between the presidents themselves and the circumstances surrounding their deaths. But the lack of enthusiasm surrounding the *Lincoln* and the matter-of-fact way that the Union League Club approved Brown's final model indicates that the place monuments in New York had changed between 1856 and 1870. That is, it was no longer unusual to see a monument nor was it a tremendous undertaking to sponsor or build one. The wealthy, civic-minded men of society had placed their efforts in parks, such as Central Park, and museums, such as the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art—all of which opened in the late 1860s and 1870s. The responsibility that civic-minded men had to society was measured by their support of "useful" monuments such as these.

Abraham Lincoln for the War Fund Committee of Brooklyn

Much like the Union League Club of New York, the Brooklyn War Fund Committee met one week after Lincoln's death and began planning a monument to the fallen president.

⁸⁴ Nettie Colburn Maynard, *Was Abraham Lincoln a Spiritualist?* (Philadelphia: Rufus C. Hartranft, 1891). Coincidentally, Henry Kirke Brown and his wife, Lydia, were spiritualists and she even claimed to possess telepathic powers. This may seem irrelevant, circumspect, and perhaps even ridiculous to us today, but spiritualism and analogous movements like Swedenborgianism were incredibly important and popular in the nineteenth century. Many prominent citizens believed in contact with the spirit world. The Browns' circle of spiritualists reportedly included people like William Cullen Bryant who frequently invited the Browns to visit his country home in Roslyn, Long Island. There may be nothing conclusive to say about a spiritualist sculptor making monuments of the dead, but it is curious to consider that the Union Square *Lincoln* became something of a public shrine with overt references to death. On Brown and spiritualism see Bush-Brown, 651-4, quoting from William James Stillman, *The Autobiography of a Journalist*, 2 vols. (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1901), 1:183-185.

Ironically, although the Union League Club had approached Brown first, the Brooklyn War Fund Committee unveiled its monument by Brown on October 21, 1869, one year before the one in Manhattan was unveiled. It was probably the first public Lincoln monument in the nation. Like the Union League Club, the Brooklyn War Fund had formed to muster support for the Union during the Civil War and raised over \$400,000 for the United States Sanitary Commission through the Brooklyn Sanitary Fair of 1864. The Brooklyn War Fund differed from the Union League Club in that it had broader support for its cause. Unlike Manhattan, Brooklyn was home to some of the nation's most outspoken abolitionists, including Henry Ward Beecher. Consequently, Brown's *Lincoln* for Brooklyn more explicitly refers to abolition, the war, and the Union victory than does the one in Manhattan. Lincoln's greater popularity in Brooklyn is evidenced by the way this monument was funded through a remarkable public subscription raised of 12,959 individuals, who donated only one dollar each.

On 22 April 1865, eight days after Lincoln was shot, the War Fund Committee met and decided to erect the monument.⁸⁵ In limiting the subscriptions to one dollar per person, the Fund hoped "that all might have equal opportunity to take part in this work of public gratitude."⁸⁶ It raised the bulk of the funds so quickly, it invested the \$12,959 in savings bonds to generate a total of \$15,000 for the monument and its installation.⁸⁷ On 1 June 1865, the War Fund Committee sponsored a public oration by Richard S. Storrs, a well-known reverend, presumably to help boost interest in the monument drive. At the close of

⁸⁵ *Services and Addresses at the Unveiling of the Statue of Abraham Lincoln, Brooklyn, N.Y. October 21st 1869*, 3.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

his rousing speech, Storrs said, “The monuments we may build— and which it is our instinct and privilege to build... in this city by the sea... are not needful to [Lincoln], but only to the hearts from which they arise, and the future generations which they shall instruct.”⁸⁸

The “Committee on the Monument” consisted of influential Brooklynites: James P. Wallace, James S. T. Stranahan, James How, Jr., Isaac H. Frothingham, Dwight Johnson, George S. Stephenson, Benjamin F. Delano, and Elias Lewis, Jr.⁸⁹ Wallace, the chair of the committee, was a successful businessman and, at various times, president of the New York Produce Exchange, the New York Guaranty and Indemnity Company, and the New York Warehousing Company.⁹⁰

Given Brown’s connection to Brooklyn in the 1850s, when he maintained a studio there and built the *Clinton* monument for Green-Wood Cemetery, he was a likely candidate for the commission. It is unknown exactly when the War Fund Committee commissioned Brown to sculpt the monument. However, by January 1866, Wallace wrote to Brown asking for a description of the design for the press, indicating that the artist was in contact with some members of the commission. In an undated letter that probably predates Wallace’s letter to Brown, the sculptor wrote to “Mr. P.” and fleshed out detailed specifications for the monument:

In accordance with your suggestion in our conversation about the proposed monument of Lincoln, I make the following suggestions— If a Statue, and exposed

⁸⁸ Storrs, Jr., *An Oration Commemorative of President Abraham Lincoln; Delivered at Brooklyn, N.Y. June 1, 1865 at the Request of the War Fund Committee, Brooklyn*, 64.

⁸⁹ *Services and Addresses at the Unveiling of the Statue of Abraham Lincoln, Brooklyn, N.Y. October 21st 1869*, 2.

⁹⁰ “James P. Wallace” in Henry R. Stiles, ed., *The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History and Commercial and Industrial Record of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn*, N.Y. (New York: W.W. Munsell & Co., 1884), 506-508.

to the open air, it should be of bronze, both for the sake of appearance and durability. If placed in Prospect Park, the statue should not be less than eight or nine feet in height, and should surmount a suitable pedestal of granite or some suitable and lasting stone,--said base or pedestal to be not less than fifteen feet in height, making the whole work twenty-three or twenty-four feet.⁹¹

“Mr. P.,” probably refers to either James Prentice or John H. Prentice. Brown had been close to the Prentice family since the early 1840s. Although Prentice is not among the list of committee members included on the monument’s dedication pamphlet, he was present at several of the planning meetings for the project and may have introduced Brown to the committee members.⁹²

In addition to asking for a description of the design, Wallace invited the sculptor to meet the full committee, which he did in early January 1866.⁹³ The committee joined Wallace in heartily approving Brown’s proposal; the monument that was ultimately unveiled deviated very little from Brown’s written descriptions. The committee, which, at this time had raised \$7000, quickly moved to hire Brown, but then recanted its offer because of a disagreement on how to draft Brown’s contract and payments. Even at this point in his mature career, Brown faced a well meaning but inexperienced monument committee. As had happened with the Union League Club commission, Brown suffered new procedures and a burdensome contract. In this case, Brown was not asked to compete against his fellow sculptors but, rather, to provide a monetary security that the monument would be completed. In years prior to this, it was Brown who pushed for precise contracts to protect him from losses if the commission failed. For example, as discussed in Chapter III, Brown

⁹¹ HKB to Mr. P., no date, HKBB 1762.

⁹² *Services and Addresses at the Unveiling of the Statue of Abraham Lincoln, Brooklyn, N.Y. October 21st 1869*, 2; HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 7 January 1866, HKBB 1768.

⁹³ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 7 January 1866, HKBB 1769.

wrote to James Lee, chairman of the *Washington* monument committee, and demanded a contract that would clarify his position and terms of payment for sculpting the monument. Committees had changed in the fifteen years between these two commissions. The Brooklyn Lincoln Monument Committee asked Brown to guarantee his first payment for the monument with a security that he would finish the monument. Brown did not have such funds and wrote, “[I] would not consent to anyone’s binding themselves to do this for me.”⁹⁴ The Fund proposed to advance the sculptor \$3000 to produce the model but required him to secure the funds against his property. Unwilling to do this, Brown suggested two alternatives. First, he conveyed to the committee John Quincy Adams Ward’s offer to “finish the monument without compensation” should Brown find himself unable to complete it. The committee rejected this on the grounds that it could not bind Ward to such an agreement.

Brown suggested an alternative arrangement, arguing, “when the model was complete, the artist had performed his essential work and that my natural kin, my wife [Lydia], could carry out the rest of the work as well as any one.” Lydia’s ability to oversee the completion of the monument would not have been implausible given that she seems to have closely followed her husband’s work; many of her letters describe his day-to-day progress with various commissions. Wives of other sculptors had played active roles in completing unfinished works, for example Thomas Crawford’s wife, Louisa Ward Crawford, supervised the completion of her husband’s works after his death and arranged for the distribution of his plasters.⁹⁵ By now, several women had also claimed sculpture as their own

⁹⁴ Ibid., HKBB 1770.

⁹⁵ Sylvia E. Crane, *White Silence: Greenough, Powers, and Crawford, American Sculptors in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1972), 402-408; Laretta

profession. In addition to the group of American women who sculpted in Rome, like Harriet Hosmer and Emma Stebbins, Vinnie Ream was making headlines on home soil by modeling a Lincoln monument for the Capitol when she was only a teenager.⁹⁶

Given Brown's experience and reputation as a professional sculptor, both of his suggestions to the committee seem outrageous. However, Brown must have anticipated this problem, since he arrived at the meeting prepared to make these counter offers. The Brooklyn Lincoln Monument Committee accepted Brown's suggestion that Lydia Brown follow the completion of the monument in his absence, but it still wanted a financial security. Brown offered to mortgage his house, but after the meeting James Prentice, a member of the committee and long-time acquaintance of Brown, approached the sculptor and confidentially offered his and his brother's assets as a security. Afterwards, Brown reconsidered the unfavorable terms and determined to write his own contract, one that contained "no humiliating clauses or quibbles." He wrote to his wife, "I will have my rights and they shall be respected."⁹⁷ No record of the final contract exists but Brown evidently secured the commission; he completed a model eleven months later.⁹⁸

In spite of his long experience in the field, and his record of successfully completed statues, Brown faced heavy demands from the commissioners of the *Lincoln* monument. His first instinct, to provide them with the security they sought at his expense, show that he did

Dimmick, "The Portrait Busts and Ideal Works of Thomas Crawford (1813?-1857), American Sculptor in Rome" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1986), 1:88.

⁹⁶ Ream visited Brown's studio in Newburgh, Lydia Brown to HKB, 21 May 1867, HKBB 1841.

⁹⁷ HKB to Lydia Brown, Brooklyn, 7 January 1866, HKBB 1768.

⁹⁸ James P. Wallace to HKB, New York, 10 November 1866, HKBB 1807.

not have much leverage in this situation. Without a professional organization or a union, such as the National Sculpture Society, sculptors as accomplished as Brown would be pressed to accept unreasonable contracts.

Aesthetics

A major element of Brown's Brooklyn design was his emphasis on the Emancipation Proclamation. Rather than depict Lincoln holding a rolled piece of paper, as he had done for the *Lincoln* in Union Square, Brown sculpted several bold references to the famous document and placed them in clear view on the composition. When first formulating his thoughts for the committee, Brown wrote, "in the treatment of a statue to Mr. Lincoln, the fact of his Proclamation Emancipation [sic] should be made prominent somehow, either in bas-relief, or on the base, inscribed on the pedestal or seen on a scroll held in his hands."⁹⁹ In a letter to Wallace, he further stated the importance of including the theme of emancipation:

In any view of the late rebellion the Southern interest in human slavery was its foundation and its motive power and, in consequence, the destruction of that institution by the President's proclamation was the final blow to it... It has therefore appeared proper to me to represent the late President unfolding the sublime purpose of emancipation to the people.¹⁰⁰

In creating a design for the Brooklyn War Fund, Brown did not revisit his first model for the Union League Club, which had been rejected because it included a figure of a black man. Ironically, the Brooklyn War Fund might have been more likely than the Union League to approve a politically radical design that blatantly celebrated emancipation and did not have to

⁹⁹ HKB to Mr. P[rentice], no date, HKBB 1762.

¹⁰⁰ HKB to James R. Wallace, circa January 1866, HKBB 1768.

negotiate an unsupportive public. However, the limited funds collected through public subscription prevented the Fund from affording a composition with two figures. Even without the figure of an African American, Brown's design for the *Lincoln* in Brooklyn more overtly refers to the Emancipation Proclamation than does its sister monument in Manhattan. In the Brooklyn monument, Lincoln points with his right hand to the proclamation that he unfurls in his left hand. Brown inscribed on the bronze scroll a quote from the proclamation, "Shall be forever free."

Brown also used bronze accoutrements on the base of the monument to add further meaning to the *Lincoln* statue [Figure 5.10]. On the front of the monument, an eagle holding a broken shackle in its talons tangibly referred to the abolition of slavery, while an eagle on the rear held the coat of arms of Brooklyn, then a separate municipality from New York.¹⁰¹ Two bronze wreaths inscribed "USN," an abbreviation for United States Navy, and "USA," for United States Army, placed on the sides of the monument, made acute reference to Lincoln as commander-in-chief, the war of the rebellion, and the victory of the Union—ideas that the Union League Club had avoided in its monument to Lincoln. These decorative elements, though seemingly minor, set the Brooklyn monument apart from the *Lincoln* in Union Square Park.

In November 1866, Brown notified Wallace that his model was complete. True to the all-inclusive, democratic spirit of the War Fund Committee, Wallace printed invitations for all 150 members of the committee to visit Brown's studio in Newburgh, New York, to

¹⁰¹ Brown mentions these bronze decorative elements in a letter to James R. Wallace, circa January 1866, HKBB 1768. They are also described in a review of the monument, "Abraham Lincoln, Unveiling [Sic] of His Statue in Prospect Park, Brooklyn," *New York Daily Tribune*, 22 October 1869, 1.

review the monument on November 15, 1866.¹⁰² Although there is no record of how many people came or what they said, the final monument closely matches Brown's early written proposals, indicating that the model was approved without major changes. To guide him in sculpting the head, Brown supposedly relied on "a bust taken from life" and his 'vivid recollection which a personal intimacy [with Lincoln] afforded the artist."¹⁰³ Like the *Lincoln* for Union Square, the Brooklyn *Lincoln* was cast at the Robert Wood Foundry in Philadelphia. In February 1868, Brown wrote to his friend, the painter George Fuller, "Have made a statue of Abraham Lincoln for Prospect Park, Brooklyn-nine feet high, -just finished."¹⁰⁴ The War Fund committee accepted this completed bronze sculpture in March 1868 and gave the monument over to the Park Commission which was responsible for providing a location and building the pedestal.

The Monument and the Park

The arrival of the monument at Brooklyn Parks Commission posed a legal problem. This was the first statue it ever received, and there was no precedent or protocol for accepting such a gift or providing for its installation.¹⁰⁵ In May of the same year, New York State granted the Parks Commission legislative authority to accept monuments for the park,

¹⁰² Lincoln Monument, Brooklyn, 12 November 1866, HKBB 1807.

¹⁰³ William G. Bishop, *Manual of the Common Council of the City of Brooklyn 1868* (Brooklyn: Arthur Brown, 1868), 419-420.

¹⁰⁴ HKB to George Fuller, Newburgh, 23 February 1868, HKBB 1864.

¹⁰⁵ I am grateful to Elmer Sprague for this observation.

but it took more than one year for the Park to build the pedestal and install the monument.¹⁰⁶

As is the case with all outdoor monuments, finding an appropriate site for the *Lincoln* was important. From the beginning of the project, the Brooklyn War Fund Committee had worked closely with the Brooklyn Parks Commission, established in 1860 to oversee the designation and construction of public parks. The Commission's president, James Stranahan, attended Brown's first meeting with the committee in January 1866. All had agreed to place the *Lincoln* in Prospect Park. However, when it came time to install the monument in 1869, Chairman Wallace, Brown, Stranahan, and the park's landscape architects had conflicting opinions on where to place the statue.

This unusual problem of determining where to place the monument existed because the face of urban environments was changing. Brown's *Washington* of 1856 was placed on a traffic triangle facing a small park that one could see across. But after the opening of Vaux and Olmsted's parks in the 1860s, many people thought to integrate monuments with these new landscapes, even as this went against the wishes of the parks designers.

Prospect Park was Brooklyn's largest and most attractive park. It was designated parkland around 1859, but its construction was interrupted by the Civil War. After the war, the Parks Commission hired the landscape architects Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux to improve the design. The award-winning duo applied the same picturesque aesthetic that they had used for Central Park, treating the space as a carefully landscaped pastoral retreat from the city. Their vision included long green vistas and some utility buildings, but

¹⁰⁶ Bishop, *Manual of the Common Council of the City of Brooklyn 1868*, 419-420.

no monuments in the body of the park. Then main entrance to the park was at the northern plaza at the confluence of the major thoroughfares Flatbush Avenue and Eastern Parkway.

The plaza at the Flatbush Avenue entrance to the Park is a congested matrix of streets that, in the 1860s, included a crossroads of two railroads [Figure 5.11].¹⁰⁷ Olmsted and Vaux tried to mitigate this harsh entrance to the park by planting two long, high mounds in the shape of crescents and one circular mound along the plaza. In the center of this elliptical plaza, they placed an ornate circular Victorian fountain made of cast stone and colored glass that was lit by gaslight. The fountain was enormous, with a basin diameter of 160 feet and a central jet projecting water to a height of 100 feet, and meant to mark the entrance to the park from a distance down Flatbush Avenue. A high platform, built for public gatherings and orations, abutted and stretched northward from the fountain, away from the park.

Although this was not in keeping with Vaux and Olmsted's vision for the park and the plaza, since 1866 the Parks Commission had wanted to erect in this space monuments to America's three war-time presidents: George Washington, Andrew Jackson, and Abraham Lincoln.¹⁰⁸ These would have best fit into Vaux and Olmsted's plan if they were placed at the entrance to the park. Instead, Brown's *Lincoln*, which was the first and only one of these proposed monuments to be completed, was installed on the platform, near the fountain, at a

¹⁰⁷ The history of the Plaza and Prospect Park is summarized from Vollmer Associates and Mary B. Dierickx, *A Historic Summary of Grand Army Plaza and Eastern Parkway from the Plaza to Washington Avenue Borough of Brooklyn* (New York City Department of Transportation Bureau of Highways, Capital Project No HW-170 Contract No. THCK170C, 1982).

¹⁰⁸ Stranahan spoke about these three monuments in his speech at the dedication of the *Lincoln, Services and Addresses at the Unveiling of the Statue of Abraham Lincoln, Brooklyn, N.Y. October 21st 1869*, 11-12.

highly visible but busy point, away from the entrance to the park and close to the traffic. Although this had long been the proposed site, as the installation of the monument approached, Brown and several members of the War Fund Committee found it unsuitable and would have preferred to place the monument inside Prospect Park. Their dilemma touches on a question fundamental to public monuments in an urban environment: Are they best placed on streets, where they might have to compete visually with the city's chaos but would be seen by many people? Or are they better viewed against the green, tranquil backdrop of a park? Monuments are often relocated after installation as original sites change character with time. The location of Brown's *Lincoln*, for the Brooklyn War Fund Committee, however was debated even before its installation.

Chairman Wallace was the first to take issue with the location and asked the Parks Department in February 1869 to approve a new site for the monument.¹⁰⁹ Wallace hoped the monument could be installed closer to the Union Street entrance to Prospect Park and argued that the majority of subscribers who had funded the statue lived closer to that entrance of the park. He reasoned, "it ought to be located where we could see it at least from our carriage way."¹¹⁰ Although the monument was sponsored by public subscriptions limited to one dollar per person, Wallace suggests that some constituents ought to have better access to the monument than others. Wallace spoke with both Stranahan and Superintendent John N. Taylor about the site, but the Parks Department hesitated to approve a new site, because the plaza's fountain was nearly complete and the foundation for

¹⁰⁹ James P. Wallace to HKB, New York, 18 February 1869, HKBB 1905.

¹¹⁰ James P. Wallace to HKB, 3 March 1869, 1907.

the monument had already been laid.¹¹¹ However, the Parks Department was open to discussing the matter further and encouraged a dialogue between Brown and the architects of the plaza, Vaux and Olmsted.

It is unclear if Brown ever met or corresponded with Vaux and Olmsted on this matter. If he did, the architects were probably not sympathetic to moving the sculpture into Prospect Park, where it would disturb their vision of uninterrupted pastoral views. But neither were they content with the monument's location in the plaza. Olmsted wrote to Brown just five days before the monument's dedication,

I am instructed to inform you that the Park Commission can not allow the Statue of Lincoln to stand in its present position with its face to the west. The objections to it are of such a character that I am quite sure that when they have been explained to you, you will at once acknowledge the necessity for a change.¹¹²

Brown suggested that Olmsted wait at least until after the dedication to discuss the matter but disagreed strongly with realigning the monument as Olmsted had proposed. He wrote to Olmsted:

My objection to placing it with the face to the north is that it never could have other than a reflected light, which would make the face look like a caricature – like the effect of footlights on the stage... it would be more in unison with the main idea to have it face to the north, but to so would sacrifice the Statue to its position – would reduce it to a decoration rather than confer upon it the dignity of a monument to a great man.¹¹³

In spite of the problems with the site, the dedication of the monument went forward and was well-attended. The statue proved a greater popular success than did the one in Union Square. The ceremony began at 3 PM on Thursday, 21 October 1869, with 12,000

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Frederick Law Olmsted to HKB, Brooklyn, 16 October 1869, HKBB 1918.

¹¹³ HKB to Frederick Law Olmsted, Newburgh, 18 October 1869, HKBB 1919.

spectators in attendance.¹¹⁴ The Navy Yard band played, and a Regiment from the New York State National Guard was present. Brown had the honor of releasing the shroud and uncovering the monument “amid the cheers of spectators, and the thunders of the National Salute.”¹¹⁵ Although he had long left his studio in Brooklyn Heights, one of the speakers identified him to the people of Brooklyn as “one of your gifted townsmen.”¹¹⁶ Brooklyn luminaries, including A. Abbott Low, Stranahan, Storrs, and Wallace, delivered speeches and typically compared Lincoln to Washington, reminding the audience of the revolutionary battlefield within Prospect Park, “a spot consecrated, more than ninety years since, by the patriot blood.”¹¹⁷ The speakers also reached further back in history to compare the statue to the antiquities of ancient Rome and forward to future generation who would see it. Praising it for its bronze and granite material, Storrs said:

And so we mean this statue to continue: its base of stone not soon decaying; the tooth of time pressing long, before it yields to the sharp imprint; the metal which stands upon it remaining, untouched of air, or worm, or fire; enduring, almost, as are the features of nature.¹¹⁸

Newspapers focused more on the patriotic event and less on the aesthetics of Brown’s monument, although one article described the figure as “a life-like representation... as

¹¹⁴ “Unveiling of the Lincoln Statue,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 18 October 1869, 1; “The Lincoln Statue, Prospect Park, Brooklyn,” *Harpers Weekly*, 13 November 1869; “Abraham Lincoln, Unvailing [Sic] of His Statue in Prospect Park, Brooklyn,” 1.

¹¹⁵ *Services and Addresses at the Unveiling of the Statue of Abraham Lincoln, Brooklyn, N.Y. October 21st 1869*, 8.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

[Lincoln] appeared with his cloak wrapped around him.”¹¹⁹ The reception was quite different from that of Brown’s *Lincoln* in Union Square, perhaps because it was truly a public project and was located in a largely residential area that had always supported Lincoln and his politics. In subsequent decades, the monument was annually laden with wreaths, flowers, and memorabilia on Memorial Day, then called Decoration Day.¹²⁰

As Brooklyn changed, so did the environment surrounding *Lincoln*. Between 1889 and 1892 John Duncan’s massive granite *Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Memorial Arch* steadily rose on the plaza. Under the direction of architect Stanford White the arch was heavily ornamented by 1904 with elaborate bronze compositions and a quadriga by the Beaux-Arts sculptor Frederick MacMonnies. Ironically, Lincoln’s monument was replaced by a monument that commemorated the Civil War at large and all the soldiers and sailors who had fought for the Union, not just their commander-in-chief. Brown’s *Lincoln*, which had defined the plaza and which was so warmly received at its unveiling, came to be seen as too small and understated compared to new tone of the great plaza. In 1895, *Lincoln* was moved out of the shadow of the imposing arch and into the Concert Grove, deep in Prospect Park. It was carelessly installed and, to this day, it is misaligned with its base by a factor of ninety degrees and confusingly displays “USN” on the front of the monument.

The Brooklyn *Lincoln* was better received than the one in Union Square but both of Brown’s last civic monuments for New York essentially suffered the same undesirable fate. Soon after their unveilings both were modified and moved from their initial public locations to the interiors of the parks. This is the fate of many a monument but the fact that this

¹¹⁹ "Abraham Lincoln, Unvailing [Sic] of His Statue in Prospect Park, Brooklyn," 1.

¹²⁰ Vollmer Associates and Dierickx, *A Historic Summary of Grand Army Plaza and Eastern Parkway from the Plaza to Washington Avenue Borough of Brooklyn*, 16.

happened so soon after they were installed shows how Brown's art no longer carried the importance that it had at the beginning of his career, that his work was misunderstood and had fallen out of favor with the prevailing tastes of society.

It is not that monuments were less important now than they had been when Brown first started sculpting. On the contrary, monuments had become very common and it was no longer enough to capture the hero as he had appeared in life. As is the case with MacMonnies's sculptures for the Memorial Arch, the new vocabulary for public monuments took the realist hero that Brown had long promoted and combined it with grand scale architecture settings and added allegorical figures. This was the new language for public monuments. Though its realism and historical accuracy and even its use of bronze were rooted in the model that Brown had put forth, it was an utterly different way of representing a hero.

Conclusion

When Brown began his career, the first wave of American sculptors had established themselves in Italy and many of their works borrowed heavily from the classical examples they saw abroad. Though Brown also studied in Italy and was influenced by neoclassicism, he advocated for a more realist approach that was based on the study of nature. More importantly, he left Italy with the ambition of sculpting civic monuments in the United States.

Brown left his mark on American art not only by sculpting some of the first monuments in the country, but also by cultivating support for public art, befriending patrons, and pioneering the bronze industry so that his sculptures could be cast locally. He went on to do more for fellow American artists by lobbying Congress for their rights and helping to shape National Statuary Hall.

The field of sculpture changed greatly during Brown's life. When he sculpted the *Clinton* and the *Washington* in the early 1850s, competing commissions for other monuments to these heroes threatened to diffuse the limited public interest and resources and eliminated one another. Sculptors constantly risked watching that their commissions disintegrate. If funding was secured, the sculptor often underestimated the time and cost needed to build it, as he could not always count on technology to be available and efficient. By the end of Brown's life in 1886, monuments had become a familiar part of the American landscape. Numerous foundries existed and it was no longer necessary to convince the general public to support the building of monuments, they were simply part and parcel of the urban environment. The greatest example of this booming interest in monument is the fact that Brown was hired to sculpt two monuments to Lincoln at the same time, and that many other artists around the country also had commissions for sculptures of Lincoln in the decade after

the Civil War. The great public intellectual, William Dean Howells sarcastically wrote in the article "The Question of Monuments" in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1866, "each city was about to celebrate [Lincoln] by a statue in its public square; every village would have his bust... and our soldiers were to be paid the like reverence and homage."¹ The fact that he could even make light of this monument mania is telling of the enormous promise post-Civil War America held for the rising sculptor.

Brown continued to receive commissions late in life but none of his late works had impact that his early works had had. What had changed in the decades between Brown and the nation's first bronze equestrian monument, *Washington* at Union Square, and his last equestrian monuments to General Winfield Scott and General Nathaniel Greene? In part, the expansion of the field of sculpture, which Brown had always encouraged, led to the demise of his career. After the Civil War, many more professionally trained sculptors were able to work in this country, thanks in part to Brown's efforts. Brown's best apprentice, John Quincy Adams Ward, eclipsed his mentor's fame. The National Gallery of Art's humorous sketch that Ward made in 1859 shows Brown asleep in his chair, an unintentional, though apt metaphor for how the younger sculptor, actively working and striving to build a career had outrun the aging, snoozing Brown [Figure Conclusion.1].

Elements of Brown's realist style and his use of bronze continued to influence future generations of American sculptors but the simple heroicism of his monuments was no match for the Gilded Age. In Howells's words, "there is in every epoch a master-feeling which art must obey, if it would flourish, and remain to represent something intelligible after

¹ William Dean Howells, "The Question of Monuments," *Atlantic Monthly* 17 (May 1866): 646-647.

the epoch is past.”² Brown’s approach to civic art was rooted in humanizing the hero, which held tremendous public appeal as the Empire City was rising. Brown depicted statesmen as they had been seen in life and included accoutrements and historical narratives without aggrandizing their persona. These monuments were placed on pedestals of moderate height that left the statuary figure within clear sight of the pedestrian viewer. In the days before towering skyscrapers and enormous, picturesque parks, these monuments were integrated with the common fabric of society and, literally, stood in the middle of the street.

After the École des Beaux Arts in Paris opened its doors to foreign students, a powerful new aesthetic came to define American urban monuments. The trio of McKim, Mead, and White built plazas specifically designed to display impressive monuments. These architects collaborated with sculptors, such as Augustus Saint-Gaudens, to harmonize monuments with their surrounding urban environs. Saint-Gaudens’s figures shared the realism that Brown had upheld but he infused them with a poised dramatic vitality and a decorative quality that better matched the tastes of the late nineteenth century. His monuments, such as the *Admiral David Farragut* and *General William Tecumseh Sherman*, combined the power of allegorical figures with meticulously rendered portraits of heroes.

At the beginning of his career in 1846, Brown had been ahead of his time. By the 1870s, he was regarded as a respectable giant of the past.

² Ibid.: 647.

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