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EDWARD SIMMONS, A PAINTER AND A YANKEE IN THE GILDED AGE

by

CYNTHIA HOLTHUSEN SANFORD

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.

2003

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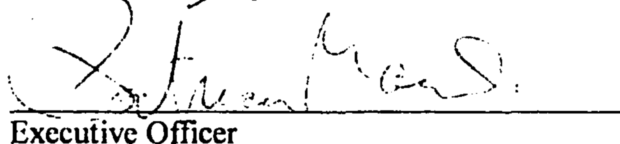

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In memory of

CATHERINE HOOVER VOORSANGER

Always an inspiring and generous colleague and a great friend

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Edward Simmons, a Painter and a Yankee in the Gilded Age

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Edward Simmons in 1893, etching by Will Simmons from a photograph by Benjamin Kimball. From Edward Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), frontispiece.

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Introduction

Edward Simmons (1852-1931) was one of the most prolific and respected mural painters of his time, beginning in the last decades of the nineteenth century and continuing well into the twentieth. As an easel painter Simmons was associated with the most significant group identified with American Impressionism, the Ten American Painters. He was very competent and versatile, producing paintings of great variety—landscapes, marines, figures *en plein air*, genre scenes, and portraits. However, major mural commissions absorbed most of his time and attention. As a consequence, he produced fewer works for exhibitions, and is therefore less well known today than other members of the Ten. No other painter in this group was so involved with murals as Simmons. Because mural painting was the mainstay of his career and earned him a national reputation, it is the focus of this dissertation. Other of his art activities are considered, especially as they relate to his murals. Both in his life and in his work Simmons was an exemplar of the art spirit of his time. He expressed the ideals and prejudices of the period known as the American Renaissance (1876-1917) and lived adventurously, enjoying "the good life" in the company of such colleagues as Edwin Blashfield, Kenyon Cox, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Childe Hassam, Will Low, Frank Millet, Robert Reid, and Stanford White.

Nearly all of this generation of American artists went to Europe, especially to Paris, to study in the academies and then to work in art colonies where they gained mastery in drawing and painting the human figure. They were further inspired by the decorative painting they saw in abundance in public buildings of many types. Simmons and a good number of his American colleagues returned home with the zeal

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to equal or surpass the decoration in the nineteenth-century Beaux-Arts and Renaissance buildings they had admired abroad. Their talents and eagerness were well met with the vanity and financial power of newly rich business barons as well as with the pride and civic spirit of government officials. Together with groups such as the Municipal Art Society and the Mural Painters these advocates aspired to create a new Athens or Rome, or more often a new Renaissance palace. They had faith that they could take the best from the past and create a new era in the decorative arts greater than all that had gone before.

In such a climate murals gained prominence and stature. Numerous artists and critics considered murals to be the highest form of painting, partly by virtue of their public nature, distinguished history as an ancient form of painting, and, not least, because of the formidable challenges involved in decorating architecture. Frank Fowler (1852-1910), an exact contemporary of Simmons and a mural painter himself, wrote of the demands of mural painting in an 1895 article "The Outlook for Decorative Art in America." He pointed out that muralists were called on to respond to the particular needs of the space, the wishes of those commissioning the mural, and the architect as well as the work of other artists involved in the projects. Fowler further explained that decorative painting demanded "a high standard of drawing . . . a great breadth and simplicity of painting . . . and splendid power of deduction and synthesis." He noted that the artist should be proficient in figures, portraits, landscapes, marines, and animals, as all of these subjects were likely possibilities for murals.[1]

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Simmons was able to use the skills developed during his studies abroad in his mural painting. He experimented with a variety of techniques and subjects and was among the most adept at making the leap from easel painting to executing large-scale panels for mural settings. Colleagues and friends attested to his remarkable ability. In 1900, in a feature article on Simmons, the artist Arthur Hoeber (1854-1915), wrote in words that seem to capture the feelings of many of his colleagues: "There are some men . . .whose natural gifts are most interesting, and whose ability seems simply marvelous. These happy mortals appear to have none of the trials and tribulations that beset the path of their comrades and from the beginning draw and paint dexterously. Such a man is Edward Emerson Simmons." Hoeber, who knew him well from student days in France, related that Simmons's easel "was a favorite loafing-place" and magnet for classmates at the Académie Julian. His fellows would "stand and watch him draw with charcoal or paint *morçeaux* with surprising facility."[2]

Cosmopolitan artists like Simmons felt that allegory was the most appropriate form of expression for the decorative purpose of murals. They also thought that allegory was a timeless and universal language well suited to public buildings. Murals were considered generally uplifting for the public, and it was hoped that they would be particularly effective in reaching those too young to read or too old to learn or the new immigrants, who were arriving in what many felt were alarming droves. Allegory held sway as mural painting burgeoned in the 1890s. By 1900, however, a growing number of artists and representatives of the public found allegory inscrutable and irrelevant. Cultural nationalists became increasingly outspoken in demanding more direct lessons from the country's own history for decoration. They believed history

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paintings were more suitable for American public buildings and had clearer messages to impart to the new immigrant, schoolchild, or down-to-earth western farmer.

For classicists like Simmons, Blashfield, and Cox, who admired the European tradition, allegory was not easily forsaken. It was the epitome for decoration and gave them an excellent opportunity to display their mastery of the human figure. Simmons was often credited with breathing new life into old symbols and giving his figures, which were based on traditional myths and iconography, a fresh American aspect. But skilled as he was, Simmons could also deliver outstanding decorative history paintings when they were required. He was noted for creating the perfect painting for the site, suiting both the architectural setting and the purpose of the space, whether courtroom or ballroom.

In addition to building their own careers, leading muralists like Simmons were creating a new profession for American artists. Together with prominent architects and sculptors they encouraged a demand for public art and attained new status for decorative art and artists. They believed they were "heroes in the fight for beauty."[3] Indeed they stood firm for their ideals of beauty, for sufficient pay for their work, and for artists' copyrights. They were pioneers in the field of public art in the United States, and their legacy may in fact be much larger than the actual artwork they left behind.

This study takes a behind-the-scenes look at how Simmons and other artists and architects lobbied and struggled to develop the profession of decorative painting. Simmons's career is traced chronologically through his murals and the documents that record his experience in conceiving, creating, and installing them. His relations with

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architects, artist colleagues, and patrons, including private clients and government officials, are also investigated. Archival documentation from mural sites, Simmons's autobiography, letters and reminiscences from other artists, contemporary commentary and criticism, and even a novel based on his early art life combine to give a picture of a man who was an artist to the core—who had to "sing his song to the eye . . . or die."[4] He was a colorful leading character in the exciting society that nurtured artists and their art at the turn of the twentieth century.

Because there is no large collection of personal papers, Simmons's autobiography *From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee* (1922)[5] is the single most important resource for a chronicle of his life as an artist. This book was reportedly co-authored by a young woman, Georgia Long. But the voice and the tales are clearly his. The character who emerges quickly from the first pages matches the one who is represented in fellow Players member Oliver Herford's foreword, other artists' testimony and recollections, and to a certain extent, the fictional exaggeration of his character in the novel *Guenn*. Most convincing, *From Seven to Seventy* was praised by Simmons's son George who wrote to his father at the time it was published:

> I have spent the last two evenings deep in your book—hearing echoes of your voice, from my boyhood, on every page.
>
> I would not have believed it possible! Over all the procession of your recollections in which earl, squire and courtesan, charlatan and altruist, rub elbows down the way, you have painted the figure of yourself, with a simplicity that dignifies them all . . . . Portraits and photographs record only the shell—but science has found no way to record the man such as you have found in your tale of others, where I find you peeping out at me on every page!
>
> . . . [T]he handling is so damned good that for whatever part she played in it, Miss Long should have grateful and unstinting praise.[6]

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This book has been the starting point for my examination of Simmons's career. I used it as though it were a series of interviews with the artist and then followed up with a study of the murals and research in primary and secondary sources to learn more about the chronology and history of the murals. Simmons's account is rich in entertaining anecdotes but weak on dates, order of events, and many details about the murals. Once he discovered his profession he was in it for the love of it. He wrote that he lived life to the fullest, found beauty in the large and little things, and was driven to capture such beauty in his work. He ended his book by describing himself as happy from the day he was born, a lover and an optimist—someone who still at seventy reflected on the "beauty in the curve of a wave or a woman's breast."[7] He called himself a painter and a Yankee—something of a paradox. He played both roles with wit, intelligence, confidence, and skill, combining the intellectual and social privilege of his Yankee background with his artist's eye and passion for beauty to take full advantage of the opportunities and excesses of the Gilded Age.

Simmons left one of the most important bodies of mural work from the American Renaissance. From the time of his debut in the 1893 Columbian Exposition to the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition, he was one of the most sought-after muralists for the most prestigious commissions, both on the East Coast and in newer western states. He was on the cutting edge of trends in the early history of the movement and among the first to respond to the call for local history and the use of landscape. His work was regarded as exemplary of a new American spirit in public art. Most of his murals are extant and provide an excellent study for the development of mural painting in this country.

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[1] Frank Fowler, "The Outlook for Decorative Art in America," *Forum* 18 (February 1895): 690-91.

[2] Arthur Hoeber, "Edward Emerson Simmons," *Brush and Pencil* 5 (March 1900): 241.

[3] From the title of the exhibition and catalogue *Heroes in the Fight for Beauty: The Muralists of the Hudson County Court House* (Jersey City: Jersey City Museum, 1986). Blashfield was quoted in regard to murals and "the fight for beauty—beauty of form, color, relations, proportions," in Royal Cortissoz, *The Works of Edwin Howland Blashfield*, (New York: Charles Scribner's, Sons, 1937), n. p.

[4] Edward Simmons, "The Fine Arts Related to the People," *International Studio* 63 (November 1917):xii.

[5] The title reportedly was drawn from Benjamin Kimball's poem, "Seven and Seventy or Do Dreams Come True?" Benjamin Kimball to Simmons, 13 April 1922, original, collection of Sarah Simmons White, granddaughter of Edward Simmons, typed copy courtesy of Sumner Crane.

[6] George B. Simmons to Daddy [Edward Simmons], 28 November 1922, ibid.

[7] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), 344.

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Chapter I

The Early Years—The Making of a Yankee and a Painter

New England Heritage

Edward Emerson Simmons was a New England blueblood, born in 1852 into an intellectually elite family in Concord, Massachusetts.[1] His father, George Frederick Simmons, a Unitarian minister, died when Simmons was only three years old. He was raised by his mother, Mary Emerson (Ripley) Simmons and his grandmother Sarah Alden (Bradford) Ripley (Fig. I:1), an avid reader of the classics in Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit. Simmons descended from nineteen Mayflower Pilgrims and grew up in the Old Manse, built in 1760 and made famous by Nathaniel Hawthorne in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1846). While Simmons was growing up, this venerable house was a gathering place for many erudite friends and family members, including Henry David Thoreau and Simmons's cousin Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Simmons attributed his artistic bent, just a form of "Yankee handicraftsmanship," to his father "a better carpenter than a preacher." He further characterized that side of his family as a long line of "long-legged...lazy galoots," who had enough skill or talent to do something well enough to "make about a thousand dollars—then...sit down and loaf until it is gone." There are a couple of examples in his autobiography of this easy-come, easy-go approach to his own work and pay. His mother is described as almost the opposite—a thrifty, kind, generous, and very modest and practical person. "She was always surprised when anyone [in this intellectual

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milieu] showed a preference for her—a woman who would rather scrub a kitchen floor than write an essay."[2]

Simmons's maternal grandmother, Sarah Ripley, on the other hand, was a noted scholar, mostly self taught, who chastised herself for needing a dictionary to read Sanskrit, and was an accomplished lifelong student of botany.[3] Her sitting room was fondly described by Simmons: "There was a broad chimney shelf, and down on the left-hand side a framed bit of handwriting, an invitation to Lieutenant Bradford to dine with General Washington. Over that was a big hornet's nest, a stuffed owl, and, strangest of all, a copy of 'Beatrice Cenci' and Titian's 'Tribute Money,' brought back by my father from Italy." This favorite childhood refuge of Simmons was also a draw for many outstanding figures of the day including Emerson, Frank Sanborn, Charles Sumner, and John Brown. Simmons would listen, too young to understand the words but impressed by the emotional tone of the discussions of slavery, abolition, human and states rights.[4]

Simmons later wrote, "Every remembrance of my boyhood seems permeated with the Civil War. It is hard for me to remember when it began and when it ended. We were always having holidays at school, either for a victory or for a defeat."[5] His grandmother Ripley was deeply affected by the war, in which she lost her son Lieutenant Ezra Ripley and also a number of young men she had tutored as schoolboys. At ten years old, Simmons had tried to sign up as a drummer boy but was foiled when he was told he must first return home and learn to play the drum. This assignment gave local officials time to tip off his mother, who scolded him for this early attempt at heroism.[6]

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Throughout his life, Simmons maintained a wry pride in his New England background. In his autobiography, on the opening page of the introduction subtitled "A Yankee Heritage," he described a long-standing urge to draw two cartoons representing the relationship of New England to the rest of the nation. One titled "New England with Her Child America," ca. 1800, would show a beautiful young mother with her baby. In the other, ca. 1900, New England would be an old crone "in a poke bonnet and mitts" sharing a carriage with her son who is letting the horse run away. She tries to gain control but her New England values are shrugged off by her reckless, cigar-smoking son. While Simmons often made fun of Yankee characteristics, at the same time he so identified with his native New England that he maintained that even his physiognomy, which he compared to that of an Iroquois, was shaped by that land—where generations shared "the same climate, the same food, and the same life."[7]

Simmons's family managed to pay for his tuition to Harvard—there seemed to be no question that he would attend, and he did not wonder where the funds came from. This complacency he later attributed to his unconscious acceptance that the needs of a parson's family would always be sustained. At Harvard, he fell in with a thrifty but *bon vivant* group of fellows including James Duane Lowell, Ned Higginson, Ned Walker, Frank Childs Faulkner, and Waldo Read. They began a tradition of dining monthly on humble fare at a different member's room. This group, called "The Ring," was not allowed to grow in official members, although each member could invite a guest. Along with simple but filling food and plenty of drink, fine stories were offered, and eventually from these gatherings the college newspaper, the *Harvard*

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Crimson (then called the *Magenta*), was founded as a lively antidote to the "stuffy" *Advocate*.[8]

About this time the Art Club at Harvard was established by another more well-heeled group including August Belmont, Herbert Wadsworth, and others who were generally interested in art. Simmons observed that he was included because of his ability to draw.[9] He also reminisced about the Hasty Pudding Club and the sustenance such meetings provided that went far beyond the humble cornmeal mush that provided the club's name and was the overt excuse for the gathering:

> It seems to me that we cannot overestimate the importance of eating and drinking, for out of these desires of the human body have come most of the clever ideas of the world. Conviviality stimulates the brain, and while the viands may be of ever so simple a quality, the atmosphere in which they are partaken means everything to sensitive genius.[10]

Later in his autobiography Simmons wrote about the importance of an artist's recognizing his constitutional weaknesses and taking care of his body, but here he is talking about the nourishment of the artist's creative soul. He noted that membership qualifications of clubs like the Hasty Pudding were "based on great principles of truth, honor, and manhood."[11] Simmons benefited from the companionship of such bands of brothers throughout much of his early career as an artist. These collegial groups at home and abroad nurtured the artists and provided a network in which they sparked each other's creativity and ambition and supported each other's work. This kind of mutual support and fertile environment was particularly important to Simmons and others seeking and undertaking the ambitious challenge of huge mural programs in the era of the American Renaissance.

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Upon graduation from Harvard in 1874, Simmons had originally contemplated a career as an architect, but when he sought the advice of prominent architect and critic Russell Sturgis on this matter, he was dissuaded from this profession. Sturgis quickly learned with a few direct questions that Simmons had no architectural experience and no family fortune behind him and suggested that he would do better as a painter. Simmons had thought a painter had about as much standing as a "strolling player, a tinker, or a mountebank," but Sturgis planted the idea that "the painters of the day were real people and, furthermore, making a lot of money." Simmons promised himself to give this prospect more thought, but decided that first he would travel west and broaden his life experience before settling on a profession. He had money enough to get to Cincinnati, where there was a community of Bostonians. He first took a job as an agent for an oil company that was based in Pittsburgh. After an embarrassing mistake with a shipping charge, he left that position in debt ten dollars to his employer and began tutoring young students for West Point and Yale.[12]

Cincinnati was emerging as an art center for the Midwest. Nicolas Longworth had made a fortune in land investments and with a taste for the fine arts had built a significant collection. Simmons wrote that this was his first acquaintance with a collection of oil paintings and that he was "anxious to be an artist and was painting in [his] bedroom every night." A revelation at this time was his encounter with Frank Duveneck, recently returned in late 1873 from studies at the Royal Academy in Munich. Duveneck's doorplate with his name and the title "artist" had intrigued Simmons to the point of finally knocking on the door. The meeting with this imposing professional artist in his studio had a powerful effect on Simmons. The first shock was

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the size of the bold brushes Duveneck was using, the second was the sight of a live model in the studio—a woman, nearly nude. Simmons was impressed by the large canvases he saw—"the sense of color" and "capacity for brushwork"—and he tried unsuccessfully to share the excitement of his discovery with his friends where he was living in nearby West Walnut Hills. He later felt vindicated when Duveneck was lionized in Boston as the "new American Velásquez."[13]

After a stint as a casket maker's assistant, Simmons decided to leave Cincinnati. In January 1875, he set out on a cross-country rail trip to California where his cousins offered a job as a clerk in the Household Art Company, a department store they had started in San Francisco.[14]

Western Adventure—In Love with California

In his autobiography Simmons recounted further tales of his three-year search for a profession. His railroad ride to California was full of wild-West types that seem like stock characters from movies and adventures with gamblers and pistol-packing drunkards and rogues. He nearly froze to death when he had to leave a train in the middle of the night after he lost his ticket and ran out of money in Rawlins, Wyoming.[15]

After several narrow escapes from robbers and gunmen and exposure to temperatures of twenty to thirty below zero in Wyoming, Simmons was joyous when he arrived at the southern slopes of the Sierras. "The air was balmy, the sky was a soft blue, and looking like orchards of apple trees of enormous size were the live oaks that

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covered the slopes of those mighty mountain sides. Best of all...and almost denying the month of February, was growing tender young green grass! I picked some of it, put it in my buttonhole, and cried." He hopped out at every railroad station to drink in the "beauty of this big, good-natured, sweet, mild country." Simmons wrote that largeness of spirit characterized the people as well. He described Californians as "pleasure-loving, and easy-going, and, above all...[having] a magnificent, even if childlike, sense of humor." He was, as he put it, "in love with California."[16]

In addition to working as a department store clerk in San Francisco, Simmons tried other ways to make extra money. One of these jobs was as a temporary replacement for the literary and drama critic of the San Francisco *Chronicle*. He enjoyed his work as a newspaper critic and hoped it would put him in contact with some people involved in the fine arts.[17]

Simmons met Henry Casey, a young architect from the firm of H. H. Richardson, who was constructing some houses in San Francisco. Casey had tuberculosis and was advised to go camping in the mountains as a cure. Simmons volunteered to accompany him and went on ahead. Setting out in the spring of 1875, Simmons took the railroad north to Redding, California, and then a stagecoach to the Mount Shasta region where he did many different odd jobs—taking them first and then learning how to do them. He did farm chores at a Mr. Bayley's and then went by foot to his next job at the United States Salmon Hatchery on the McCloud River. Casey joined him in August. The camping trip was no cure for poor Casey who nearly died of pleurisy during days of incessant rain they had before Simmons sent him home to New York. For Simmons, however, the trip to the foot of Mount Shasta provided a

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profound moment of beauty and inspiration. On the morning the rain stopped he witnessed a dazzling sunrise in a landscape with the river and Mount Shasta. Recalling this experience he later wrote:

> If we touch the realm of high beauty, we enter the realm of high thinking, and . . . if we get there, we are at the edge of the goal and something whispers: "Be careful; tread slowly; you are on sacred ground." I had felt and *realized* my first artistic harmony, and it was in the realm of color.[18]

After his friend Casey was on his way back home, Simmons went on to Sissons, a town in Strawberry Valley about five miles from the foot of Mount Shasta, to find work and fellowship. He worked for Mr. Sisson, the town's namesake, as a farmhand, and as a waiter and bartender at the same man's hotel, and also served as postmaster. Nicknamed "Boston," Simmons gained a reputation as a learned man and was offered more "intellectual" pursuits such as clerk of the polls at election time. When the local teacher left the school at Strawberry Valley, Simmons applied for the position, which had a salary of seventy-five dollars per month. He impressed his interviewer, Jenkins, the president of the school board and a grocer and saloon owner, with a letter signed by his cousin Ralph Waldo Emerson and was hired on the spot. Simmons was left awed by the power of the arts, as Jenkins had seemed unimpressed by another letter of recommendation from a railroad tycoon of great wealth and influence. The school building was about a half mile from Sissons. The thirteen students ranged greatly in ability and in age from five years old to twenty-one. Some lived five or six miles from the school. Simmons, never at a loss for a good tale, began teaching them great stories from the Old Testament and found he had a rapt audience. He taught at Strawberry Valley from 1876 to 1877.[19]

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Then, after his friend Walter Scott, a well-loved man of honesty and character, was murdered, Simmons was afraid that California life was too rough and raw for him, and he decided to return east. The train ride cost sixty-five dollars for a third-class ticket and took thirteen days. Simmons, of course, reminisces in his autobiography with many stories, including one that already identifies him as an artist: when a poker-playing Texan complained that Simmons's hands were "too soft," suggesting those of a "card sharp," and asked him "Well, how *did* you get those hands?" Simmons replied, "Painting pictures."[20]

In the summer of 1877 he taught painting in Bangor, Maine, where his brother William was a surgeon.[21] From 1878 to 1879 he was enrolled in the art school of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where he studied under Frederic Crowninshield.[22] Simmons recalled that Crowninshield warned him that he had "chic," a quality of cleverness that could be of much "value" later but was "dangerous" to a young artist.[23] Likely a more powerful influence than Simmons's brief mention indicates, Crowninshield had just returned from nearly a decade of study in Italy, where he had developed a great appreciation for Renaissance murals and a thorough understanding of traditional techniques of decorative painting including fresco and encaustic. In Paris he had studied briefly with Alexander Cabanel, whose figure paintings, which were the standard of absolute perfection, included allegorical murals. At the Museum of Fine Arts Crowninshield taught drawing, painting, and decorative art with an emphasis on learning to draw the figure from a nude model as in the European academies. He seems to have inspired most of his students, including Simmons, to seek further instruction in Europe.[24] He was to be influential in the field of decorative art. His

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pioneering treatise, *Mural Painting*, published in 1887, was dedicated to his pupils in the hope that some of them might "through its means be induced to practice monumental painting, the noblest form of all pictorial expression."[25]

While studying in Boston, Simmons also took advantage of Dr. William Rimmer's courses in art anatomy. He credited Rimmer as an under-recognized genius in the field of art education and a teacher who was of great importance to his growth as an artist: "His absorption in his work was that of a crazy genius, but his knowledge of the structure of the human figure, combined with his delicate sense of beauty and vigor of execution, was of inestimable value....Doctor Rimmer did me more good than any other man except one—Boulanger."[26]

Rimmer and Crowninshield were undoubtedly both significant in laying a foundation for Simmons's development as a superb draughtsman and for his future as a muralist. Following about a year's study in Boston, Simmons set out in June of 1879 for further training in Paris, where he would have an important first encounter with Gustave Boulanger.

European Studies and Art Life

Like most serious young American artists of his generation Simmons was bound for one of the renowned academies of Europe to seek further study. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts was the premiere academy of the day, but it required applicants to pass an examination for entrance. Private ateliers run by masters who might also have affiliation with the Ecole were also important. The Académie Julian was one of these

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private academies that had an international following and was particularly popular with Americans in the 1870s and 1880s.

Simmons wrote that his passage across the Atlantic in 1879 cost him forty dollars for an "emigrant-class" boat ticket and the expenses of his trip from London to Paris. He arrived at the Hôtel de Londres and enrolled at the Académie Julian to begin study under Jules-Joseph Lefebvre and Gustave-Rodolphe Boulanger.[27] Simmons recalled a humiliating meeting with Boulanger.[28] "With the conceit of youth," upon joining Julian's he immediately began to paint. He was working on a "head of an Italian" when Boulanger came up behind him and said, "If you go on this way, you might as well go home and make shoes." Simmons had been, as he later admitted, "showing off." He left the classroom in shame but determined to learn a remedy for his folly and went out to wait on the stairs for his teacher. When Boulanger appeared, Simmons approached him and said, "I admit everything you said. I do not know anything, but I came here to learn...tell me what to do." The teacher paused and asked if Simmons was familiar with the outline drawings of Jean-Léon Gérôme. Simmons responded that they were the "finest things" he had ever seen. Boulanger then challenged him, "Go back and make one, young man, and see that you take a week over it." The suggested drawings were large—larger than the academy paper—so Simmons placed wrapping paper over a three-foot stretcher and worked diligently on a drawing each week. Months went by without notice of Simmons by Boulanger. Then one day he stopped behind Simmons's easel and announced to the whole student body: "None of you could do a drawing like this, and I doubt if any one of you could copy it." Then he said to Simmons, "Let's see you make an academy [a single-figure oil

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study from a live nude model]"[29] It was at this point that Simmons changed from "a loafer and *chiquer*... and realized that only by eight hours' daily work and hard digging could [he] become a painter." The following week there was a contest for the best drawing. Simmons won the prize of one hundred francs, which carried with it the distinction of a position of honor at the front of the class, close to the model.[30]

He described the physical atmosphere of the Académie Julian as "the dingiest place imaginable":

> The room was dirty and dark, despite the skylight above; at one end a platform, and near it a soiled bit of drapery behind which the women models stripped. On a hot July day, what with paints, dirty Frenchmen, stuffy air, nude models, and the place below, this room stank worse than anything I can think of. Not much calculation for comfort, but possibly an enormous inspiration for genius.[31]

But it was the intellectual climate—the unbureaucratic, collegial atmosphere and toleration for new ideas at Julian's that drew many students and provided the medium for talents as well as friendships to ripen. Julian's was an experience that was career and life changing for many artists, and especially Simmons, who would find ways to experience this kind of camaraderie throughout much of his life.

After passing the admission test, Simmons enrolled in the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in March of 1880. He showed a painting at the Paris Salon for the first time the following year. His entry was a life-sized portrait of a Scottish highlander, *Portrait de M. R.* (now unlocated). This painting was commended in a small review in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* of May 30, 1881, which may be the first critical notice of Simmons's work in an American newspaper. The paper had received three photographs of Simmons's works—that of the highlander, a depiction of a young Italian boy, and a

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painting of a young girl that was on exhibit at the Royal Academy in London. The writer remarked that the acceptance of works at the Salon and Royal Academy was an uncommon distinction for a painter so young and that with "study and perseverance" Simmons was bound to reflect further honor on his home state, where he had first studied art in Boston at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts. The picture of the highlander was praised for its "merit and originality" and "ease and freedom" of execution. The review continued: "The face is well drawn, the position is graceful and dignified, and the left hand, which is shown is modeled with exceptional truth and vigor." The painting was prominently placed in the exhibition and reportedly also received favorable notice in France. The closing paragraph noted that Simmons would "pass the summer in this country" and planned to "return to Paris in October to execute orders."[32]

Having gained a good command of form and line in his drawing practice, and no doubt eager to get out of the grim conditions of the studio at Julian's, Simmons visited Grez in 1880[33] and then settled in the Breton village of Concarneau in 1881. He lived there until 1886 with interludes that included trips to Paris and a few months in Spain.[34] In Concarneau he would continue to focus on the figure, but with the added aim of plein-air study and improving his mastery of color. Simmons wrote that artists were attracted by the beauty of the seacoast location and the cheap living quarters; he characterized the move to Concarneau as a trip back to the Middle Ages. This was meant partly in tribute to the rugged, picturesque quality of the village and the coastal site, the honest, close-to-nature, muscular industry of sardine fishing, and the traditional local dress and customs, particularly of the women. Notwithstanding his

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attraction, he sometimes belittled the culture of the peasants, especially their superstitions and personal habits. He wrote "all the Breton peasants I ever saw washed below the chin only twice in their lives—once when they were born and once when married." But he described their work of seining fish in sailboats with faded sails in "lovely tones of rose, gray, and tan," as wonderfully picturesque. He noted too that at the fishing grounds the sails are dropped as some men row while the captain tosses the bait, which is cod roe—"and as he throws it from side to side the play of his body in action is more beautifully Greek than anything in all Europe."[35]

Peasant subjects represented hard work and other traditional values revered by the artists and their social peers as exemplary for society. At the same time these subjects provided an opportunity for artists to draw the human figure in a picturesque and fashionable mode. Concarneau in particular had the added attraction of a pearly gray, even light favored by painters like Simmons who appreciated the tonal atmosphere for its beauty and also its relative constancy, a boon to plein-air painters, who could enjoy working for long periods in nearly stable light conditions. The local costumes, faded and softened, were also favored for aesthetic reasons. Cecelia Beaux, who was among the many artists who visited Concarneau in the 1880s, gave the following account of the integrity of Brittany:

> To Brittany nothing may be added nor may anything be eliminated. Poor, rude, suffering, even dirty, from the low olive background, touched with the russet of the chief occupation, inland to the poorest *chaumiere* and its inhabitants, hidden in a muddy *chemin creux*, Brittany is perfect in style.[36]

Simmons contrasted Concarneau with neighboring Pont-Aven, which he characterized as a place of "predigested food for artists," particularly British

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watercolorists. He said that the British were frightened by the "bigness of the coast [at Concarneau] and left it to the French and Americans, who formed a very happy crowd, all living at the Hôtel des Voyageurs." Simmons recalled that his colleagues there included Thaddeus Jones, Alexander Harrison, Frank Chadwick; Howard Russell Butler, Arthur Hoeber, M. Brion, Emile Renouf, Paul Dubois, and Jules Bastien-Lepage. Of all the artists drawn to Concarneau, Bastien was undoubtedly the most influential and a great attraction to others. For Americans he was probably the most significant of the French painters known as the "Salon," "Poetic" or "Rustic" Naturalists, and was at the height of his popularity. As Simmons wrote, he was "first in importance in the Concarneau older set, being almost the father of the Realistic movement."[37]

Kenneth McConkey has perceptively assessed Bastien-Lepage's magnetism as the perfect representative of realism to artists of the 1880s:

> Not only was the drawing most accurate but the style admitted a freedom of handling which in a limited sense might be described as "painterly." Its selective focus, which brought up hands and head to great exactness, stressed those features which would always receive the closest scrutiny. With these tightly defined, the figure and the hillside could be "licked" in with considerable brio! Beneath the surface however, it must have seemed that the work of Bastien-Lepage, . . . resolved and drew together in one coherent style many of the diverse strands of the nineteenth century. It provided a consensus, it incorporated elements, of Pre-Raphaelitism, realism and plein-air and its strength lay in doing what had been done before only doing it better. The drawing was finer; the handling tidier; the colour cooler; the values correct. In this way all of the realisms of the mid-century became realistic.[38]

The Concarneau artists shared Bastien-Lepage's plein-air approach--making studies in the open air, working on them further in the studio, and sometimes revisiting the outdoor setting for final touches. At the time Bastien's work was among the most

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controversial exhibited at the Salon and in London and New York. American artists were interested in grounding themselves in academic training, but they were also open to fresh influence and eager to develop and experiment in painting technique, color, and composition. In the French art colonies of the 1880s, especially in Concarneau and Grez, Bastien's plein-air painting, broad brush or "square brush" technique, tonal coloring, blonde palette, and unconventional perspective were much discussed and imitated by American and English artists. Bastien abandoned traditional Renaissance perspective and suggested depth by altering his handling, emphasizing detail in the foreground and softening the features of the background. He depicted everything in a diffuse, even light. The result was a focus on the figure and a flattened, more decorative background. Contemporary critic W. C. Brownell saw Bastien as a truly sincere painter, painting nature just as he saw it, but explained that for the viewer "to find the pictorial assistance of light and shade so pointedly disdained. . .is something of a shock" and the "absence of the customary. . . compass-card of perspective . . . occasionally disconcerting."[39] In response to some criticism of the rendering of perspective in his plein-air pictures, Bastien characterized it as the reaction of those who only viewed landscape while seated or crouching, positions in which you "see more sky and you have more objects—trees, houses, or living beings standing out sharply in silhouette against the sky, which gives the illusion of a greater distance and a wider atmosphere." But he went on to describe how we most often actually see a figure in the landscape:

> We look at it standing, and then the objects, animate or inanimate, that are nearest to us, instead of being seen in profile against the sky, are silhouetted upon the trees, or upon the fields, gray or green. They stand out with less

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> clearness, and sometimes mix with the background, which then, instead of going away, seems to come forward.[40]

The faces of his peasant figures are beautifully painted, almost in the technique of a miniaturist. J. Alden Weir and other contemporaries compared Bastien's work to that of Hans Holbein, the Younger. Weir remarked "The modeling of the head [in *The Communicant* (Fig. I:2)] was carried to the extent of a Holbein, with all the charm of Bastien's peculiar technic."[41] As Kenneth McConkey has pointed out, the frontal placement of many of Bastien's figures, which quite literally emerge from the world or background they inhabit, and the extremely realistic rendering of the face help the viewer to experience the figures almost as a real-life meeting. [42] Because of this realism and the intense or even confrontational gaze, as well as the placement of the figure's feet nearly at the canvas edge, Bastien's subjects—for example the urchin in *Nothing Doing* (*Pas Mèche*) (Fig. I:3)—can have a sort of "in your face" reality that is on the edge of causing discomfort to the viewer.

Simmons wrote that Bastien used several models to create his ideal head for *Joan of Arc* (Fig. I:4) and commented: "You feel she is a working girl and not a pretty peasant by Bouguereau." [43] Simmons's own portrait of a working girl, *La Blanchisseuse* (*The Laundress*) (Fig. I:5)[44] was shown and won honorable mention in the Paris Salon of 1882. The painting depicts a robust and attractive young woman who has left a small group of women still at work in the background to head home with her basket of washed laundry. The Bastien-inspired frontal encounter with the figure gives the viewer the impression of meeting her on the path. Reproduced by contemporary critic Clarence Cook under the title *Homeward Bound*, Simmons's

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laundress was commended as "marked by the artist's habitual sincerity and dependence on nature, free from posing or affectation, and yet with a clear-eyed perception of the grace that is often found growing in humble places."[45] Arthur Hoeber, another artist from Concarneau, later remarked on the "pretty model" and the painting itself—"a charming, naïve work, beautifully drawn and well painted."[46] Such large figure paintings were very much in vogue in the 1880s. The peasant paintings of Simmons and other expatriate artists are generally prettier than most examples by Bastien. Their subjects do indeed look like beauties found in humble places—they seem young, strong, and relatively cheerful or comfortable. In contrast, Bastien's peasants in *Les Foins* (*The Hay Makers*) (Fig. I:6), *The Communicant*, and *Joan of Arc*, show the weight of a hard life. As Weir wrote, he painted "nature as she is . . . . Prettiness and daintiness of form or feature he put aside for the beauty that lies in the individuality and character of the peasant."[47] Simmons's Concarneau paintings, such as *Communion Day* (Fig. I:7), and *Awaiting His Return* (Fig. I:8), as well as *The Laundress*, are in tune with the more idealized peasant paintings of the 1880s and early 90s by Americans such as Charles Sprague Pearce (Fig. I:9), Daniel Ridgway Knight, and George Hitchcock, British painter John Lavery, and Polish artist and fellow Julian student Anna Bilínska-Bohdanowicz. Bilínska's painting *At the Seashore*, 1886 (Fig. I:10), is especially close in subject matter and sentiment to Simmons's *Awaiting His Return*, 1884.

Cecelia Beaux left her written appreciation of the particular beauty of Breton women that inspired American painters.

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> The young Breton girls have faces whose forms have as good a reason for being what they are as has the modelling of the perfect wild creature of unmixed strain. Beauty is an unpopular word now, but a face that halts the passing stranger, by its pure cool perfection of line and proportion, its color and texture like the inward slope of a seashell—well—if 'beauty' will not do, what will? She is *paysanne*—where did she get those facial lines and that mean high race in the selective sense of the word? And the seign of her head-dress, which so perfectly sets off this very type, purifying purity, enhancing the absence of woman's major triumph, her hair—there is not a lock in sight; a high black bodice, tightly binding in her form, as she goes in her heavy skirt and sabots, with her long boyish stride.[48]

Capturing the strength and beauty of such models was an opportunity to show mastery of academic drawing in a subject that was very marketable. These large-scale figures were also good preparation for the paintings that many like Simmons would undertake in allegorical mural programs in the next decade.

Another painting from Concarneau, *Playing Jackstones*, 1884 (Fig. I:11), can be compared with paintings of working-class children like *The Meeting*, 1884, (Fig. I:12) by the Ukrainian-born painter Marie Bashkirtseff whom Simmons knew from Julian's and from Concarneau. Simmons and Bashkirtseff render peasant or working-class children with Bastien-inspired naturalism and techniques. Simmons's *Playing Jackstones*, is a particularly strong example of his use of the broad, square brushwork associated with the followers of Bastien and enthusiastically developed by the artists of Newlyn, in Cornwall, the neighbor of Saint Ives, the next destination for Simmons. Another painting showing more subtle use of this technique is *Le Printemps*, 1883, (Fig. I:13). The competent figure drawing, frontal pose, and flattened decorative background reflect old and new lessons from French training. The great draftsmanship Simmons obtained from traditional academic training is combined here with experimental composition and brushwork. Even the full title used for this work when

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it was shown at the Paris Salon of 1884, *Le Printemps--panneau decoratif*, is prophetic of the coming career direction.

Simmons was recognized as one of the hardest working artists at Concarneau. Howard Russell Butler found many of the artists in the colony to be lazy. But Alexander Harrison and Simmons he respected. He spent many evenings with Simmons and thought him second only to Harrison as the standouts of the group. He judged Simmons a "pleasant fellow" though "not over-humble and of an argumentative nature,"[49]

Butler was among the many American artists who had read the popular novel by Blanche Willis Howard, *Guenn: A Wave on the Breton Coast*, and recommended it for a true glimpse of the artist's life in Concarneau. Simmons, together with Louise Nevis,[50] his real-life model, provided the inspiration for the main characters, the American painter Everett Hamor and the Breton model Guenn Rodellec. Simmons stated that his studio was a wheat loft and that in Concarneau any peasant would model for a few cents. In Howard's romantic novel, the heroine, a sought-after model who plays hard to get, is the rare local girl who will not readily pose for pennies.

The author, Blanche Howard, was born in Bangor, Maine,[51] where Simmons had recently taught art and probably met her. Howard too embraced life abroad and became an expatriot herself. Because *Guenn* influenced perceptions of life in a French art colony and gained Simmons some unusual fame, the novel and its popularity deserve some further attention here.

Based on Howard's experience of a summer's research and observation in Simmons's studio in 1882, *Guenn* was published in 1883. The novel was widely read

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and remarked upon by Simmons's artist contemporaries and by a larger public. A review in *Lippincott's Magazine* in February 1884, introduced *Guenn* as "so bright and sympathetic, so well set off by a background of suggestive and charming pictures all tinged with delicate hues of sentiment, that few will hesitate to pronounce Miss Howard's third novel a very delightful book." The reviewer summarized the tale as "the study of a girl, wild, passionate, and proud, untamable as the wind, whose exuberant and unexhausted feelings are all spent on a generous love for the artist who paints her picture." Everett Hamor, the protagonist modeled after Simmons, is described as "clearly a woman's hero,--beautiful with a *tête du Christ*, cool delicate, aesthetic, subordinating every faculty and every passion to his love for art." The reviewer adds, "the reader hardly shares Guenn's infatuation for him. He talks too much; there is an eternal pretense about his attitude." The notice ends with praise for "the delicate little coast sketches which illustrate the book and above all, the very clever and spirited drawing of Guenn, which makes the frontispiece and may be supposed to have been Hamor's *chef-d'oeuvre*."[52] (See Figs I:14 a, b, c, and Fig. I:15). In fact, the real-life Hamor, Simmons, was the artist of these charming vignettes of local landscapes, peasants, and artists, which appear at the beginning and end pages of chapters.[53]

In 1885, just two years after its first publication, *Guenn*'s third edition had appeared, and the book was being issued in several European languages.[54] It was a particular favorite of artists who recommended it to other artists, especially those contemplating or planning a stay in Concarneau or another French art colony. In July of 1886, Butler had followed Arthur Hoeber and Alexander Harrison to Concarneau,

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where he boarded at the Hôtel de Voyageurs and met Simmons and other personages he recognized from reading *Guenn*. He observed:

> Ever since I have been here I have been running across the objects and characters mentioned in the book *Guenn.*
>
> The artist hero himself is here, only he is a married man now. His wife is a nice little woman, also an artist. . . .
>
> I have not yet seen much of Guenn, although she was pointed out to me the first or second day. I did encounter her a few days ago down by the river, at the washing. She was teasing one of the old chatterboxes who finally got up and chased her; but Guenn is a rapid runner and quickly disappeared over the hill.
>
> The studio in the loft where I have been working myself for several days is perfectly described in the book.
>
> Altogether I feel as if I have returned to an old home, for I can hardly turn a corner without seeing something that I remember.[55]

Simmons had married a young painter and writer from San Francisco, Vesta Schallenberger, in 1883. Their first son, William Francis Simmons, was born in Elche, Spain, on June 4, 1884. Ellen Peirson, a childhood friend of painter Frank Benson and later his wife, visited him in Concarneau with her family during the summer of 1884. Her diary preserves her first impressions of Simmons (whom she too recognizes as Hamor) and his wife Vesta as they arrived from a stay in Spain. On September 3, 1884 she wrote:

> Oh, Hamor arrived last night with his wife and baby...He is very attractive looking, we have not yet met. He came to table d'hote last night and talked to us all generally. He talks a great deal up the table way up to Mr. [H. Harewood] Robinson and down to the other end to somebody else. His wife is a funny looking little thing, great eyes and a great black bang close down to her eyebrows. They have come from Spain—80 hours railway journey without

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> change, with a two month baby whose wet nurse would not come and having to be fed with a bottle it did not know how to take—imagine the difficulty![56]

At first Peirson enjoyed Simmons's company but later commented, "Mr. Simmons grows rather a bore, I think, he talks so incessantly."[57] A decade after Peirson's stay in Concarneau, Birge Harrison was still advising prospective visitors to read *Guenn* in advance:

> Miss Howard spent the summer at Concarneau and *Guenn* is the outcome of her visit. In its pages Concarneau, with all its gloomy superstitions and its quaint and picturesque life, lies embalmed, like a fly in amber. The book is written with rare sympathy and intuition, and as mere study and record of a strange people it stands nearly alone in the literature of the day. Many of the characters of the book are well-known Concarneau artists drawn to the life, and only thinly veiled. The hero, Hamor, except for his all-pervading selfishness is Mr. Simmons, the American painter. It will perhaps interest the readers to know that the picture of *Guenn* so vividly described in the novel, was really painted by Mr. Simmons, and when exhibited in America became a great and legitimate artistic success.[58]

While abroad, Simmons was represented by the gallery of Doll & Richards in Boston, where his work was exhibited a number of times in the 1880s and 90s. The "Boston Letter," which appeared in the *Art Interchange* in January of 1890, noted Simmons's reputation "as one of the most vigorous and substantial of all the American figure painters." The writer further observed that Simmons had enjoyed "no little advertising through the well-circulated report that he sat for the portrait of the hero in Blanch[e] Willis Howard's widely read story of 'Guenn'."[59]

Guenn no doubt contributed to the eventual overpopularity of Concarneau, drawing more and more travelers who had read the book. After the loss of their beloved mentor Bastien and with the intrusion of the growing tourist population, artists like Simmons, Butler, and Harrison sought fresh, less-trammeled ground. Simmons

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and his family were among the pioneers who established a new art colony at Saint Ives in Cornwall, England.

Before 1877, Saint Ives was remote and isolated. In that year an extension of the London to Penzance railway was lengthened to reach Saint Ives, and even then only a small number of wealthy tourists began to visit. Not until the late 1880s when an artists' colony was established did Saint Ives attract a significant number of tourists. Howard Russell Butler described the physical attraction for artists (in addition to its charms as "a quiet and lonesome place"):

> The French coast cannot boast of a single spot as beautiful as St. Ives. Here the water is pure and clear as crystal—the old town is fully as picturesque as Honfleur; the fishermen are splendid models—the coast is rugged as the sea heavy—colour exceedingly rich—the only drawback is—as on the coast of Maine—the seafogs."[60]

James Abbott McNeill Whistler was one of the first noted artists of the late nineteenth century to work at Saint Ives, when he visited early in 1884 and made a series of small, tonal, quickly-painted marine sketches in oil that were, as usual, very influential on other artists.[61] Butler also credited the French marine painter Emile Louis Vernier (1829-1887), who was there in 1885, with increasing the fame of Saint Ives among artists, particularly landscape painters. Simmons was among a pioneer influx of painters, a few of whom had been together in Concarneau, who settled in Saint Ives in 1886.[62] Simmons stated that Saint Ives "was unknown as an art colony" when he arrived, and that Penzance about ten miles away, was the popular spot at the time. Although Whistler had visited two years before, English painter H. Harewood Robinson was the only artist there when Simmons first arrived. As Simmons recalled:

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> Going from Concarneau to St. Ives was like moving up from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. No more thatched roofs, no more floors of beaten earth, no more manure piles in front of the houses. The roofs are of slate, topping little stone houses, with quite proper floors; the front yards are clean, and the Cornish farmer is most likely a Wesleyan, but he may belong to one of the other thirteen denominations that flourish in this town of five thousand inhabitants . . . .The waves that come to St. Ives Bay are straight from America and there is nothing to equal the beauty of the cliffs and sand except the coast of Maine. The climate is five degrees less than that of Naples and never goes over eighty degrees in summer or much below freezing in winter, so that vegetables and flowers flourish . . . .The real beauty of the country is the constant storm, shower, and sunlight. If it is not raining, it is shining, and there is a rainbow almost any day.[63]

The hospitable climate and striking scenery made Saint Ives a haven for landscape painting, and the robust fishermen were suitable figure studies. Bastien's influence remained of importance in Cornwall, particularly in the development of the "square brush" technique, which flourished especially in Newlyn under the leadership of English artist Stanhope Forbes, and in the continued study of the figure outdoors and in skylighted studios. Simmons reported an amusing story of the origins of the "Cornish School." The critic, Harry Quilter, famous as Whistler's foe, was said to have asked, "Why do all you men of the Cornish school paint alike?" Stanhope Forbes replied, "We use the same model." When Quilter eagerly responded, "Ah that's it! Who is She?" Forbes answered smugly, "Nature."[64]

With regard to actual models, one bounty of Brittany not shared in Cornwall, at least according to artist and writer W. H. Bartlett, was strong, comely women like the model for "Guenn":

> I was struck by the difference in physique between the men and women at St. Ives; the men so sturdy and brawny, while the women were thin and underfed-looking. Commenting on this to a native one day, he said it might be the quantities of tea the women take. Whatever the reason, a fine, buxom-looking woman is not a common sight among the fisher class.[65]

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Although the Saint Ives environment would trigger new ventures in pure marine painting, Simmons also continued his interest painting genre figures. His autobiography mentions *Darby and Joan,*[66] which depicts an old fisherman "kissing his wife goodbye," and *Low Tide*, showing an old man and two children looking out at the sea, and gives a longer discussion of his more controversial painting *The Carpenter's Son.*[67] *The Carpenter's Son* (Fig. I:16) and *The Mother* (Fig. I:17), both painted in the same setting of a carpenter's workshop, feature Simmons's family members as models. Of course, they were likely the most easily available, but given Bartlett's above remark about the lack of suitable female models, Simmons's wife and children may also have been the most attractive subjects he could find. Simmons continued to use his wife, his older son Will, and his second son George Bradford Simmons, who was born on 6 December 1886, as models in Saint Ives and elsewhere throughout the 1880s and 1890s for his paintings, including numerous allegorical murals of the 90s. In *The Carpenter's Son* and *The Mother* he adopted the convention popular then among European and American painters of representing religious figures in contemporary peasant dress.[68]

Simmons described *The Carpenter's Son*, which he sent in 1889 to the Royal Academy in London as

> a simple pose of one of my children in my studio, a blond boy with a light shining over his head sat dreaming, instead of sweeping out the shop, while his mother, in the back, told his father what a worthless son he had begotten. The shavings had accidentally fallen in the shape of a cross, and the light seemed to be a halo. The Scotsman came out with a scathing denunciation of the work (not at the idea, mind you) but because, as they said, I had been sacrilegious enough to paint Christ in the costume of a French peasant boy![69]

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Simmons suggested that this review thwarted the purchase of his painting by the Chantrey Bequest after representatives of the fund had already indicated their interest in it. Another reviewer in the London *Arts Journal* was stronger in his condemnation, writing "it is an outrage to a very large class of visitors to stamp with such a title the underbred, low-typed boy, who with the old hag in the background, are supposed to represent Christ and his mother."[70]

When the picture was exhibited in New York at the Fourteenth Exhibition of the Society of American Artists in May of 1892, it received a mixed response from the *Studio.* Noting the "general recrudescence of sentimental religion that marks these rantipole days," the reviewer turned particular attention to Frank Du Mond's *The Family* and Simmons's *The Carpenter's Son.* Objecting to the "sentimental and anaemic treatment" of the holy family subject by Du Mond, he contrasts that with the "manliness and directness" he appreciates in Simmons's painting. Yet he finds the title and treatment of the theme both "somewhat enigmatic" and believes that "Mr. Simmons has handicapped his picture by its title, for . . .

> search as we will, we can find no more here than a nice little boy, healthy and happy, but loving play better than work and wondering to himself in his childish heart, what there is so very bad, in wanting to be at play, that his mother must needs be always chiding him for it. . . . If this sound matter of fact, 'tis all we can make out of this picture, and it is so well painted, so altogether acceptable as a picture that we wish with all our heart that Mr. Simmons had been content to give it another name, or to leave it with no name at all.[71]

A letter from Simmons written at the time of the exhibition in 1892 to Amelia Jones, a wealthy Unitarian of New Bedford, Massachusetts,[72] who had purchased *The Carpenter's Son*, discusses the painting and his bemused reaction to the criticism and

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confusion it aroused. He explained to her his view in painting the Christ figure as an ordinary young boy in contemporary peasant dress:

> I have a feeling that any picture of our race should be typical enough to remind one of all such cases in one's memory. I know very little of how the details of Christ's surroundings should be told. I imagine no one knows enough to be worth listening to. Therefore we younger men fall back upon our own time—believing that man has always been fundamentally the same.[73]

As evident in Simmons's own work, a number of a rtists continued the practice of peasant paintings of the Breton type. But market interest in these subjects was apparently fading somewhat, at least in England,[74] and artists were inspired by the spectacular scenery of Saint Ives and the precedent of Whistler's silver-toned oil sketches of sea and sky. Simmons and Saint Ives became known for marine paintings.

Norman Garstin, an English artist writing for the *Studio*, described the setting:

> St. Ives, on the northern coast, has a north-east to a north-western aspect; the sun comes gleaming over the water in the morning on the one hand and sinks gleaming into it on the other hand in the evening; big waves come tumbling over white sands, and the foam is dyed in turns with all the colours of the spectrum; out of the windows of their foam-spattered studios the St. Ives artists can watch the sea pranking itself in all the many tinted garments of the day and evening, and so they become impressionistic and sensuous in colour."[75]

The particular popularity of the Saint Ives twilight and nocturnal or moonlight views was noted by another writer for the *Studio*: "Later in the day, when the sun is setting, the number of umbrellaless easels is even more; for if anything is fashionable in St. Ives, it is 'evening effect.' This distinguished beach goes regularly every year to the Salon, where it sometimes receives an honorable mention."[76]

Simmons's Saint Ives marines won both honors and critical acclaim. He exhibited *Night*, later known as *Night, St. Ives Bay* (Fig. 1:18), at the Universal

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Exposition of 1889 in Paris, winning a bronze medal. In 1890 he received notice for "a couple of the most evanescent sea views" shown at Doll and Richards in Boston.[77] Clarence Cook gave Simmons perhaps the best review of his career when he wrote: "Mr. Simmons's pictures of the Bay of St. Ives are among the most beautiful and poetic works of the kind that we owe to any modern artist. The marines of Alexander Harrison are exquisite of their kind, but they are paint and canvas alongside the ethereal transcripts of Simmons."[78]

In addition to its picturesque coastline, Saint Ives, like Concarneau, soon grew to offer a congenial social life for artists.[79] In 1887 the critic for the *Studio* who signed "R.G.," was able to call Saint Ives "one of the jolliest places imaginable for painter-people," where "twenty-seven of that elusive profession, representing almost as many different countries, have wandered down to these kindly shores and formed a colony which is now perpetuating this old town's delight."[80]

By the following year there were enough artists to make an informal club led and hosted by the Australian artist Louis Grier. Grier described the club's beginnings: "In the autumn of 1888 a few good men and true [including Simmons] met together in my studio. . .to discuss the advisability of forming an Arts club in our little fishing town . . . . We arranged to meet on Saturday nights only, and the rendezvous chosen as the most suitable was 'The Foc'sle' [Grier's studio]." After a few such all-male meetings there was a suggestion to admit women, and the resulting group of about sixty members enjoyed the mixed company, piano, and lively games of charades---"things began to 'hum' a little more," and on "fine nights the large doors at the end of the

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studio would be opened, and then we had a series of nocturnes that would have merited the artistic appreciation of Mr. Whistler."[81]

Here again Simmons enjoyed the collegial atmosphere--the challenges, the stimulation, and the support of an international gathering of artists. This was fertile ground for technical innovation and adventure. The artists experimented with media and took a new look at the old masters, sharing and comparing observations with others. Vermeer and Velázquez were admired for the unity artists perceived in their works and for the blond palette they used. Simmons had viewed Velázquez's paintings at the Prado. He later wrote of the modernity of the surface and recalled that artists of his day wanted to emulate "the free brush work and the blond note." They were also interested in Velazquez's use of pure color. Simmons was struck by the opportunity to see the artist's palette in the painting *Las Meninas*, revealing his colors—"red, yellow, black, and white."[82]

European study and the community of artists provided the milieu for Simmons to develop as an excellent draftsman, colorist, and handler of paint. He became an artist of great facility and versatility, comfortable with portraiture, large-scale figure painting, genre groups, and landscapes. His figure paintings of the Breton type and his marines received honors and critical acclaim. The editor of the *Studio* returned from a visit to Saint Ives in 1887 with the following "note" of praise and prediction: "I gave the palm to Edward Simmons, whose talent and originality I am sure America will some day know more of, and be proud of, too! He is a man of about thirty five, intellectual and clever, with unmistakable Yankee blood and wit, whose mind and heart face due toward the true Artistic Pole."[83]

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Simmons's New England background and his education were common bonds shared with many figures in the art world of the day. They were cosmopolitan Yankees, well-grounded in literature and the classics at home and in art studies abroad. Simmons made friends easily and was a spirited member of any group he joined. His work was much admired by colleagues. His connections and the respect of his peers would serve him well and, indeed, direct his career.

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[1] Simmons dropped his middle name later in life. An obituary by Frederic Dorr Steele in the *Players Bulletin*, January 1932, noted that Simmons "did not use "the 'Emerson' which was his middle name," and was particularly proud and protective of his club nickname, "Simmy." Earlier class reports of the Harvard Class of 1874 include Simmons as Edward Emerson Simmons, later ones call him Edward Simmons. A note in Harvard University Archives from Edward Simmons dated 8 December 1909, states: "Legal name in full, Edward Simmons." Harvard University Archives, Pusey Library.

[2] Edward Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), xiv, 8.

[3] Prominent botanist Professor Asa Green of Harvard once said to Simmons, "Allow me to do honor to the offspring of one of the ablest botanists I have ever known" (Ibid., 3).

[4] Ibid, 2-3.

[5] Ibid., 11.

[6] Ibid., 13; See Web site: www.uua.org/ uuhs/duub/articles/ripleyfamily.html, 3, and Joan W. Goodwin, *The Remarkable Mrs. Ripley: The Life of Sarah Alden Bradford Ripley* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998).

[7] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, xv.

[8] Ibid., 31.

[9] Ibid., 32.

[10] Ibid., 36.

[11] Ibid., 37.

[12] Ibid., 45-47.

[13] Ibid., 48-49.

[14] Ibid.; *Harvard College Class of 1874: Eleventh Report* [Fiftieth Anniversary] (Boston: Plimpton Press, 1924), 246.

[15] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 50-55.

[16] Ibid., 56-57, 64.

[17] Ibid., 70.

[18] Ibid., 78-83.

[19] Ibid., 89-94; *Dictionary of American Biography*, s. v. "Simmons, Edward," entry by Frederick W. Coburn.

[20] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 115.

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[21] *Dictionary of American Biography*, "Simmons"; Lorenzo Albert Simmons, *History of the Simmons Family* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Lincoln Herald Press, 1931), 87.

[22] *Harvard College Class of 1874*, 246.

[23] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 124.

[24] Florence N. Levy, "Frederic Crowninshield, a Many-Sided Artist," *International Studio* 42 (November 1910), xi-xii; H. Barbara Weinberg, *The Lure of Paris: Nineteenth-Century American Painters and Their French Teachers* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1991), 134, 145.

[25] Frederic Crowninshield, *Mural Painting* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1887), iv.

[26] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 123-124.

[27] Ibid., 117-118.

[28] Boulanger was called Gérôme's "alter-ego" by contemporary art historian Clara Harrison Stranahan. Like Gérôme, Boulanger was an excellent draftsman with great interest in the Middle East and Roman and Pompeiian history and culture. After studying Pompeii, Boulanger decorated in accurate style the Pompeiian House of Napoleon with scenes from theatrical performances. Stranahan, *A History of French Painting from Its Earliest to Its Latest Practice; Including an Account of the French Academy of Painting, Its Salons, Schools of Instruction and Regulations* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888), 319-321. Boulanger like Crowninshield was himself a student of the master Alexander Cabanel, whose decorative works at the Panthéon and Hôtel de Ville in Paris were very influential to American artists such as Kenyon Cox, Edwin Blashfield, Will H. Low, Simmons, and others who would soon produce their own decorative works.

[29] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 124-125; *académie* as defined in H. Barbara Weinberg, "Cosmopolitan Attitudes: The Coming of Age of American Art," in *Paris 1889*, 34.

[30] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 125.

[31] Ibid., 118.

[32] "The Fine Arts: Mr. E. E. Simmons's Paintings," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, 30 May 1881, 2.

[33] William H. Gerdts, "The American Artist in Grez," in Torsten Gunnarsson *et al*, *The Painters in Grez-sur-Loing* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shimbun: Japan Association of Art Museums, 2000), 268.

[34] *Harvard Class of 1874: Eleventh Report*, 246. This report also notes that Simmons spent the summer of 1881 in the United States.

[35] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 142-143

[36] Cecilia Beaux, *Background with Figures: Autobiography of Cecilia Beaux* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930), 145.

[37] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 145.

[38] Kenneth McConkey, "The Bouguereau of the Naturalists: Bastien Lepage and British Art." *Art History* 1 (September 1978): 379.

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[39] William C. Brownell, "Bastien-Lepage: Painter and Psychologist," *Magazine of Art*, 1883, 266-267.

[40] Andre Theuriet, *Jules Bastien-Lepage and His Art: A Memoir* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1892), 73-74, as cited by Kenneth McConkey in Gabriel Weisberg et al., *The Realist Tradition: French Painting and Drawing 1830-1900* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1980), 208.

[41] J. Alden Weir, "Jules Bastien-Lepage" in John C. Van Dyke, ed., *Modern French Masters: A Series of Biographical and Critical Reviews by American Artists* (New York: Century Co., 1896), 233.

[42] McConkey in Weisberg et al., *The Realist Tradition*, 208.

[43] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 146.

[44] This painting was also known as *Homeward Bound* and *The Washerwoman.*

[45] Clarence Cook, *Art and Artists of Our Time* (New York: Selmar Hess, 1888), vol. 3, 298-299.

[46] Arthur Hoeber, "Edward Emerson Simmons," *Brush and Pencil* 5 (March 1900): 242.

[47] Weir in Van Dyke, *Modern French Masters*, 231, 234.

[48] Beaux, *Background with Figures*, 145-146.

[49] Michael Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life: Artist Colonies in Europe and America* (Oxford: Phaidon Press Limited, 1985), 74. See also David Sellin, *Americans in Brittany and Normandy, 1860-1910* (Phoenix: Phoenix Art Museum, 1982).

[50] In her diary Ellen Perry Pierson wrote on 29 August 1884: "Guenn is about and is [really] Louise Nevis . . .We saw 'Hamor's' studio which is now occupied by Mr. [H. Harewood] Robinson." Quoted in Faith Andrews Bedford, *Frank W. Benson, American Impressionist* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994), 29. Bedford also notes that Nevis often sat for Frank Benson [page 30].

[51] Frederick Campbell Moffatt, "Manners, Morals, and Aesthetics in Brittany: A Lost Artist Novel by Blanche Howard," unpublished manuscript, 3. I am grateful to Frederick Moffatt for sharing this paper with me.

[52] The figure of the young woman in *Le Printemps* is clearly the same as the one in the illustration on the first page of Chapter II of *Guenn.*

[53] Jeffrey Brown of Brown Corbin Fine Art, Lincoln, Massachusetts, has a copy of *Guenn* with an inscription by Simmons attesting that the illustrations are his.

[54] Moffatt, "Manners, Morals, and Aesthetics in Brittany," 1.

[55] Howard Russell Butler to parents, 24 May 1885, Howard Russell Butler Papers, Archives of American Art.

[56] Ellen Peirson's diary as quoted in a letter from Faith Andrews Bedford to William H. Gerdts, 12 May 1990.

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[57] Faith Andrews Bedford, *Frank W. Benson, American Impressionist*, 30.

[58] Birge Harrison, "Quaint Artists Haunts in Brittany," *Outing* 24 (April 1894): 32.

[59] "Boston Letter" *Art Interchange* 24 (18 January 1890), 22. I found no mention of Simmons in the Doll and Richards papers I examined on microfilm at the Archives of American Art, but daily newspapers and art periodicals review several showings of his work by Doll and Richards in the 1880s and 90s. The Boston *Daily Evening Transcript* of 28 November 1883, p. 6, notes that only a few of Simmons's paintings remain unsold and attributes the success of the exhibition to both the high quality of the work and keen local interest in the work of a native son.

[60] Jacobs, *The Good and Simple Life*, 153

[61] When Simmons was still based in Paris, he met Whistler at his London studio through a letter of introduction from his Aunt Fanny. Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 129-130. This must have been just before or around the time that Whistler visited Saint Ives. Perhaps Whistler mentioned Saint Ives to Simmons.

[62] Some of the other American and English artists who were colonists of both Concarneau and Saint Ives and its neighbor Newlyn were Howard Russell Butler, Frank Chadwick, Stanhope Forbes, Alexander Harrison, and H. Harewood Robinson.

[63] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 162-165.

[64] Ibid, 165. Simmons noted that the painters of the "Cornish School" had all studied in France.

[65] W. H. Bartlett, "Summer Time at St. Ives, Cornwall" *Art Journal*, 1897, 293.

[66] This painting was exhibited by Simmons at the 1893 World's Fair and described in "Monthly Record of American Art," *The Magazine of Art* 16 (December 1892-November 1893): vi, as noted in Carolyn Kinder Carr et al., *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair*, (Washington, D. C.: National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1993) p. 318.

[67] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 177-178, 181.

[68] In fact, Robert Reid had imagined a painting of the same subject and setting. He wrote to his sister in May 1887 that he was excited by his idea for a salon picture of "*Christ as a boy in the workshop of Joseph*—I have the most stunning old carpenter's shop—one that no one has ever painted and very few have ever seen. . . . I had decided to do it last year when I found this old shop." A few months later Reid wrote that his "religious subject" would "have to wait." He had decided to do an "*essentially Etaplean* picture . . . [of] the *unloading of fishing boats*." Robert Reid to Sara Bigelow Reid, 27 May 1887 and 6 September 1887, as quoted in H. Barbara Weinberg, "Robert Reid: Academic 'Impressionist,'" *Archives of American Art Journal* 15, no. 1 (1975): 7. At the 1889 Paris Salon, Reid exhibited a picture of fishing boats about to depart, *Avant le depart des bateaux*. It is tempting to think that he may have passed on the idea for the carpenter's shop with the Christ figure to Simmons.

[69] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 177-178.

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[70] Simmons may have confused these reviews in his recollection of them as noted by Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman, "In Memoriam: Simmons's *The Carpenter's Son (1888-1996)*," *American Art* (Summer 2000), 89, n. 19.

[71] "The Society of American Artists of New York: Fourteenth Exhibition," *Studio* 7 (28 May 1892): 233-234.

[72] Amelia Jones (1849-1935) lent *The Carpenter's Son* for exhibition at the Chicago Fair in 1893 and bequeathed it to her church, the First Unitarian Church of New Bedford, Massachusetts, where it remained until it was vandalized in November 1996. See Crane and Lehman, "In Memoriam."

[73] Simmons to Amelia Jones, 8 June 1892, First Unitarian Church Records, Old Dartmouth Historical Society-New Bedford Whaling Museum, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

[74] Jacobs, *Good and Simple Life*, 157.

[75] N. G., *Studio* 6 (December 1895) as quoted in Tom Cross, *The Shining Sands: Artists in Newlyn and St. Ives 1880-1930* (Westcountry Books, Lutterworth Press, 1994), 85.

[76] R. G., "A Letter from St. Ives, Cornwall," *Studio* 3 (September 1887): 54.

[77] *Art Interchange*, 18 January 1890, 22.

[78] Cook, *Art and Artists of Our Time*, 299.

[79] From his experience of Concarneau and Saint Ives, Simmons was able to make the following observation of the rise and fall of an art colony—cycles that correspond to his own five-year tenure in each locale: "The artist finds a place that is beautiful, undiscovered, and suits his pocketbook. He goes there for two years. The third year other artists follow him; the fourth year come the retired British admirals and 'vamps'; the fifth year the artist leaves; the sixth come the wealthy people who spend a lot of money on it, making it as ugly and as dear as possible, but soon tire and go away. The artist then comes back again and begins all over again, picking the bones of what the Money Bags had killed." –Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 165.

[80] R. G., "A Letter from St. Ives, Cornwall," *Studio* 3 (September 1887): 54.

[81] Louis Grier, "A Painters' Club" ibid. 5 (April 1895): 110.

[82] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 152.

[83] "Notes from St. Ives," *Studio* 3 (November 1887): 76.

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Chapter II
Two Windows, Four Pendentives, and a New Career

Stained-Glass Windows for Harvard and the Church of the Unity

Simmons's college connections led to his first known foray into the field of the decorative arts, which would include stained glass and mural paintings. In 1891 he received a commission by his Harvard class for the design of a two-panel stained-glass window for Memorial Hall to commemorate those class members who had fought in the Civil War. A class report records that Simmons returned from Europe in the spring of 1891 and settled in New York, where he was working on "several stained glass windows," including the one for Harvard, as well as painting "portraits and marines."[1]

Although Simmons's class claims the distinction of being the first to succeed in engaging one of their own members to design a window for Memorial Hall, there was already a history of illustrious alumni involved in the creation of this building. Just after the war a group of alumni had petitioned the Harvard Corporation for permission to solicit funds for a memorial to Harvard men who had served as Union soldiers. The idea was popular and drew nearly $400,000 between 1865 and 1868 (or approximately one-twelfth of the college's total endowment). The alumni wanted a lasting memorial that would be both beautiful and practical—a hall that would answer the college's needs for a meeting place for alumni and for a theater. A number of renowned architects who were Harvard alumni were invited to submit coded anonymous proposals. The winning design of William Robert Ware (Class of 1852) and Henry Van Brunt (Class of 1854) was chosen in 1865, and five years later the cornerstone was

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laid. In 1878 at the dedication of the building, President Charles W. Eliot praised Memorial Hall as "the most valuable gift the university has ever received, with respect alike to cost, daily usefulness, and significance."[2]

Beginning in 1874 a number of Harvard classes of the 1840s, 50s, 60s, and 70s sponsored memorial windows in honor of class members who had fought in the Civil War. In that year marking their thirtieth anniversary, the Class of 1844 decided to commission a window. They first invited their classmate William Morris Hunt, but he refused "on the ground of his unfamiliarity with the kind of work that would be required." Then John La Farge was asked by Ware and Van Brunt to take on this commission, and he accepted with enthusiasm for the opportunity to work in stained glass. Dissatisfaction with the current English method of over-painting in enamel on colored pot-metal glass made him eager to experiment to achieve a more translucent rather than transparent glass. He used plating or layering of different colored glasses to achieve new tones, but his experiments were still in their infancy. When one-half of the window had been completed, La Farge was unhappy with the results, and the Class of 1844 balked at the cost when it was learned that the completed window would cost twice the one thousand dollar estimate. La Farge destroyed his window, and a British firm was commissioned.[3]

A commemorative, stained-glass window for Memorial Hall was discussed by Simmons's Class of 1874 at their annual meeting in 1886, and in 1889 a committee of three was appointed to oversee all arrangements. The committee members, George Wigglesworth, Charles C. Clarke, and Edward Higginson, surveyed all class members and found strong favor for a window and for a subscription campaign to raise the

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fifteen hundred dollars required for the commission. The following year three new members, Charles M. Green, Paul Dana, and William R. Tyler, were added to the window committee, and the transfer of one thousand dollars from the class fund to the window project was approved.[4]

The committee reported that Simmons had agreed to do the work—apparently his first effort in the medium of stained glass—provided that there were sufficient funds to support high-quality materials and craftsmanship. There were several reasons why the window committee stipulated that Simmons should return to the United States for the design and execution of the window. Most important, they considered American stained glass superior aesthetically and technically. They had in mind the innovations pioneered for windows by La Farge and further developed by him and by Louis Comfort Tiffany. Their new techniques included the use of opalescent or semi-opaque white glass, plating together two or more tiers of colored glass, and molding textured and corrugated glass of wavy and varied thicknesses to produce luminous and translucent rather than transparent glass. More practically, the window committee also wanted Simmons to be readily available to meet with architects William Ware and Henry Van Brunt, to be well acquainted with the site and the other windows of Memorial Hall so that his design would be sympathetic, and to be on hand to supervise the work. In addition, the committee wanted to avoid the high customs duties levied on a window of glass made abroad.[5]

As far as the design went, the committee wanted a window illustrating the theme of reconciliation with an example from classical history.[6] They reported that their choice of subject was the reconciliation of Greek political rivals Themistocles and

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Aristides on the eve of the battle of Salamis.[7] They explained that the subject was fitting because of the "paramount importance of the reconciliation of the North and South" and their sympathetic desire to honor class members whether they fought as Union or Confederate soldiers: "When it is remembered that our class numbers among its members men who proved their devotion to the respective causes of the North and the South by service in the field, the appropriateness of the subject becomes still more striking."[8]

The story of Aristides and Themistocles illustrated by Simmons is related in Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles* and in the seventh book of Herodotus. The committee's report to their class gives this brief background and summary of the event:

> Artistedes had been ostracized by his countrymen; but on the night before the battle of Salamis, impelled by the desire to aid his country in the time of her peril, he made his way through the lines of the enemy at the risk of his life, seeking reconciliation with his former antagonist, Themistocles, and an opportunity to support his country's cause in the impending battle. His noble words uttered at the time of his meeting with Themistocles are inscribed [in Greek] in the small panels at the base of the window, and may be paraphrased, "Our rivalry now and hereafter must be only in devotion to our country's good."[9]

Because of other commitments, Simmons could not return to the United States for work on the window until the spring of 1891. At the class meeting in June of that year, he discussed his progress, showing a photograph of his drawing and estimating that he would finish the project sometime in the winter. He was originally to have completed the window in time for Commencement in 1891, but he needed and was allowed more time.[10]

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Simmons's designs were executed at the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company of New York. William Ware saw the work in progress and reported:

> The window itself is in a fair state of advancement, and is of great promise. Simmons is keeping his promise in the matter of care and pains, and devotes himself to it daily. Moreover, the Tiffany people are much impressed with his capacity and the aptitude with which he has taken to the technicalities. They say he goes at it as if he had done glass all his life.

Ware closed his letter with the judgement that the window would be "something very superior."[11]

When the window panels (Fig. II:1) were put on display in June of 1892 at Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company on Fourth Avenue just before their installation at Memorial Hall later that month, they were noticed by the New York *Sun* and the *Studio*. The *Sun* praised the panels as "beautiful examples of modern stained glass,"[12] recognizing Simmons's proficiency in the use of "modern" techniques. The glass was used like thick paint to provide both color and form, and the leading was used like lines to draw the figure as well as to provide structural support. Overpainting was also adventurously applied with varying thickness and freedom to add texture and rich painterly effect.

The *Sun* also reproduced a line drawing or cartoon of Simmons's window design (Fig. II:2) and a description noting that the right panel depicts Aristides greeting with extended hand his formal rival Athenian General Themistocles and that his patriotic words of peace appear in Greek in the ventilator panel below. The writer gives special recognition to the artistry of the glasswork:

> The faces and arms [of the figures] were painted in mineral colors by Mr. Simmons and fired so as to be literally a part of the glass, and all the other effects of color and shading in background and drapery are got by the use of

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> opalescent glass of varying thickness and translucency. The toga of Aristides is softly tinged with a pale green made denser in the shadows while that of Themistocles is of pearly whiteness; while below the hem of the garment of the Athenian General shows the light of brazen armor. The flames of the torches as illuminated from without are wonderfully like fire in color, and in the left-hand panel the red glow is reflected realistically in the faces of the followers, the more conspicuous of whom represents the artist himself.[13]

A review in the *Studio* was likewise appreciative of Simmons's mastery but less happy with the overall window project at Memorial Hall and its potential to communicate its lessons clearly and with unity of effect. After commending on the one hand the spirit of the graduate classes and the "general intention" of these windows as a means to commemorate the dead and promote "good feeling and public spirit," the writer lamented,

> On the other hand it were much to be wished that unity of spirit, if not unity in design, could have been more insisted upon, and harmony as well, with the architecture of the building. Had this been done, we should have been spared this medley of all known styles of design, and all known methods of glass-staining, that makes the collected windows of Memorial Hall look like a glass stainer's sample book.[14]

The writer allowed that while Simmons treated his subject "with as much skill, and clearness as possible" and that "it is not his fault that the subject cannot be understood without a key or without the quotation from the Greek historian [Herodotus] in the panels below the pictures," still his work added to the lack of unity found in the whole interior:

> Owing to the nature of his subject, an incident chosen from classic story, Mr. Simmons has not been able to escape contributing his mite to the general confusion, and we see figures in classic costume standing under Greek porticos with their pediments and columns, and the whole picture enclosed in a Gothic frame-work with its mullions and trefoiled heads. The inconsistency would

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> have been less marked, had the classic architectural features been omitted: they were not necessary to the telling of the story.[15]

The reviewer noted that Simmons adopted the Renaissance convention of including contemporary portraits in his design: "his own portrait as one of the attendants of Themistocles is not to be mistaken, nor can there be much doubt for whom the head of Aristides is intended." In conclusion, this review also commended the technical excellence of the window: "the color of the glass employed is at once spirited and refined and the mechanical execution of the window reflects honor upon the house to which we owe it."[16]

Ironically, Simmons's use of eclectic architectural elements as well as his somewhat arcane subject matter criticized in the *Studio* review were likely the result of his and the window committee's aim to fit the prescribed guidelines for windows at Memorial Hall. These requirements as stated below had been set by the Harvard Corporation for the very purpose of promoting unity:

> Each window shall contain one or more upright figures, about the size of life, with an ornamental panel or inscription occupying the ventilator panel below, all with a border or canopy; and that these figures shall be typical or historical. The choice of design is also restricted to characters prior to the time of Shakespeare, it being the intention that the windows, when all complete, shall unite harmoniously into one great theme.[17]

The guidelines were gradually relaxed and "typical and historical" came to include allegorical figures representing such virtues as Peace or Honor. Roughly half of the memorial windows depict subjects relating to the Civil War and the remainder have other historical, cultural, or literary themes.[18]

Following the guidelines, which specified historical figures predating Shakespeare, Simmons and the window committee of the Class of 1874 agreed on

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figures from Greek history to illustrate the generous spirit of reconciliation that they felt to be particularly appropriate for their class, members of which fought on both sides in the war. In addition this theme was considered relative to their year of graduation, 1874, because of major accomplishments that year in the Senate's passing of the Civil Rights bill and, as *The Studio* put it, "the sealing of the political reconciliation of the North and the South, after the Civil War."[19] Simmons's use of classic architectural features fulfilled the requirement of a border, and his inscriptions were framed in the ventilator panels below as prescribed (Fig. II:3).

The class of 1874 was justly proud to have been the first to have supported a window for Memorial Hall created by one of its own members. It appears that Simmons not only designed but was intimately involved in the manufacture of the window as indicated by the letter from Ware and as stipulated in the expectations of the window committee.[20]

Simmons's hands-on involvement with the Harvard window is also corroborated in a recent study by Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman of another window by Simmons, *The Light Bearer*, 1894 (Figs. II:4, 5), executed at Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company within a few years of the Harvard window. *The Light Bearer* was originally created for the Church of the Unity in Springfield Massachusetts. The building was the first commission (1866) of architect H. H. Richardson, and the church congregation had been a pastoral post of Simmons's father from 1848-1851.[21] The window, a memorial to the influential newspaper publisher Samuel Bowles II (1826-1878)[22] and his wife, Mary Dwight Bowles (1827-1893), was saved by staff members of the Springfield newspapers and given to the George Walter Vincent Smith Museum

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when the church was razed in 1962. The window was recently conserved for the museum by the Cummings Stained Glass Studios. Crane and Lehman, with Conservator Diane Roberts, maintain that while there are no known actual records detailing work procedures and artists or artisans attached to each project at Tiffany Glass and Decorating, it appears that Simmons was instrumental in selecting the glass for his pieces and directing how it was used. Their study during the conservation process provides new insights and appreciation for both *The Light Bearer* and *The Reconciliation of Aristides and Themisocles.* Roberts believes that the chrome yellow for the drapery glass in the gown of *The Light Bearer* must have been custom ordered by Simmons, not only because of its unusual color but also because of the way it conforms to the lines of Simmons's cartoon. She also asserts that the "painting of the angel's face in this window, with various 'hot' and 'cold' firings and uneven paint application, is consistent with an individual artist giving special attention to his work than that of a professional Tiffany painter who has painted thousands of faces. . . .Much more work went into the head." Roberts continues:

> The face has at least two further complete firings than the limbs, and a final layer of underfired, or possibly unfired, paint. Simmons is creating depth by laying on a wash and then hatching it by scratching paint away until he's got as much light as he wants. Then he fires it, takes it out of the kiln, lays on another wash of paint, hatches that in a different direction, and fires it again. He keeps doing that until he's satisfied. It's a very interesting technique; not usual. Not unheard of, but not usual.[23]

The 1880s and 90s were years of much experimentation with a range of subjects, styles, and media and a concurrent growth of confidence for American artists trained in Europe. Simmons displayed such confidence when he eagerly took on the challenge offered by his classmates to work in a new medium, and the Harvard

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commission was the beginning of a new direction for him. Colleague Arthur Hoeber wrote in his "sketch" of Simmons in 1900 regarding this commission: "that it was his first attempt at working in stained glass mattered little, for by this time Mr. Simmons's mastery of any medium was quite unusual, while his skill as a draughtsman rendered the preliminary work a simple problem." He continued, "It was his first departure in a decorative direction, but it showed the man's capacity, and the years of training fitted him to express himself with dignity and thoroughness; it paved the way for future efforts in this direction, and opened up new possibilities which the artist was not slow to appreciate and develop."[24]

According to the *Sun* of June 16, 1892, Simmons had booked passage on the *Britannic* for Europe, where he had planned to return to live with his family.[25] However, with his first decorative work just accomplished, his destiny changed when he received an invitation to join the largest decorative endeavor this country had known—the creation murals and sculpture for the Columbian Exposition's White City in Chicago.

The Columbian Exposition and a New Career

The decoration of the exposition was more than a chance to do artwork on a scale never before attempted by Americans—it was an opportunity to be part of an extraordinary effort and to feel the bond of fraternity that comes from such experience. For Simmons this was the deciding moment in his career, which was "entirely changed at Chicago." He recognized this project as an important turning point not only for

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himself but also for art in this country. He hailed the shift "from Italian workmen, who had formerly smeared the walls with bad copies of their old masters, to American artists (not experts in mural work, it is true, but full of enthusiasm and fresh, original ideas.)"[26] Pauline King, the author of the important early history *American Mural Painting* (1902), was among those who recognized the fair as a coming-of-age event for the arts, in which the "enormous reserve of artistic strength in the country" was called upon to meet "the requirements of the time" in an unprecedented decorative project "where architecture, painting, and sculpture could work together."[27]

The director of decorations for the fair, artist Francis Davis Millet, who assembled and led the team of artists, compared the exposition to a great war campaign: "the spirit is identical, and the mental and physical characteristics developed and the qualities of manhood demanded are precisely the same in both cases." [28] Although the exposition was a venture to promote peace, prosperity, and progress it was also, like some war campaigns, an effort to preserve valued traditions and a certain status quo in the political, economic, and social spheres. The decoration of the exposition was an early occasion for artists and administrators to show their faith in the power of art to influence and improve society. The urge to educate and inspire was motivated by both a sense of noblesse oblige or genuine philanthropy, and by more subtle and complex desires for self-preservation.

Thomas Palmer, president of the World's Columbian Commission, gave an address in 1891 expressing his belief in the exposition as "the promoter of the highest interests of humanity." The muralists themselves seemed convinced that the arts in general, and murals in particular, were tools for universal inspiration and instruction.

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Part of the rationalization was that such art would be meaningful for even those too ignorant, or in too much of a hurry, to read. As muralist Will H. Low wrote:

> In the marts of commerce, in the halls of legislative deliberation, in the courts of justice, and in our libraries and schools await many fair wall spaces. Give these to the mural painter and you will do two things: you will bring into your daily life a message of spiritual aspiration which he who runs may read, and you will help to create that great civilizing force which every truly great nation has had, and which we as yet lack, a national school of art.[29]

Blashfield expressed similar faith in the taming and civilizing effect of public art: "The artist is teaching the lesson of intellectual development, teaching it with brush and chisel to the child who has not yet learned to read and the peasant [or foreign immigrant] who is too old to learn.[30]

The fair, and particularly the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, presented the latest and finest products made using the most modern technology. It demonstrated the industrial prowess of participating nations, most notably that of the United States. The presentation of decorative work on a large scale for this building was an opportunity to show that this country could rival Europe in the arts as well as industry. While the fair celebrated progress, at the same time the murals honored the work of the past—the honest handwork of artists and artisans.[31] The murals were part of a broader effort, including school programs, applied arts programs, literature, and speeches, reflecting the intellectual view at the time that traditional work and craft and the work ethic they represented provided the foundation for a civilized well-ordered society. At the beginnings of their mural careers, many of the painters did not think that showing contemporary laborers at work was picturesque or uplifting, and they preferred

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allegorical representation. Simmons and his colleagues were taught the use of allegory by their study of the Renaissance and their Beaux-Arts training.[32] Allegory was the international language of choice. Not only was it viewed as universally understood, but also it was well suited to the decorative purposes of mural painting. Some artists saw American history as too short and modern clothing too ugly and unfit for mural painting.[33] Allegory provided opportunity for drawing the beautiful human figure, nude or nearly nude in graceful and sometimes diaphanous drapery.

When Frank Millet chose the muralists for architect George B. Post's Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building (Fig. II:6), he appointed eight artists to paint directly on the plaster of the eight pendentive domes of the four corner pavilions and four more, including himself, to paint two lunettes each for the walls of the entrance pavilions.[34] King wrote that because there was no pool of American artists with previous experience in decorative painting, Millet followed the traditional precedent of choosing "artists of good rank," trusting they had the talent and resourcefulness to do the job. The artists for the domes were J. Carroll Beckwith, Edwin Blashfield, Kenyon Cox, Robert Reid, Charles Reinhart, Walter Shirlaw, Simmons, and J. Alden Weir. Millet, Walter McEwen, Gari Melchers, and local artist Laurence Earle painted the lunettes for the entrance pavilions.[35]

The murals were to relate to the exhibits of the building,[36] and the artists of the domes strove for a unified effect, each featuring four allegorical figures in the pendentives. Most of the artists chose to symbolize various arts with female figures in accord with Renaissance tradition as well as the nineteenth-century view of women as the keepers and transmitters of refinement, culture, and civilization. In addition to

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following Renaissance models, the artists were inspired by the more immediate precedent of contemporary French murals. King wrote that they had observed Paul Baudry's "triumphs of foreshortening" in his ceiling murals in the foyer of the Paris Opéra on the one hand and absorbed Pierre Puvis de Chavannes's "ideas of flat colour and breadth of general effect" on the other.[37] Janet Marstine's recent doctoral thesis, *Working History: Images of Labor and Industry in American Mural Painting, 1893-1903*, cites as particular examples the work of Puvis at the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Amiens including the representations *Work*, *Rest*, and *The Spinner* (1863), and *Pottery* and *Ceramics* for the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Rouen (1888-91).[38] Economic and cultural growth in France during the Second Empire (1852-70) and during the early phase of the Third Republic (1871-94) had provided for hundreds of murals in government buildings, particularly in Paris. The most important of these for Simmons and his colleagues were likely the murals in the Hôtel de Ville, but there were also numerous murals in marriage chambers, festival halls, and council chambers of smaller town halls in the various *arrondissements* (wards) of Paris. The abundance of decorative work in Paris undoubtedly provided the strongest inspiration for American artists who had studied there to promote civic art at home.[39]

For the pendentive domes of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, the artists other than Simmons used mainly or only female allegorical figures to represent the arts or commerce and industry, but Simmons's figures were all male (Fig. II:7). Blashfield depicted *The Arts of Metalworking* (Fig. II:8) and rendered "The Brassfounder" and "The Ironworker" as bare-chested male youths. Reid also showed "Metal" as a semi-nude male figure, but represented "Design," "Ornament," and

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"Textiles" as female figures (Fig. II:9). Reinhart portrayed "Embroidery," "Design," "Decoration," and "Sculpture" with four female figures (Fig. II:10), as did Weir in showing "Pottery," "Painting," "Decoration," and "Gold Work" (Fig. II:11), and Shirlaw with his "Silver," "Gold," "Pearl," and "Coral" signifying *The Abundance of Land and Sea* (Fig. II:12). Cox, whose dome was paired in the same pavilion with Simmons's, showed the arts of "Metal Work," "Ceramics," "Building," and "Textiles," all as female figures (Fig. II: 13). Carroll Beckwith took a modern tack with his embodiments of electrical inventions—"The Arc Light," "The Telephone," "The Telegraph," and "The Dynamo" (Fig. II:14). These four also, even "The Dynamo" outfitted in a factory worker's shirtsleeves, were women; only the "Genius of Electricity" shown directing the force of electricity from the dome center was a male figure.[40]

Simmons's theme was *Resources*, and the nude or partially draped male figures were labeled "Wood," "Stone," "Iron," and "Hemp" in the escutcheons painted on the dome ceiling center above them. All the figures were seated, whether shown at rest or at work. "Stone" and "Wood" were personified by sculptors at work, each with a tool in hand and representing a fine arts profession albeit one associated with male strength and hard work. "Iron" or "Forging" (Fig. II:15) represented the trade of the blacksmith. He held a hammer and rested on an anvil. "Hemp," embodying the principal raw material for rope, was shown nude with a carefully placed hand holding coiled rope fed though a pulley. Forging and rope-making were male professions and demanded skilled labor. They were invested with picturesque artistry of skilled movement and handcraft, and their products were essential to early industry and

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commerce. Before hydraulic lifts, trucking, and other more modern means of moving goods, hemp rope and iron were vital to transportation.

Millet described Simmons's murals as "symbolizing 'Wood Carving,' 'Stone Cutting,' 'Forging,' and 'Mechanical Appliances.'" He added, "The general scheme is pale gray and flesh-colored tones relieved and accentuated by the forms of the tools and accessories appropriate to each figure. The composition is bold in line, firm in outline, and original in conception."[41] A reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* praised Simmons's work for "the virile strength, which characterizes his figures."[42] Simmons's extensive academic experience in rendering the figure from many different viewpoints and in a great variety of poses made him very adept at drawing the seated figure. He had quickly surmised that this posture allowed him to fit a more massive figure in the allotted space than if he had portrayed a standing figure in each pendentive. Simmons recounted that when Post was asked what his favorite decoration in the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building was he replied, "Simmons's—for if my building will hold that up, it will hold up anything."[43]

The dome murals were generally praised, but Royal Cortissoz saw failings in the seemingly haphazard choice of themes and absence of an overall plan and found the program repetitious and lacking originality. He noted weaknesses in the execution of the work as well. Simmons was one of those he selected for harsh criticism:

> . . .good drawing is of the very essence of good mural painting. It is chiefly the absence of it which condemns the decorations by Mr. Reid, Mr. Simmons and Mr. Beckwith. Never did ceiling paintings show greater feebleness of execution than these. The platitudes they depict are bad enough, but the incapacity they reveal is worse. Figures and accessories, and especially the scrolls or ribands which have frequently been used, are drawn in the most tentative, weak way, and the coloration, the painting, is no stronger. . . . It is a fact that most of the much-talked-of domes are flat failures.[44]

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Such a negative view of Simmons's ability, especially his skill as a draftsman, is contrary to the common opinion of his work throughout his career, which was usually highly favorable. Cortissoz defended himself, maintaining that "nothing is to be gained by blind acceptance of whatever is done at Jackson Park" and, that in the midst of so much good, "the bad [should] be ruthlessly criticized." In another report on the fair, Cortissoz, although he still remarked on the lack of a cohesive program, was more sympathetic in his overall recognition of the dome murals as pioneering works:

> The domes, as they stand, are extremely interesting as experiments in a field to which America has not yet contributed many workers. In a way they are more interesting than the very successful work on the Agricultural Building--not because they are better paintings, which is most decidedly not the case, but because they are attempts at solving more difficult problems. . . .The decorators of the domes of the Liberal Arts Building have had to paint on curved surfaces to be seen from beneath, and they have been met by difficulties, such as those of complicated foreshortening, which, it may be presumed, few American artists have been accustomed to attack under similar circumstances. If a lesson may be learned in the course of an inspection of the decorative side of the court, it is that science is of immense importance in mural painting—science, that is to say, of the sort which makes Paul Baudry's ceiling in the *foyer* of the Paris Opera as wonderful a performance as the work of Tintoretto in the Scuola di San Rocco is for the sixteenth century.[45]

The muralists of the American Renaissance were proud of their traditional academic training and the great skill and artistry it represented and saw themselves as protectors of the past. At the same time, they were adventurous modern men ready to advance their craft through innovative techniques and creative exchange with one another. Chicago was the scene of much experimentation and development of new technology to aid the mural painter.

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While few of the muralists chosen to work at Chicago had any previous experience in wall or ceiling decoration, it would seem that for all involved, there was no lack of patriotic pride and willing spirit in this enterprise. Pauline King wrote of the "brave response of inexperienced men to the demands made upon them" and compared the reaction to that given in the colonial past to other "draughts upon the untried strength of the country" when "there has been no doubt of the sincerity of the answer: 'We are untrained and unfitted, we are weak and the undertaking is great; but we are ready.'"[46]

She related that although the artists who did the murals for the domes painted them directly on the plaster, they also had studios set up for them in the Horticultural Building where they could pose and sketch live models and do other preliminary work.[47] She explained that mural painting is generally a challenge because of the demands posed by the huge scale and that the dome artists faced additional difficulties of perspective and foreshortening in composing and adjusting their figures for the curved surface of a dome at great height. Color also was a concern; it must be vivid enough not to appear washed out and weak, but not so strong as to create the appearance of a "hole" in the surface in the dome.[48]

Another writer said he thought a steeplejack probably had an easier job than "a domist." Visiting the work site he found a dome muralist on a scaffold, "almost on his back," but painting "as naturally as if he had been on his feet."[49]

According to King and reports from the artists themselves, they enthusiastically tried and shared different preparatory work methods. Weir and Reid were the first of

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the artists to arrive. They were eager to determine scale and proportion and set about making huge cartoons—large figures cut out of paper. Blashfield called them "colossal paper dolls."[50] These were tacked in place in the domes so that all of the artists could benefit from such trials and help in judging the effect. As Beckwith recalled, "These experiments were continued until it became evident that figures about ten feet high were the best and most effective."[51]

The artists were given small plaster models of the domes. These and other devices and exercises allowed them to work out their designs on a small scale and make enlargements in the studio. Blashfield, for instance, constructed a color sketch on an eight-sided canvas as a working model that could be rotated so that each figure could be tried in relation to the dome. Beckwith used a similar idea for his plaster model. Simmons relied on a number of boldly sketched studies in oil, and his neighbor Cox created detailed studies of models and drapery.[52]

In an interview published in the *Art Amateur* (Volume 28, 1892), Beckwith recounted more of his experience as a dome artist, much of which was shared by Simmons and others. He noted that the artists were free to choose their own subjects, and they decided for unity's sake to concentrate the main figures in the pendentives and make them of similar scale. They could afford to differ somewhat in their treatment of the center of the dome. For instance, he mentioned that "Simmons and Cox chose a centre of sky and clouds, with strings of shells and garlands," and that Reid had "an opalescent sky." He said the dome surface had been prepared for each artist—"covered with a heavy coat of coarse plaster, known technically as 'sand finish,'" and

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then with "two heavy coats of priming, mixed with very little oil." The color of the priming varied a little from artist to artist depending on how they planned to treat the dome—"some of us preferring to work on white or gray grounds, some having cloud effects or blue sky painted in." He recalled that Millet made available to the muralists the services of the photographic department of the fair and that most took advantage of these facilities to enlarge their designs for transfer to the domes, although he and Cox "used the old method of enlarging by squares." Speaking of the paint surface he stated that "it was desirable that there should be no gloss," both in order to simulate old frescoes and to make the images more clearly and evenly visible from afar. He reported that George Maynard had "adopted medium of wax and turpentine instead of oil or megilp[53]" for his murals for the Agricultural Building and that the dome artists used this too. He added that "it was found to work well with ordinary tube colors, drying quite matt," and that "Millet had prepared enough silver white, ground in wax for mixing tints; otherwise, we used the ordinary oil colors." They had scaffolding with tall stepladders allowing them to reach all areas of the domes. Some of the artists had the scaffoldings temporarily removed so that they could view their work-in-progress from the ground. Help in applying paint to the huge surfaces was available from young assistants who had been trained in New York or Paris.

Beckwith summed up his own perception, which is probably similar to that of Simmons and the others:

> . . .the artistic surroundings of the whole place were a great incentive to work. The architecture and sculpture is of such a high order that it inspired the painters to friendly emulation. Then as a number of us were engaged together,

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> there were visits of one to another, new ideas and discoveries were communicated, and the experience was, I may say, one of the greatest pleasures of my life. "[54]

Blashfield gave a similar account:

> It was all so stimulating, so fertilizing! Solidarity, temporal solidarity at all events among the artists had been born at Chicago, and the good fellowship had been so great, the disinterestedness, the willingness to work one's hardest for a pittance, were so encouraging . . . those of us who worked in Chicago can still sigh happily to each other, 'I too was in Arcadia.'[55]

This atmosphere was in many ways a continuation of the idyllic art colonies many of the artists had experienced in France. After a hard day's work they would gather for a convivial meal that continued in the same spirit as those meals enjoyed in Europe or in the eating clubs of college days. This life was a way to revel in the glow of creativity and individual and team effort and triumph and to prolong a youthful camaraderie that was truly ideal.

Simmons must have been a principal player in Chicago, for Blashfield also recalled: "In the evening we naturally discussed each other's theories about mural painting as a novelty, and . . . we were inclined to pick Simmons as our winner."[56] Simmons himself reminisced about these evening enjoyments in his autobiography, and described the dining site:

> Cockroach Ranch—called so because they indulged in the best North American manner of spoiling food—was the dining and meeting place of the artists of the Exposition. Here, in a big, bare room, looking like a railway station, with a long table in the center presided over by Elihu Vedder as our *doyen*, we met and talked of all manner of things, while such people as actresses and diplomats on a visit would sneak in to listen to our extravagant conversation . . . we bragged so much at night about our work and then at lunch the next day admitted it was rotten."

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Simmons also told of another more exclusive evening hangout: "Often after the day's work we would go out to the *Argo*—a club in a real ship tied to the end of a long wharf. Our hosts were the brains of Chicago—a famous architect, great manufacturers, a noted editor, and among others a banker who afterward sat in the Cabinet at Washington." Simmons described "a great waxed floor, a perfect table, and a perfect dinner." He wrote that the fair was there for all to enjoy, but the artists and other guests at the *Argo* shared the privilege of partaking of their hosts' "private pleasures"—their fine wine, music, "beautiful women, congenial company." All this was savored in a dreamlike setting of moonlight, and the lights of ships moving in and out of the harbor. Simmons claimed, "There was never anything like it."[57]

Simmons was not alone in feeling that the society of artists and other creators of the fair were indeed a remarkable group. Augustus Saint-Gaudens called it "the greatest meeting of artists since the fifteenth century."[58] The artists of the fair saw themselves as heroes in a noble cause—"the fight for beauty."[59] They were proud of the tough working conditions, nearly impossible time frame, low pay and self-sacrificing dedication to the cause, and especially their competence and stamina. Simmons and others would call attention to the difficulty of their feats throughout their careers. At the Columbian Exposition the artists were called upon to complete a program in a few months that Weir thought should require a year.[60] They painted directly on the concave surface of the domes, which measured twenty-five feet in diameter and rose some fifty-five feet from the floor. The corner pavilions with these domes were only half enclosed, exposing the dome painters to extremes of weather. They were paid only twelve hundred dollars for their work, while the lunette artists

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were paid six thousand dollars for the comparatively comfortable effort of painting in their studios two canvasses measuring twenty by forty feet.[61] Years later Cortissoz commented: "men like Simmons—you have no idea what a good workman Simmons is. He is a perfectly superb workman and he came back from Europe, and Melcher[s] and some of the others, and they all had been through the Paris mill."[62] Simmons and many of the other muralists felt that physical strength and skill demanded by their profession linked them to the great artists and artisans of the past. They also believed that they epitomized the American work ethic and were an inspiration to others. At the same time they segregated themselves from actual laborers at their sites and from women as colleagues as well. Simmons viewed men as the heroes and women as the "hero worshippers": "They spend their lovely youth in a vain attempt to rival men." He wrote that women artists either took their art too seriously or not seriously enough. He defined talent as ability to render skillfully "what we already know" and genius the power to go beyond and "[add] new truth." He stated: "though we have had women of talent in the fine arts, no genius is or has been a woman."[63] The women decorators of the Chicago fair were largely relegated to the Women's Building, which was itself excluded from the Court of Honor and placed closer to the sideshow exhibits and entertainments of the Midway Plaisance. Blashfield wrote of the separate worlds of the artists and the laborers at the fair: "The home life of the dome-painters and the sculptors was sheltered by little suburban hotels just outside the gates and we were happy there and secure from the sandbaggers of whom we were warned, being adjured to go out in the evening in groups or at the least two at a time."[64]

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For Simmons this was the life--the hard work, challenges, the company of fellow artists, and the rewards of decorative painting. Decades later he wrote:

> Chicago gave me a taste of the joys of decorative painting, and I resolved in my mind the idea of devoting all my energies to it. Painting pictures to be hung on the wall by strings, generally badly placed or in the wrong light, was not satisfactory. Also, one had to be subsidized to wait for sales. But given a certain space to beautify, a space one knew about beforehand (the light, height, and color of the wall), and where one was reasonably sure his work would remain permanently—that was worth doing.[65]

While the so-called White City created for the fair was ephemeral, its impact was enormous, immediate, and enduring. There was regret that, for the most part, the buildings with their complementary arts of painting and sculpture would not be preserved.[66] But as Millet could predict with confidence, "The immediate fruits of this union [of the allied arts], even if it be but temporary, are incalculable; of the final result there can be no doubt. It means the dawn of a real art in this country."[67]

Approximately twenty-seven million people visited the fair and millions more were reached by souvenir guidebooks, newspapers, and magazines, and popular fiction such as *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* (1893), by Clara Louisa Burnham, and *Two Little Pilgrims' Progress: A Story of the City Beautiful* (1895), by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The lesson in beauty was paramount. Visitors were dazzled by the scale and splendor of the buildings by day and bewitched by the light shows at night; for many it was their first glimpse of electric lights. Armchair visitors were wooed by photographs of the same.

Contemporary critic Charles Caffin wrote about the fair's creation of a demand for civic beauty:

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> It taught in the first place, the desirableness, even the commercial value, of beauty. The shrewd, large-minded citizens of a city...discovered that they could give expression to their own local pride and attract business from the outside, not only by following the old crude idea of attempting "the biggest show on earth," but by trying to make it the most beautiful.[68]

Pauline King gave a more euphoric estimation of the fair and its promise for artists. She wrote of "the splendid vigour of youth . . . as marked in nations as in individuals," and the "rapid development of . . . unsuspected talents," which were manifested in this "first triumphant effort:"

> For at Jackson Park near Chicago, in the summer of 1892, a band of men were fighting out the question whether American artists had talent sufficiently broad and strong to carry them to successful achievement in this most important field, or whether, sinking back on the excuses of our lack of traditions, our inexperience, and limitations of temperament, we should have to condone a high-spirited effort that ended in failure....The way the problem was solved is now a matter of history. From this occasion, which was the first great opportunity offered a number of artists where architecture, sculpture, and painting could work together, dates a development in the fine arts, and in the taste for them, which has already borne rich fruit, and which promises to extend beyond any limits that can be foreseen.

King saw the fair as proof of an artistic and visionary United States with the imagination, training, and resources to create "The White City" of fairy-tale palaces that seemed "built by magic." She avowed: "The memory of the whole Exposition will remain as evidence of devotion to the ideal, which is as distinctly American as a turn for mechanics."[69]

The fair helped develop a taste for decoration that provided a future for muralists—a new career for Simmons and numerous others among that band of men. There were, of course, highly competent women artists who also decorated at the fair and in the glory years that followed, but in the main it was a man's world. Indeed,

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Simmons and others wanted it that way. The men were connected in so many ways—through university affiliations, European academy and art colony studies, professional associations and clubs, and even family ties. Fired by their achievements at the fair, they were well positioned for mutual support and promotion of their own careers and the profession of decorative painting.

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[1] *Seventh Report of the Class Secretary of the Class of 1874 of Harvard College* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1899), 104-105.

[2] As quoted on the Web site of the Office for the Arts at Harvard: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~memhall/concept.html: Internet; accessed 9 January 2002. Information on the history of Memorial Hall is drawn from this Web site as well.

[3] Sally Webster, *William Morris Hunt, 1824-1879* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 143; H. Barbara Weinberg, "The Decorative Work of John La Farge," Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 1972, 340-343.

[4] There was also a provision for transferring up to one thousand dollars from the class fund for the window if necessary. The appropriation from the class fund was approved at the twenty-first meeting on 25 June 1890. *Seventh Report . . . of the Class of 1874 of Harvard College.*, 180, 161.

[5] Ibid., 159-160.

[6] "A New Window for Memorial Hall, Harvard College," *Studio: A Weekly Journal of the Fine Arts* 7 (2 July 1892): 262-263.

[7] The battle of Salamis was a major Greek naval victory over the Persians in 480 B. C.

[8] *Seventh Report . . . Class of 1874 of Harvard College*, 160.

[9] Ibid.

[10] The window was installed by June of 1892. Ibid., 180-181.

[11] Ibid. 160-161.

[12] "Memorial Windows for Harvard," New York *Sun*, 16 June 1892, 7.

[13] Ibid.

[14] "A New Window for Memorial Hall, Harvard College," 262.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 263.

[17] As quoted on the Web site of the Office for the Arts at Harvard: http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~memhall/staingls.html; Internet; accessed 7 January 2002.

[18] Ibid.

[19] "A New Window for Memorial Hall, Harvard College," 262.

[20] *Seventh Report . . . Class of 1874*, 160-161.

[21] Catherine Hoover Voorsanger, "Dictionary of Architects, Artisans, Artists, and Manufacturers," in Doreen Bolger Burke et al., *In Pursuit of Beauty: Americans and the Aesthetic Movement*, exh. cat. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), 463; Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman, "Edward

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Emerson Simmons' *The Light Bearer*: Anatomy of a Stained Glass Window," *Stained Glass*, Spring 1999: 28.

[22] Bowles took over from his father to bring the *Springfield* [Mass.] *Republican* to national prominence and founded the Springfield *Daily Republican.* Crane and Lehman, "Edward Emerson Simmons' *The Light Bearer*," 28.

[23] Crane and Lehman, "Edward Emerson Simmons' *The Light Bearer*," 28, 30-31, 61. See the complete article for a fuller study of Simmons's work in stained glass with excellent photographs, 24 - 31, 61-63.

[24] Arthur Hoeber, "Edward E. Simmons," *Brush and Pencil* 5 (March 1900): 244-245.

[25] Vesta and the boys must have stayed in England. Census records for Saint Ives in 1891show Vesta Simmons as head of household, and list their sons William, age six, and George, age four, as scholars. From West Penwith Resources, 1891 Census, p. 5, folio 15: http://west-penwith.org.uk/census/1891_2_2.htm. "Memorial Windows for Harvard;" *Seventh Report . . . Class of 1874*, 104, recorded that Simmons's family was living in Haslemere, Surrey, England in 1892.

[26] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 208. Here Simmons is no doubt referring to Constantino Brumidi's decorations for the United States Capitol. It was the fashion in Simmons's time to dislike Brumidi's work and that of other foreigners who took commissions that American artists believed could or should have been done by Americans.

[27] Pauline King, *American Mural Painting: A Study of the Important Decorations by Distinguished Artists in the United States* (Boston: Noyes, Platt & Company, 1902), 62-63.

[28] Francis. D. Millet, "The Designers of the Fair," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 85 (November 1892): 873.

[29] Will H. Low, "Mural Painting—Modern Possibilities of an Ancient Art," *Brush and Pencil* 11 (December 1902): 176-177.

[30] Edwin H. Blashfield, "Mural Painting," *Municipal Affairs* 2 (1898): 103-104.

[31] For an extensive study of work images in American murals at the 1893 fair and other sites, see Janet Cecelia Marstine, "Working History: Images of Labor and Industry in American Mural Painting, 1893-1903," Ph. D. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 1993.

[32] In addition to actual murals there were iconographic sourcebooks published in the Renaissance and available in various reprints to nineteenth-century art students in Paris, such as the *Iconologie* of Cesare Ripa.

[33] Kenyon Cox, for example, expressed this view in "The Subject in Art," *Scribner's Magazine* 50 (July 1911): 12.

[34] Simmons credited the Columbian Exposition as the birthplace of "public mural decorations in America" and told how Francis Davis Millet, director of decoration, supported by Daniel Burnham, chief of construction, made possible such a large program by deciding to leave the ironwork unpainted and in its natural color—"that reddish gray, or crushed strawberry, the color of iron as it comes from the foundry"—thereby saving twenty thousand dollars, which he demanded be used for murals (*From Seven to Seventy*, 207-208). Millet's assistant, Charles Yardley Turner, was also instrumental in

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saving money to be directed to the mural program when he developed a method of spray painting the surfaces of staff (a mixture of plaster of Paris and hemp fibers), which covered most of the structures.

[35] According to King, *American Mural Painting*, 66, of the artists called to the fair, only Blashfield and George Maynard, who painted panels for the Agriculture Building, had done mural work before. Low, Millet, and Shirlaw had also had some experience. Marstine, "Working History," 82, pointed out that Earle, "an outsider, socially and stylistically," was not commissioned until early 1893, after others had already finished and was probably summoned at the end to do murals Millet had originally planned to do himself.

[36] Millet reportedly allowed the artists to choose their subjects as long as they followed the rule initiated by his predecessor, William Pretyman, that the murals relate to the exhibits of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, see Marstine, "Working History," 61, and "Decorations at the World's Fair: A Talk with Mr. Carroll Beckwith," *Art Amateur* 28, no. 1 (1892): 4.

[37] King, *American Mural Painting*, 70.

[38] Ibid; Marstine, "Working History," 71, has stated that the muralists could have been familiar with Puvis's murals through actual site visits or through reproductions, and she also mentions that Cox wrote about the murals at Amiens.

[39] For more information on Paris murals of this period, see Thérèse Burollet et al., *Le triomphe des mairies: Grands décors républicains à Paris 1870-1914*, exh. cat. (Paris: Musée du Petit Palais, 1986) and Marie Jeannine Aquilino, "Painted Promises: The Politics of Public Art in Late Nineteenth-Century France," *Art Bulletin* 75 (December 1993), 697-712.

[40] King, *American Mural Painting*, 72, 74; Royal Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," *Century Magazine* 46 (July 1893): 327-334.

[41] Millet, "The Decoration of the Exposition," *Scribner's Magazine* 12 (December 1892): 704.

[42] "By Brush and Chisel," *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, 27 November 1892, sec. 5, p. 33.

[43] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 208.

[44] R[oyal] C[ortissoz], "American Mural Painting," in Art and Architecture at the World's Fair, special issue of *Tribune Monthly* 5 (September 1893): 58.

[45] Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," 329-330.

[46] King, *American Mural Painting*, 80-81.

[47] Blashfield recalled that male models were drawn from the workforce at the fair and two female models were locals "from the outside world." Edwin H. Blashfield, "A Painter's Reminiscences of a World's Fair," *New York Times*, 18 March 1923, magazine section, p. 14.

[48] King, *American Mural Painting*, 69.

[49] "By Brush and Chisel," 33.

[50] Blashfield, "A Painter's Reminiscences."

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[51] "Decorations at the World's Fair: A Talk with Mr. Carroll Beckwith"; King, 70.

[52] King, *American Mural Painting*, 70.

[53] Megilp is a gelled medium generally made by mixing lead-treated drying oil such as linseed oil and mastic varnish. It was commonly used in oil painting for both impasto and glazing throughout the 19th century, often to obtain the dark, translucent quality of old master paintings. I am grateful to conservator Barbara Appelbaum of Appelbaum and Himmelstein, New York, for directing me to sources for megilp at AATA Online, available from http://www.aata.getty.edu/nps/; Internet; accessed 29 July 2002.

[54] "Decorations at the World's Fair: A Talk with Mr. Carroll Beckwith."

[55] Blashfield, "A Painter's Reminiscences."

[56] Dorothy Weir Young, *The Life and Letters of J. Alden Weir*, edited by Lawrence Chisholm (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 182.

[57] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 213-214.

[58] Charles Moore, *Daniel H. Burnham, Architect, Planner of Cities*, vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), 47.

[59] *The Works of Edwin Howland Blashfield* with an introduction by Royal Cortissoz (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), n. p.

[60] Weir arrived on August 11, 1892, and left during the last week of October, having completed his work, see Young, *Life and Letters of Weir*, 181-183.

[61] Ibid.; Marstine "Working History," 65; Blashfield, "A Painter's Reminiscences."

[62] Cortissoz, talk presented on 6 March 1923 at dinner in honor of artists of the Chicago Fair, National Society of Mural Painters, New York. National Society of Mural Painters Records, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, roll D 248, frames 410-411.

[63] Simmons, "The Fine Arts Related to the People," *International Studio* 63 (November 1917): ix, x, xiii.

[64] Blashfield, "A Painter's Reminiscences."

[65] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 214-215.

[66] The Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building was destroyed along with most of the other fair buildings in the fire connected with the Pullman Strike in 1894. Of the main buildings only the Palace of Fine Arts was saved to house the Field Columbian Museum and refurbished in the late 1920s with a stone exterior to become the home of Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry.

[67] Millet, "The Designers of the Fair," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 85 (November 1892): 883.

[68] Charles H. Caffin, *The Story of American Painting: The Evolution of Painting in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Frederick A Stokes Company, 1907), 313-314.

[69] King, *American Mural Painting*, 62-63.

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Chapter III
New York in the Nineties—Gilded-Age Allegory

For Simmons the legacy of the Chicago fair became apparent almost instantly and grew steadily throughout the 1890s with a succession of commissions in New York. Arthur Hoeber wrote that Simmons took what he learned from his work at the fair, "saw his opportunity and made the most of it" to forge a new career.[1] In the early nineties in New York Simmons connected with previous artist friends and made new ones. His social milieu, which often included wealthy businessmen and other potential patrons as well as leading artists, provided much work for Simmons. His friendship with Stanford White was particularly important in the direction his career took. During this period in New York Simmons executed murals for the following New York sites: the Metropolitan Club, the Criminal Courts Building, the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, the Frederick W. Vanderbilt Mansion, the Appellate Division Courthouse, and Richard Canfield's Gambling House. All but those for the Vanderbilt Mansion in Hyde Park, New York, were in the city. Many are extant and still in their original settings. The exceptions are the three panels for the Criminal Courts Building, which were reinstalled in a new courtroom at 100 Centre Street, the murals for the Astoria Hotel, which survive for the most part but were relocated to the Silver Corridor of the present Waldorf-Astoria, and those for Canfield, which are presumed lost. All of these were allegorical murals, in keeping with the prevailing fashion, which throughout the 1890s continued to reflect strongly the cosmopolitan influence of the French training of most artists and architects of the time.

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Simmons recalled that he was "put up at the Players Club" when he first arrived in the city in early 1891. After staying there as the guest of Alexander Harrison for two weeks, he was proposed for membership by Kenyon Cox and Harrison and accepted on 24 April 1891.[2] He knew both men from his student days in France. The club appears to have been the center of his social life, and he maintained steady membership until 1903.[3] During these years he was an especially close friend of fellow club member, noted architect, and extravagant bon vivant Stanford White.[4] He received a number of commissions through White's influence. The first of these offered in about 1893 was for portions of the library ceiling of the Metropolitan Club, McKim, Mead and White's elegant Renaissance revival palace at Sixtieth Street and Fifth Avenue (Fig.III:1), which was designed by White with inspiration from the Palazzo Pandolfini in Florence.[5]

The Metropolitan Club was founded and financed by J. Pierpont Morgan and other wealthy New Yorkers including Vanderbilts, Goelets, Iselins, and Roosevelts, after Morgan's friend the railroad magnate John King was blackballed by the older, prestigious Union Club. The Union, the Knickerbocker, and other men's clubs flourished in Gilded Age imitation of the exclusive men's clubs of London. The largest and probably the grandest of all the New York clubs, the Metropolitan was already known as "The Millionaire's Club," and "the Common Wealth" by the time of its opening on 1 March 1894."[6] The membership comprised many of New York's most prominent businessmen and society figures, including in addition to the above-mentioned, John Jacob Astor, William Waldorf Astor, Ogden Mills, W. Watts Sherman, Hamilton Fish, Jr., William C. Whitney, Cornelius Bliss, Perry Belmont, Henry G. Marquand, and another artist-friend of Stanford White, Augustus Saint-

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Gaudens.[7] Just before the club opened to the exclusive business of catering to its members, it allowed the press to visit and view the splendor within. Architecture critic Montgomery Schuyler writing for *Harper's Weekly* related that the luxurious interiors seemed to warrant the club's nicknames and offered this witty appraisal: "These gorgeous interiors seem to indicate what those hardy pioneers, the decorators of the North River steamboats, would have done if they had had the advantage of a sojourn among the palaces of France and Italy and a course at the Beaux Arts."[8]

Stanford White had wanted to retain the Parisian firm of Allard et Fils for the decoration of the grandest interior spaces for meeting and dining, but because of a contribution of, as White said,"a damn lot of money" from the Vanderbilts, Alva Vanderbilt was able to secure the job for her favorite decorator Gilbert Cuel, also of Paris. Cuel was inspired by the period of Louis XIV in designing the interior of the great West Lounge, which stretches eighty-five feet along the Fifth Avenue side of the club. The three ceiling murals for this room, depicting Morning in the center flanked by Fortuna and Mercury, were painted in Paris by Cuel's painter Pereli in a manner recalling François Boucher.[9] It was the opulence displayed in this room that caused Schuyler to say that that the "riot of decoration" sometimes obscured the art. He admired other areas including the library decorated by Herter Brothers (Fig. III:2), which he found refined and restful. He called this room, the site of Simmons's murals, "rich and harmonious."[10]

The *New York Times*, while also noting the lavish decoration, was generally more favorable in its coverage: "In its house and in its appointments the new club has carried luxury and sumptuousness a degree further than they had hitherto attained on

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this side of the ocean, while the list of its members sufficiently shows that it is destined to exert a marked influence upon the social and civic life of the metropolis."[11] Of the exterior another article in the same paper said, "The effect is of extreme severity and respectability, which is raised to dignity by the unusual scale of the building, which approaches that of the Florentine palaces, each of the main stories being twice as high as the normal height of stories in New-York domestic architecture." Regarding the interior the *Times* writer was more appreciative overall of the "great luxury chastened by severity" than was Schuyler, but like him, he was especially impressed with the dignified atmosphere of the library:

> But the room of all others which is most harmonious and attractive, viewed from a clubman's standard, is the library. . . .Here the absence of books on the shelves is condoned by the excellent taste shown in the decoration. Peculiar in shape, owing to the inward curve of the wing, to allow for the carriage sweep in the courtyard, the bookshelves of satin-grained oak, the wooden chimney piece with broad reddish-yellow marble facings, the dark red, heavy velvet curtains, edged with gold and the embossed leather Yandell paper [lincrusta] on the walls of a neutral brownish golden effect, make a sober, rich, chastened atmosphere, peculiarly happy for a library.[12]

Simmons was commissioned to paint just four sections surrounding the central oval skylight of the ceiling. There is an estimate from the firm of Sarre and Le Lacheur for the painting and decorating of the rest of the library ceiling. The estimate includes furnishing and installing a papier-mâché molding covered in aluminum and gold and supplying canvas for the panels. This canvas was most likely for Simmons's panels, which Sarre and Le Lacheur were to put in place after they were painted—attaching them with a white lead compound and surrounding them with "a fine gilt moulding to the cover the joints."[13] For his four panels Simmons painted pairs of cupids with

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banderoles hovering over an open book for each corner of the ceiling surrounding the central oval skylight (Fig. III:3). The banderoles are inscribed with four fields of learning appropriate for a library represented in allegory: Ars Poesis, Historia, Philosophia, and Scientia.[14] His freely painted and adeptly and playfully posed figures seem to indicate that Simmons was attuned to the setting and executed this work with ease and enthusiasm. The *New York Times* reviewer appreciated how Simmons rendered his broadly painted figures and kept the ceiling treatment "in harmony with the walls" and noted that he:

> has been very successful in keeping colors and such figures as there are in discreet subjection. In four irregular spaces, on a ground of lapis lazuli, are groups of two Cupids, each couple with an open book. They are broadly treated in masses of light and dark, and do not worry the eye by calling it away through such realism as M. Perilli has indulged in for the ceiling of the big room on the main floor.[15]

This writer made the point that he favored the work of Simmons whom he identifies as "an American painter," over that of the European who worked for Cuel.[16] American painters were beginning to get the recognition they hoped their work at the Chicago fair and subsequent commissions would bring. They were judged capable to compete with and even surpass their European counterparts.

Simmons's work at the Metropolitan Club gave him the kind of exposure that undoubtedly led to future commissions. His work provided evidence of his ability in decorative painting to an influential audience. At least two club members, Henry Marquand and Augustus Saint-Gaudens were on the jury that awarded his next commission for a prominent mural program sponsored by the Municipal Art Society.

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In his autobiography, Simmons recalled he was still weighing the possibilities of a future in mural painting when he received news of the competition offered by the newly formed Municipal Art Society in New York City for the decoration of the Oyer and Terminer Court of the new Criminal Courts Building on Centre Street between Franklin and White Streets designed by Thom, Wilson and Schaarschmidt. He decided to throw himself wholeheartedly into preparing a proposal.[17]

This was the first competition to be offered by the Municipal Art Society, which was founded in the spring of 1893. At that time the leaders of the New York art world, very much aware that their city had provided nearly all of the artists who created the miraculous White City in Chicago, decided to bring its lessons in civic beauty to fruition at home. Muralist Edwin H. Blashfield was approached by artist William Vanderbilt Allen with the idea of starting a society to support public artworks through the collection of annual dues. Blashfield's wife Evangeline was enlisted for the cause, and she became the prime promoter and coined the motto, "to make us love our city, we must make our city lovely." In about a year's time they had the five thousand dollars necessary for the first commission.[18]

In January of 1894, the competition rules and conditions had been adopted at a meeting of the executive committee of the Municipal Art Society held at the offices of McKim, Mead and White. The society had initially applied to the Department of Public Works to decorate the Court of General Sessions in the new court building, but the choice of site was changed to the Oyer and Terminer Court because it was in less frequent use and would therefore be more easily accessible. The rules and guidelines for the competition were published in early February with a deadline allowing two

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months—proposals were to be submitted on or before 15 April. The first prize winner was to receive five thousand dollars with an advance of five hundred, and for the second and third prize winners there were awards of two hundred and one hundred dollars respectively. Contestants could submit "figure compositions of allegorical or historical subjects, or both, appropriate to the character of the room," to fill the three panel spaces on the east wall. Sketches of the overall scheme were to be in a scale of one-half inch to one foot and those of the main panel one and one-half inches to one foot. The competitor was to submit together with sketches "a typewritten specification of his intentions, both as to the meaning of his subjects, &c., and as to the processes he proposes to use." All entries were to be retained for an exhibition to be held at the time of the awards in rooms provided by the Architectural League in the Fine Arts Society Building on Fifty-seventh Street.[19] The final murals were to be executed in oil on canvas to be adhered to the wall with a white lead compound, the object being to simulate frescoes as closely as possible. There was a suggestion that the design of the room provide for a five- or six-foot wall section under the main figure panels so that the figural paintings would not be subject to abrasions caused by everyday traffic. The conditions of the competition further specified that the "ceiling is to be colored in flat tints. The three panels on the east wall to be filled with figure compositions of either allegorical or historical subjects, or both, appropriate to the character of the room. The rest of the walls to be decorated in flat tints or with figures and ornament at the discretion of the artist."[20]

This and other such competitions sponsored by the Municipal Art Society were to be judged by a fifteen-member jury, which was to comprise "three architects, seven

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painters or sculptors, and five laymen," to be appointed by the executive committee. The jury members for the Criminal Courts Building murals were architects Richard Morris Hunt, George B. Post, and Bruce Price; artists Howard Russell Butler, Daniel Chester French, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Francis Lathrop, George W. Maynard, Francis D. Millet, and H. Siddons Mowbray; well-known art collectors Samuel P. Avery, William T. Evans, and Henry G. Marquand; and prominent citizens ex-Judge H. E. Howland, and Seth Low.[21] The competition was to be open, that is, the names of the artists were to be known to the jurors. In fact, it was noted that there would be certain prejudice for more experienced contestants, "From a man who is well known, less would be required by the jury in the way of a sketch than from an unknown man. The roughest kind of a sketch from Mr. La Farge, for instance, would be sufficient for the jury to consider."[22]

According to Simmons, for reasons unexplained and hard to understand since he seems to have been so well-connected in New York,[23] he first heard of the contest in April on the Friday before the Monday when submissions were due and after the other contestants had already turned in their entries. He claimed:

> Two days and three nights! I never slept from the time I "hit" my studio Friday afternoon until three minutes of nine on Monday morning, when I ran from Fifty-fifth Street to Fifty-seventh street with my sketches in hand to present them to the jury. At the last minute there were complications. I had to have the drawings photographed and reduced to the correct scale, and then there were the frames. At eight-thirty the latter were not ready, so I took the workman's tools out of his hands and finished them myself. All this time I had kept my faculties going by a combination of green tea and absinthe, drinking first one and then the other while working at a feverish heat."[24]

Simmons seems to have flourished under challenging time constraints. He was able to conceive a program quickly and with self-assurance, and he matched this ability

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with expert draftsmanship gained in his French training. In addition to his ambitious mural scheme, he gave careful instructions for the painting of the setting, in accord with contest rules.[25]

Years later Simmons recalled the difficulty of decorating with appropriate motifs such a place as a criminal courtroom, which would host the defendants, jurors, and judges in connection with the gravest crimes. He related that Thomas Dewing thought it was impossible to decorate such a "butcher shop," suggesting the only solution was "to put a crucifix over the head of the judge and say to the prisoners, 'There, damn you, look at that.'"[26]

Simmons decided to focus on the judge rather than the defendant and described a scheme of a center panel in a shallow niche showing Justice with two panels "representing what a fair-minded judge should be thinking of" on each side (Fig. III:4). Regarding his figure of Justice and his decision to depict her as "clear-eyed" rather than wearing the traditional blindfold connoting impartiality, he wrote:

> In this case, my classifications were as clear as any botanist's. As to family, she was a Justice of America and carried the flag. In the Middle Ages she was always represented as being blind, but in a glorious democracy she should be clear-eyed. As to genus, she was of the state of New York and therefore should bear its coat of arms; as to species she was of the city of New York and should bear its emblem. In the one hand, she carried the scales for weighing the facts offered, and, as either innocence or guilt must predominate or there is no decision, the pans were uneven. In the other hand she carried the crystal ball, emblem of truth, surmounted by a cross, for she was a Christian Justice. In order to complete the scheme and carry out the composition, I placed two little boys to the left and right below and looking up at her; one was offering her pigeons for innocence, and the other the sword, if she needed it, for condemnation. Behind her was a bronze door. The Temple of Janus opened its doors when war was declared—also the feeling of a closed door suggests that unfortunate companion of Justice—Punishment.

Simmons continued, explaining the side panels:

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> The left panel was my idea of the mental qualities that a judge should consider. They are called to-day—Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, but I did not so name them. I meant to suggest two people thinking of themselves and one thinking of the others. The first was Liberty, who had broken his chains—the physical; the third was the Scientist who was absorbed in facts only—the mental; and the second, between the two, was Brotherly Love, who was bringing them together. The judge should think to what class a man on trial belonged. A free thoughtless soul should not be condemned for not remembering the facts, a scientist for lack of imagination, or the middle figure for forgetting himself.
>
> On the right I put the Three Fates because the judge also was born and must die. Michael Angelo (if he made the panel—there is a question as to the artist) has painted them as old women; Hesiod has stated that they were of different ages. I figured them as Birth, Life, and Death. In the laughing young women's lap I put a child playing with the thread of human life which issues from his navel; next a grave, middle-aged woman who measures the thread; and third an old hag who cuts the cord—Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos.[27]

Simmons's proposal won on the first ballot when the jury met on 18 April and was universally praised by critics when exhibited free to the public at the Fine Arts Building along with the other forty-seven entries, a few of which were designs by Charles Yardley Turner, Charles H. Reinhart, Louise King Cox, and Will H. Low.[28] The New York *Sun* found his design "one of the simplest and most dignified of those submitted, and . . . "admirably suited to its purpose." Avoiding the mistakes of "heaviness of color" and overabundance of decoration, Simmons made his color sketch "light and pleasing . . . [and] simply blocked in." The reporter admired the "drawing in the figures and draperies," and the overall composition of the designs for the side panels, and noted that Simmons's recent decoration of the Metropolitan Club provided further assurance of his ability to execute such a scheme. He added, "A wax medium will be used to preserve the flat and lustreless effect of frescoe."[29]

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The New York *World* hailed Simmons's work with the title, "A Beautiful Design This," and reported that Simmons went into great detail in defining the "general scheme" to insure an effect of harmony and dignity:

> The walls are to be tinted a low ivory, with a very slight quantity of grayish gold in the architectural ornaments. The ceiling is to be tinted blue, in a shade not too pronounced, so as to harmonize with the walls. A narrow gilding outlines the woodwork. The dado is in solid color.
>
> The eastern wall is divided into three panels set in gray-gold framing. In the intervening spaces are Roman fasces and around the central panel columns, wreaths and other devices in relief in papier-mache. The bas-reliefs are finished in oil or wax. . . . .
>
> In all three panels the architectural parts (benches, pillars, &c.) are marble, running from gray to yellowish white in tone and color. The floors are small mosaics of gray, yellow and white.

The writer closed by commending the "simplicity, dignity, and symmetry," as well as the appropriate "severity of color" and "seriousness of significance" of Simmons's design.[30]

In the same vein Edward Hamilton Bell, the secretary of the Municipal Art Society, acknowledged Simmons's ability to set the right tone for the decoration of the court: "Mr. Simmons has in his design shown a sincere regard for the dignity of the chamber he was called upon to decorate. The first thing that strikes you in looking at it is its monumental severity and cold passionless reserve." Bell praised the central panel's "stately figure of Justice, holding high, with a simple direct action, the scales, which seem to be not merely a conventional attribute, but the reason for her being there, to weigh out his just meed to the wretch arraigned before her." He noted the "cross-crowned orb symbolic of Christian rule," and the two boys at her feet, one bearing the sword signifying "condemnation," the other, "a pair of doves emblematic of

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acquittal." In the side panels, he found the "same serene emotionless scheme of color—opalescent white draperies, flesh, and in the background marble benches and steps, together with curtains, gray yellowish-white, with delicate patterns in silver and gold."[31]

All proposals were to feature figurative designs, and the majority of those submitted were allegorical. However, there were a number of historical schemes including that of the second place winner, Charles Yardley Turner. Turner depicted the 1784 case, Rutgers *vs.* Waddington, the first to be tried in New York following the Revolutionary War, and a landmark case for establishing the principle of judicial review. The setting was the Mayor's Court of New York. A number of prominent figures were present, including Alexander Hamilton, Richard Varick, and Egbert Benson, and there were portraits of these men available for Turner to copy. The *New York Times* reporter conceded that "those with literal minds, people who like realism and plain history, people who dislike symbolical work, may possibly rank this design above the first prize." But in the writer's opinion, while "strong as anecdote, it is weak as art" and "more appropriate for a lawyer's club as a bit of history interesting to the legal profession than fitted for a court of Oyer and Terminer."[32]

The third prize went to Walter Shirlaw for an allegorical scheme showing Justice and Mercy in the central vertical panel with two three-figure panels representing Crime and Law on either side. Shirlaw's design was compared to Simmons's by the same critic from the *New York Times*. After complimenting Simmons's designs for their "rare merits of simplicity in composition and restfulness in the figures," the writer went on to say of Shirlaw's: "It is true that the designs that took third prize, Mr.

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Walter Shirlaw's, have the same characteristics. But his figures, while much larger in scale, and excellent groups all three, suffer from a vagueness, a lack of definite meaning, as compared with those of Mr. Simmons."[33] The review continued finding "half a dozen of the compositions . . . so idiotic that no one can suppress a laugh and half a dozen more such wearisome commonplaces that they cumber the walls."[34]

In a turnabout from his previous sharp criticism of Simmons's efforts at the Columbian Exposition, Royal Cortissoz commended with enthusiasm his program for the Oyer and Terminer Courtroom (Figs.III:5a-c). He wrote that once installed, "it will stand in an official spot and though privately inspired, . . . it will place us on record as having employed the services of an artist in a building public to a degree, and in the official national sense, that even the library at Boston is not." He admired Simmons's design with its "stately and majestic ideal of Justice, showing her erect in severe white robes, with the flag flung so deftly over her left shoulder, and falling so gracefully down her side, that it becomes part of her drapery in a very subtle artistic way," and the side panels "nicely balanced" with the "same gradation of heights of the figures" in each. He concluded with this high praise:

> Taken as a whole, regarded as a design, the work is brilliant in its adherence to the rules imposed by its surroundings. It is finely held together, each figure falling into its place with naturalness, and at the same time with that special dignity and poise essential in mural decoration. The principal figure, Justice, is extraordinarily imposing; an abstraction, if it must be called one, but brimming over with character; a figure so vitalized that it looms imperious in its place, touches the imagination, and stirs the emotions, as is seldom the case with the Justitia of pictorial or decorative art.[35]

Simmons's murals were put in place in November of 1895.[36] At the installation ceremony, Joseph H. Choate, acting for the Municipal Art Society, presented the

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murals to Mayor William L. Strong and the city saying, "We are gazing upon the handsomest court-room in the world."[37] Sponsors and reviewers thought that he had met or surpassed expectations for the project. The New York *Sun* reported that Simmons had "greatly improved upon the cartoon shown a year ago. The work is a large one in the fullest sense of the word, and is a worthy beginning of what, is to be hoped, will develop into a recognized movement for the proper adornment of our public buildings."[38] The unveiling drew a similar response from the *New York Times*, which saw the commission as marking "an epoch in the art history of this country." Simmons had more than fulfilled the promise of his proposal and all that the commission represented for high standards of public art:

> He has kept to a harmonious scheme of color and he has been entirely successful in subordinating his work to the requirements of the place. It is a fitting beginning, encouraging to the men who have given liberally to the project, educational to those who, up to this time, have not realized the possibilities of such work, intelligently executed, and there are in it elements of hope for the artists of this country, and incentives for future exertions.[39]

A critic for the *Art Amateur* recognized Simmons's achievement "[taking] an ugly whitewashed room of poor proportions . . . and [bringing] the entire room into harmony with the color scheme of this composition." Unity and repose were found in the "balanced arrangement of his powerful clean-limbed figures, [and] the masses of cool but not cold or monotonous color." The same writer hailed the figure of Justice as "decidedly American," and noted that "throughout the work Mr. Simmons has made but little use of conventions."[40]

This writer and others saw a strength and freshness in Simmons's work that for them characterized a developing national art. Simmons and some of his colleagues

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were convincing the critics and the public that they could breathe new life into traditional iconography and give the symbols of ancient and Renaissance art relevance and vigor reflecting an American spirit and advancement of civilization. Simmons himself wrote that his clear-eyed Justice was appropriate for a free and open society. Her appearance was also recognized as distinctly American. Indeed, it was based on Simmons's wife. He used his wife and sons as models for this mural[41] and for other paintings in the United States as he had in England. They were undoubtedly the most convenient and economical models he could find and also provided good examples of what were considered modern American types.

Almost a decade later Russell Sturgis found in these murals mastery of color and "dignity of composition" and called them "impressive altogether beyond the habit of modern art."[42] Even in 1941 when their original site, the old court building was demolished, and when such allegorical painting had generally fallen from favor, Simmons's *Justice*, *The Rights of Man*, and *The Fates* had sufficient admirers among civic-minded judges and others, including members of the Art Commission of the City of New York, to secure their transfer to the General Sessions Court of the new Criminal Court Building at 100 Centre Street designed by Harvey Wiley Corbett. They were reinstalled in the new building in 1942. More recently, in the 1990s, thanks once again to the efforts of their original sponsor, the Municipal Art Society, in concert with the Art Commission of the City of New York and the Department of General Services, the murals have been restored as part of the Adopt-A-Mural Program. Nearly at their centennial they were rededicated following the completion of their conservation on 2 December 1993.[43]

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Today the murals seem to retain their original power and appeal even though they are not in their original site and configuration. No longer a unit, they were reinstalled as three separate pieces—the central arched panel *Justice* behind the bench and *The Rights of Man* and *The Fates* on either side of the back wall (Figs. III:6a-b). Yet, they are still, as they were originally, placed at a height where they are easily seen by the viewer. Simmons knew that unlike many of his murals for domes, ceilings, and other high places, these would be much more accessible, and he seems to have worked accordingly. The murals, especially the side panels, are beautifully drawn and painted with expressive and fluid brushwork (Figs. III:7a-b). They exhibit freshness, facility, and vitality of handling and are executed as well as the best of his easel paintings, inviting comparison with the work of John Singer Sargent—both in the bravura technique of his portraits and of his murals. The friezelike configuration of figures in the side panels calls to mind in particular Sargent's *Frieze of the Prophets* (Fig. III:8) executed for the Boston Public Library at approximately the same time.[44] Pauline King wrote in praise of Sargent's mural: "In the painting of these eighteen figures, Mr. Sargent is entirely the brilliant painter, whose manner is familiar through the magnificent series of portraits which has made him famous."[45] The same could be said of Simmons, who was equally brilliant in his work for the Appellate Courthouse.

The success of the murals for the Oyer and Terminer Court set the tone for Simmons in the nineties. He steadily built his career as a mural painter from this point, proving he could adapt the traditional art of mural painting to current needs for a variety of spaces and building uses and capitalize on each experience as well as his personal and professional connections. He had an optimum place to work within a

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community of artists in the new Carnegie Hall complex.[46] Simmons later recalled of the 1890s, "It was during this period of my life that I did my best work. I had a good studio in Carnegie Hall, freedom from money worries, and abounding spirit. Also my imagination was still fresh from the influence of Europe, and the Old World was enough in retrospect for me to realize its worth."[47]

He believed that among "the most interesting orders [he] received at this time" was the commission for the decoration of the smaller ballroom, or Astor Gallery, of the Astoria Hotel in New York.[48] The Astoria (1897) was a new 550-guest-room, sixteen-story hotel designed by Henry J. Hardenbergh to adjoin the earlier Waldorf (1893), creating the Waldorf-Astoria at Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street, which opened for business on 1 November 1897.[49] This hotel was the largest and most sumptuous of the day—a meeting place, art gallery, and shopping center for the general public as well as hotel guests. Simmons described the 37 by 103 foot Astor Gallery (Fig. III:9), modeled after the interiors of the Hôtel de Soubise in Paris (Fig. III:10),[50] as "a long narrow hall . . . with boxes all around a dais at one end. The room was an attempt at the French of Louis Seize—bastard architecture, I think—fancy work and rococo with curves and bends everywhere."[51]

A similar but more gracious portrayal of the room was given by influential author and critic Charles Caffin in *Harper's Weekly*:

> The construction of the room is a series of tall pilasters and arches. On the north side these enclose windows, but on the three others the spaces are spanned with boxes. The arches are locked together by pendentives. Instead of a level cornice, there is a border of ornament in relief, which rises and falls in a waving line, giving vivacity and elegance to the room.[52]

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Caffin noted that Simmons built on these qualities of "vivacity and elegance, . . . in a delightful manner" with his theme of the months and seasons rendered in sixteen panels (Figs. III:11 and 12):

> The six pendentives on the north wall representing the months from November to April, vibrate in one prolonged chord. The movement of the swirling draperies and poised figures speeds along several panels like the streamer of a pennant, alternately coiling and shaking itself loose in the air. It is more than rhythm: it is the spontaneous movement of separate forms impelled by a single aim—buoyant, elastic, as a flock of Ariels. In the six summer and autumn months on the opposite side of the room, the key-note is rather repose; the panels count more as independent masses, and flash one after the other upon the eye. At each of the short ends of the room are two narrow panels representing the seasons. They have to carry farther, and also to balance each other, so the artist has relied upon a strong and simple action.[53]

Relishing Simmons's "breadth, delicious subtlety," and even a hint of "diablerie" or "irresponsible force within that will burst its way out," Caffin credited Simmons's fresh technique and conception with yet again breathing new life into a tired theme:

> His imagination has evolved new representations of the somewhat hackneyed subjects, and his conception is thoroughly modern in the best sense. Spring, for example, is a lithe-limbed girl leaping into the air with racquet poised . . . Summer is a lovely girl, whose smooth form is caressed by a veil as filmy as a summer cloud, and she leans forward to catch a butterfly to bait her hook. . . . What an original conception of January: a girl bounding through the air in the fullness of new strength, offering an hour-glass to two little "Loves"! Of February, her piquant face hooded with a cloud of ermine, while a baby boy tugs at the strings and another, poised in air, fits a skate to her bare foot![54]

Caffin described the room color as "two tones of gray relieved by gold," and the mural panels with "a foundation of blue and flesh-color, enlivened with accidental effects of green or red, or black, golden brown, or silver gray. He compared the effect to that of a "mountain sunrise," with "snow-capped summits touched with rose, the gray sky quickening into blue, and the greens and golds and reds of the valley peering

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through the rising mists. Such are the color effects which may have inspired Mr. Simmons's scheme—tender and moist, but fresh and vibrant with life and eternal youth."[55]

Although he could not have read the description in Simmons's yet unpublished autobiography of the epiphany he had experienced at a sunrise on Mount Shasta, Caffin seems to have shared that moment when Simmons "felt and *realized* [his] first artistic harmony . . . in the realm of color."[56] As if this weren't sympathy enough, Simmons could hardly have hoped for more than the critic's closing words on this mural program:

> But to try to put these exquisite plays of fancy into words is to bruise the butterfly's wings by handling them. If one could really express the delicacy of the conception it might seem to the reader trivial, whereas the thought, as well as the execution, with all its elusive daintiness, is extraordinarily virile.[57]

The critic for the *Art Interchange* found much to like in the "freshness and novelty" of Simmons's handling of "the somewhat hackneyed subjects of the seasons" and stated: "He has brought an active and playful imagination into his work that lifts it far above the ordinary, with a force and ideality not often met with. . . . In all there is movement, vivacity and a degree of elegance and refinement that is very attractive."[58]

The writer for *Architecture and Building* was enchanted by the room and its color scheme:

> . . . the color scheme includes a harmony of the most delicate and subtle grays, balanced by a varied treatment of blues. This room with its pictures is one of the finest examples of complete and harmonious decoration to be seen anywhere, impressing at once by its grace and beauty of proportion and color.[59]

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A few years later, in her study of American mural painting, Pauline King still placed Simmons's Astor Gallery murals "among the finest artistic achievements" in the nation.

> Each of the sixteen compositions is a gem of exquisite fancy, painted with such lightness and brilliancy that it seems to have been tossed upon the canvas in a moment of exuberant happiness and freedom from care, and did not need to be worked over and spoiled by too much labour, but is just as it came fresh from the artist's first thought. . . . The truly joyous spirit has quite as honourable a place in art as monumental dignity or elevated sentiment; and, since the character of the nineteenth century was none too light-hearted, and painters and writers were somewhat prone to take themselves very seriously, if not sadly, this delicious burst of gayety in the humour of the eighteenth century is the more to be appreciated. [60]

In his autobiography, Simmons recollected his care in making the entire room an elegant, harmonious, and flattering environment for beautiful people:

> For the Astor Gallery I chose as subjects women—which I like best to paint—representing the twelve months of the year and the four seasons, sixteen panels in all. How I labored over the color of the room, changing the tone every three feet all the way up, until it looked all the same! My idea was to make a background that would seem to be white, but against which a woman's complexion would be beautiful and a man's shirt front would tell. They have painted the whole thing over now, of course. My decorations are untouched, but it is no longer my room.[61]

The setting of the murals is now definitely no longer Simmons's room. Although the murals were saved when the old Waldorf-Astoria was torn down in 1929 and were reinstalled in the new building on Park Avenue, which opened in October 1931, they were placed in a different environment and many of the panels were cut down—some dramatically, and they were put in different order with seemingly little regard for their original placement or the rightful sequence of months and seasons. The new location is known as the Silver Gallery or Silver Corridor (Fig. III:13), which

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serves as a corridor leading to the Grand Ballroom and also links the Ballroom foyer, Jade Room foyer, and Astor Gallery. Thought by some to be "the most beautiful room in the entire hotel,"[62] the Silver Gallery is a hall of mirrors in Art Deco style, dominated by cascading chandeliers. This hall is approximately two hundred feet long or nearly twice the length of the old Astor Gallery. A few of the paintings now appear in bad condition or seem insensitively restored. Some of the panels that still hint at the original grace and delightful movement are the aforementioned favorites January (Fig. III:14a) and February (although February now seems to have a badly repainted right eye), April (Fig. III:14b), and remaining portions of Spring and Autumn (Figs. III:14c-d). However, as a group, in their fragmentary state, haphazard order, and with new surroundings, they no longer have the same continuous rhythm and harmonic effect. Still, it is fortunate and testimony to their original charms that they were saved and moved.

Henry Hardenbergh had succeeded in making the Waldorf-Astoria a landmark of American decorative art. He had conceived and brought under contract a plan for a mural program for the earlier Waldorf even before the influence of the World's Columbian Exposition. Not only did he promote the idea of murals as the latest in fashionable decoration to his client, William Waldorf Astor, but he also insisted that they hire American artists to do the work. He included muralists Frederic Crowninshield, Frank Fowler, Will H. Low, George Maynard, and Herman Schladermundt.[63] When the Astoria was added a few years later[64] making a combined hotel more than double the size of the original Waldorf and taking up an entire city block, Hardenbergh drew on the talents of additional muralists including Blashfield and

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Simmons. He hired mural painter and advocate Charles M. Shean to coordinate color schemes throughout the building, "perhaps for the first time introducing in America the trained mural painter and decorative designer as a color expert in the office of an architect."[65] In 1916, William Laurel Harris looked back upon the causes and effects of the heyday of Gilded Age hotels and called the Waldorf-Astoria the grandest of them, and "first notable effort at decorating hotels in America and . . . [still] the most elaborately painted structure of its kind in this country."[66] He wrote of the society that gave rise to such artistry and extravagance and for whose members Simmons was able to provide just the right setting. Hotels were no longer principally resting places for weary travelers but "more and more a general *rendez-vous* for gay companies, social, artistic and literary gatherings." Harris added that a "freer lighter spirit has so far prevailed that every one now feels instinctively that lightness and gayety are the qualities required *par excellence* in all hotel decorations."[67] Simmons showed in his Astor Gallery murals that he was among those most attuned to these requirements for the perfect setting for hotel society.

Harris observed in regard to the traveling public that few people visit museums or galleries, and that they were much better able to receive an art education in the well-decorated hotel. He pointed out that the public rooms and hallways of hotels like the Waldorf represented a range of different periods and styles almost like a museum. He believed that such a stylistic eclecticism was "fundamentally educational," and that good examples could promote art appreciation.[68]

Simmons had earlier submitted a mural proposal for another Hardenbergh hotel, the Hotel Manhattan, but his designs did not win that competition—Turner won with

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his *Triumph of Manhattan.*[69] Simmons was probably referring to this experience when he wrote "Speaking of competitions, I once entered one for the decoration of a prominent New York hotel. There were three members on the jury. I lost in spite of the fact that all three of them came to me, separately, and told me in strictest confidence that he had voted for my proposition."[70]

Stanford White and Simmons were among artists who often moved in society circles, belonging to the same clubs and sharing entertainments with their patrons. Such socializing led to commissions and to an intimate appreciation of clients' tastes and desires. White was able to secure for Simmons a number of commissions for decorations for private homes as well as club houses.

Simmons must have felt in his element in creating murals for McKim, Mead and White's mansion for the Vanderbilts in Hyde Park, New York. He was commissioned to do ceiling murals for the dining room and Gold Room, or ladies reception room. Charles Follen McKim of McKim, Mead and White was retained by Frederick and Louise Vanderbilt as the architect for the renovation of their Greek revival mansion they had purchased from the Walter Langdon estate in 1895. When the old building was found to have serious structural weaknesses, it was razed and a new building was constructed in Italian Renaissance style. As principal architect, McKim was responsible for many of the interiors, which were decorated between 1896 and 1899. The interiors are a mixture of architect- and decorator-designed spaces representing the ultimate in eclecticism. The Vanderbilt mansion, a National Historic Site (Fig. III:15), and similar great houses of the American Renaissance, like the grand hotels of the period, typify the Gilded Age spirit of having it all—the best of everything chosen from different

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periods of fancy under the guidance and with the good taste of consulting architects and designers. Stanford White was McKim's right hand in decorating the Vanderbilt mansion. He was given a budget of $50,000 from Vanderbilt and suggestions and instructions from McKim to comb Europe for a "selection of such furniture, hangings, floor rugs, mantels and objects of a decorative character, in wood, metal, stone or marble, of Italian workmanship, as may, in his judgment, be appropriate."[71] As Nina Gray observed in her recent Historic Resource Study of the interiors for the National Park Service, McKim and White were guided by different aesthetic approaches—McKim's was more clean-lined and classic, White's a rich, artful, and eclectic assemblage of many layers. It was unusual for White to serve merely as "antique dealer and not a decorator" for the Vanderbilt Mansion as White generally specialized in interiors.[72]

On this project, Simmons undoubtedly received his mural commissions for the reception and dining rooms through White. The dining room (Fig.III:16) was designed in Renaissance style by McKim and furnished by White with antique architectural pieces, including marble columns, mantels from Paris and Florence, and sections of an antique Italian painted ceiling which were incorporated with components reproduced by Herter Brothers. The initial design allowed for three panels by Simmons—one central rectangle and two circular panels. There are a few letters between Simmons and White regarding the dining room ceiling. White advised on 12 December 1898, "pray consider the two circular panels you have made as eliminated from the matter entirely; that you have painted these for me and on my order. I will use them elsewhere and will see that the spendulix is forthcoming for them.[73]

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In February 1899 Simmons wrote to White, "Why in Hell I cannot have a piece of the Vanderbilt Ceiling, no matter how small, to go by, I don't see. . . . Big as a dollar bill will be enough."[74] Then seemingly in reference to the rectangular ceiling panel, Simmons notified McKim in a letter of 24 April 1899, "The ceiling is ready for your inspection." He added that it has the "firm approval" of the Vanderbilts and that a "coat of buttermilk" will be applied to tone down the shine.[75] On 26 April, White responded, "All right about your ceiling. Write to McKim asking him for the final certificate. I am sure it is all right, and if when we go up we find there is anything that needs toning down or alterations or change, why we can, of course, always rely on your doing it."[76] On 27 April, Simmons asked about the circular panels, "Shall we call them off?"[77] Twice White prodded Simmons to send up the circular canvasses. In a letter of 27 April he suggested, "I think it would be a good thing to try one circular panel up and let Vanderbilt decide whether he cares to have them. If not I will try to use them elsewhere."[78] Again on 8 May, White urged, "I wish you would roll up your panel and express it up to Vanderbilt's addressed to me. I do not know whether anything will come of it, but I think it will be just as well to have it up here."[79] Ultimately, the Vanderbilts approved only the central rectangular panel of putti with ribbon and flower garlands and wreaths (Fig.III:17) for the gilded coffered ceiling of their dining room. The contractors, Herter Brothers, had finished their work in this room by May of 1899. As requested by the clients, they dulled the gilded walls to make them look old and worn rather than brashly new. The Vanderbilts also chose red velvet draperies and portieres rather than the green specified by McKim. The greenish-blue coloration of Simmons's mural seems better suited to harmonize with green fabric,

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but that may not have mattered to the Vanderbilts who had elaborate table settings with colorful flowers with coordinating china and undercloths, which no doubt dominated the room. This ceiling mural is very similar in design, coloration, and effect to the one for Metropolitan Club Library. Their settings too—Renaissance revival interiors by Herter Brothers—are also very much alike. Both rooms survive nearly intact. The Vanderbilt Mansion dining room has been maintained and restored to seem unchanged from days of the Gilded Age.[80]

Simmons's other commission for the Vanderbilts was for the Gold Room or reception room designed by Georges Glaenzer (Fig. III:18). A number of prominent subcontractors were hired to carry out the designs, including the interiors specialists Herter Brothers and A. H. Davenport, who worked under McKim, and Glaenzer and Ogden Codman, Jr., who were retained directly by the Vanderbilts to design and furnish several rooms including the Gold Room. Such a reception room would have been intended for ladies' entertainment and refreshment, a salon for tea or pre-dinner sherry. Glaenzer's room is a faithful recreation of the Louis XV style exemplified by the Hôtel de Soubise (See Fig. III:10), the kind of "tasteful" French room that was promoted by the trend-setting design advocates Edith Wharton and Ogden Codman, Jr.[81] This style was a familiar environment for Simmons in his just-completed work for the Astor Gallery. For the Vanderbilts, he chose to depict the myth of Aurora or Eos, the goddess of Dawn, who falls in love with the earthly prince Tithonus, who must age as a mortal while she remains forever young and beautiful.[82]

Simmons portrayed Aurora as a graceful, voluptuous young woman, nearly nude, but for a filmy drape around her lower torso (Fig. III:19). She is attended by

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other lightly clothed young women (representing the Hours) who handle her rearing horses. Aurora reaches tenderly toward the shoulder of the grayed and dozing but still muscular and handsome Tithonus, as though gently waking him. Simmons's figures are softly colored and immersed in the rosy atmosphere of dawn, and here as in the Astor Gallery, arranged gracefully in dance-like postures, creating an aura of sensuality, lightness, delicacy, and undulating movement, true to the rococo spirit of the room (Figs. III:20a and b).

Records and recollections preserved by the National Park Service indicate that the Vanderbilts apparently never liked the ceiling and seldom used the room. Perhaps they were uncomfortable with either the nudity or the mythic reminder of the human aging process, or both. According to Mrs. Vanderbilt's niece, Daisy Van Alen Bruguiere, the Vanderbilts had the ceiling painted over in 1906 when they retained architect Whitney Warren for some other changes to the interiors. The H. Siddons Mowbray murals with a central panel depicting the story of Demeter and Persephone were removed from the drawing room at the same time.[83]

Simmons had the last laugh at Mrs. Vanderbilt when he recalled an episode of their interaction in his autobiography:

> Some of my most humorous experiences have happened when working for women. Two or three things almost always occur. Women either insist upon having the kind of work their social set considers the fashion for the moment, or they try to control the color scheme, or the composition, and always the meaning. A well-known interior decorator and I spent the better part of two years in attempting to make beautiful the reception room of a magnate's wife, only to have our efforts frustrated at the last moment. She hung up two pairs of very handsome damask curtains of a deep orange color lined with cold pink. The windows faced to the south and the light coming through them made an effect of rotten eggs—for the rest of the room was lilac, ivory, and old gold. When we remonstrated we were met with:

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> "Now I have artist men! At the sale, when I bought these, Mr. Whistler bought an identical set. I suppose that his taste is as good as yours?"
>
> It was useless to explain that Whistler had a very different setting for his. This same lady was almost inclined to treat me as a workman and seemed rather put out when her husband invited me to luncheon. The only reference she ever made to my painting was to say that it was a pity my name was not "Simoni." It would make such an interesting signature."[84]

Simmons liked to tell a good story, and this one could be more fiction than fact. In any case, it shows Simmons's patronizing attitude towards women, revealed other times in his writings as well, and his comfort at moving in the same circles as his patrons—he expected to be treated as an equal by his clients.

With his advantageous professional and social connections and his energies and skills in top form, Simmons produced an impressive body of work, which put him in the forefront of the mural movement. He finished out a very successful decade in New York with two other substantial mural commissions, one public—the Appellate Division Courthouse and one private—the gambling house of Richard Canfield.

The first of these, the Appellate Division Courthouse (Fig. III:21), has been the subject of scholarship by Sara Webster, Gary Reynolds, and Jane Gregory Rubin for an exhibition and catalogue titled *Temple of Justice* in 1977, and their study provides the basis for much of the information that follows. The plans for the Appellate Division Courthouse were approved in 1896, only three years after the Columbian Exposition. As represented in these plans and as realized and completed in 1900, a unified work of art combining architecture, painting, and sculpture, the building was a full expression of the lessons of civic beauty taught by the White City.

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The architect for the building, James Brown Lord (1859-1902), was chosen, not by competition, but reportedly by the judges themselves, who were favorably disposed because of their good impression of Lord in connection with another project, the courtrooms of the Constable Building. Upon approval of the plans by the judges, the legislature appropriated $700,000. When the contracts were bid the same wisdom prevailed, and the city was not limited to the lowest bid but free to choose the best among the bidders (although, in fact, the lowest bidder won). This "ideal" situation was extended to the choice of the fine artists to decorate the building—they were also selected not by competition but on the faith of their ability for the task. Lord depended on the newly organized Mural Painters [later the National Society of Mural Painters] to help in planning the program and inviting the artists. The following ten painters were commissioned: H. Siddons Mowbray, Robert Reid, William Leroy Metcalf and Charles Yardley Turner (for the entrance hall) and Simmons, Edwin Howland Blashfield, Henry Oliver Walker, Kenyon Cox, Joseph Lauber, and Alfred Q. Collins, who was replaced by George Maynard (for the courtroom). A writer for the *International Studio* recognized the Appellate Courthouse as "the result of a careful experiment in ideal combination, by architect, sculptor, and artist," and clarified, "We say ideal because there was no competition."[85] In conceiving an ambitious decorative program of painting and sculpture, Lord showed his commitment to producing a unified work of art in the Beaux-Arts tradition. Although Lord himself did not train at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, he would certainly have felt its influence while working with McKim, Mead and White on a previous project, during his own travels in Europe at the time the Courthouse was being discussed and planned, and more generally through his

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awareness of the spirit of the time. In Paris it is likely he was particularly inspired by the recent and much-revered decorative programs of the Paris Opéra and Hôtel de Ville.[86]

Critics writing of the Appellate Courthouse were especially impressed with the ambitious art program planned from the inception as an integral part of the architect's design, and some ranked it above both the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress as a cohesive work of art. Charles Caffin called it "the completest example of intelligent co-operation which the country affords; not so extensive a one, of course, as that of the Congressional Library, but more harmonious and artistic; and not more satisfactory than the beautiful staircase hall of the Boston Public Library, but more consistently good, with nothing to disturb the *tout ensemble*"[87] Another writer also compared these three civic monuments and gave recognition to the Appellate Courthouse as a quintessential example of a full program of architecture, painting, and sculpture planned from the beginning as an organic whole: "While very small in comparison with the other two, the new Appellate Court presents, in its degree, a more complete union of the three arts, because such a union was the basis of the architect's conception from the first."[88]

To promote unity in the work of ten artists, the muralists and James Brown Lord established a committee with the esteemed painter and stained-glass artist John La Farge as adviser and mediator. They determined "a scale for their figures, established a color basis, and called upon each other for sketches," which were "criticized mutually until a scheme sufficiently uniform" was developed. Within this framework the "idiosyncrasy of the individual was allowed to have full play."[89]

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The entire decorative program of the Appellate Courthouse was devoted principally to the allegorical figure of Justice (and to related figures of Truth or Law). The figure of Justice has early roots in Western tradition stemming from the Greek goddess Themis and her daughter Dike. In Roman history Dike becomes Astrea and takes on a political role, as a companion to kings and governors. There is another Roman manifestation of Justice as Justitia, one of the cardinal virtues, a model for both civic and personal excellence and often accompanied by her sister virtues Faith, Hope, Charity, Temperance, Prudence, and Fortitude. Justice as Virtue continued as a popular concept in the Renaissance, and was most often shown blindfolded to symbolize her impartiality. This convention was continued in early American figures of Justice, which were drawn from European sources.[90]

As Simmons had written in regard to his first figure of Justice for the Oyer and Terminer Court, he wanted her to have a fresh American open-eyed look befitting a democratic state. Again at the Appellate Courthouse he used this look for *Justice of the Law*, his panel for the triptych he shared with Edwin Blashfield and H. O. Walker (Fig. III:22) for the east wall of the courtroom opposite the bench. He later wrote of the special efforts he and Blashfield made to accommodate their work to that of one another and to Walker's painting so that the pieces by the three artists would work as a whole:

> Our triptych was done by Blashfield, Walker, and myself. We were to do Justice in three forms, and as the work of Blashfield and myself was most nearly alike, we put Walker in the middle. I waited until Blashfield had determined the compostion, the color scheme, and even until he had actually painted his background, and then, as far as I could, I followed him. After the canvases were completed and on the wall, I found that my two figures of small boys in the foreground were not in the right place, so I painted them out and

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> moved them up four inches higher. Blashfield went even farther. He took out a woman's figure with her back turned and changed her completely because he did not think she agreed with the general composition of the three. These changes were very difficult, as they were done under a different light, in a different place from the original work, and of necessity (as the building was then in use), without the assistance of models.[91]

Simmons's and Blashfield's panels work well as counterbalancing compositions with their corresponding central figures of Justice and Law in classical white gowns with supporting figures arranged in a somewhat-flattened traditional pyramid grouping. Each is attended by a pair of floating figures above and children in each of the lower corners holding shields.

Simmons's panel titled *Justice of the Law* (Fig. III:23) depicts the white-robed figure of Justice at center. Her right hand rests on the shoulder of a figure representing Plenty, who is swathed in heavy brocade, which is gathered to hold fruit. As explained in the inscription below the painting, Plenty assists the "needy," in the person of a woman in black holding her child and reaching toward the fruit. Behind her a male figure in a work apron personifying Labor raises his hand, hailing Justice. In the left foreground an infant plays with a rabbit and a fox, protecting the rabbit, which symbolizes innocence, and representing Mercy, the tender aspect of Justice. On the left side of Justice, Peace, draped in brocade to complement Plenty, and clutching doves and lilies, leans to Justice for protection from the threatening advance of "Brute Force" a male figure, with bare torso and turned back, charging forward, but restrained by the figure of Fear.[92]

The inscription under Blashfield's *Power of the Law* (Fig. III:24) reads: "The Law draws her sword on behalf of appeal: on either side she is supported by

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magistrates and figures typifying Roman Law, Canon Law, and Common (Anglo-Saxon) Law." Roman Law with his toga and scroll is on the right of the central figure of the Law, Common Law robed in gold, and Canon Law in the vestments of a bishop stand to her left. Appeal is kneeling with outstretched arms with her back to the viewer. The dark robes of the magistrates are good counterparts to the dark clothing of the indigent woman and Brute Force and Fear in Simmons's painting and another example of the care given by Simmons and Blashfield to balance their compositions and harmonize their colors.

Critics were generally pleased with this room and especially praised Blashfield's mural, which was positioned for the most prominence opposite the entry to the room, for setting the proper courtroom atmosphere of dignity and somber majesty symbolizing the tradition of the law. They also felt that although Walker's *Wisdom of the Law* (Fig. III:25) was weaker than the more dynamic compositions of Simmons and Blashfield, it offered a welcome opportunity for repose and contemplation. Although the writer for the *Artist* found Walker's mural "a trifle colorless, a little inert in movement and tangled in composition, and by itself. . .too weak for the architecture of the room," he declared that: "enforced by the superior energy of the other two," and, as "the starting place for the whole scheme of decoration, its reserve affords a very agreeable spot of tranquility."[93] The *Art Interchange* explained that Walker's Wisdom stood for "something higher than mere knowledge; spiritual wisdom, as in the Scriptures."[94] She appears as a graceful, sensitive, thoughtful figure also robed in white and flanked by her attributes Learning, Experience, Humility, Love, Faith, Patience, Doubt, and Inspiration. This reviewer found that the delicate coloring added

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to the "spirituality" of this work, and Charles Caffin praised its "tranquility" and "tenderness that is altogether winsome."[95] Critics praised Blashfield's and Simmons's achievements in complementing each other's work and at the same time recognized the individual characteristics of each artist's work. The writer for *Art Interchange* saw "admirable balance in the composition and the tones, and yet great vivacity and variety." Calling "the decorative quality" of Simmons's painting "more pungent," and that of Blashfield "more dignified and scholarly," he suggested that, while Blashfield's work was "a little academic," in its "quiet strength" it could "wear better than the sparkle and dash of Mr. Simmons' work."[96]

Caffin wrote that Blashfield's mural, which could be seen from the hall, at once provided the "key note" of "general impressiveness" for the entire room. Upon closer examination he found the painting had been "evidently worked over a great deal" and therefore was not as "pure" or fresh as it could have been, but still he admired the "breadth and simplicity of effect and . . . elevation of sentiment." As Simmons's work was still in progress (he was probably making the changes he felt necessary after his canvas was installed), Caffin could not comment on the overall impact. Instead he pointed out pleasing details such as "the expressions of the women's faces" and the "elegant texture of the brocaded draperies," and made notice of the Mercy group—"a sweet little incident in the foreground."[97]

Another reviewer found that Simmons had vigor, freedom, and grace of execution that surpassed his work for the Oyer and Terminer Court: "He has filled his spaces with wonderful skill, and obtained a beauty in the coloring that is as fresh as a spring flower." On the other hand, this writer was bothered by a basic incongruity of

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allegory updated with contemporary faces and bodies. Although he felt that Simmons's figures in this panel were better "reconciled . . . to their costumes" than was the norm, still he cited "that jarring combination of classicism and modernity frequently found in his work: Generally his female figures are unmistakably modern New York young ladies, who find it a great deal of trouble to doff their tailor-made gowns and properly deport themselves in the seamless dry-goods in which artists are wont to habit allegorical figures."[98]

Others championed such modern types as bringing freshness, vitality, and a distinctly American look to classically inspired art. Pauline King, for example, who found Simmons's panel "a lovely human picture that appeals to the heart and strikes the chord that makes the whole world kin," happily defined Simmons's three principal figures as "fair creatures of distinctly modern types."[99] Questions regarding the suitability of allegory for the decoration of public buildings would continue and become more hotly debated in the coming decade. The nearly undisputed reign of allegory in American murals of the 1890s was coming to a close.

Such classicism was apparently still welcome in the richly elegant and hospitable environment of Simmons's next client, Richard Canfield, the famous gambling house owner. Canfield "elevated gambling to the realm of the fine arts" and decorated his gambling rooms and private quarters accordingly. He was a serious collector of paintings, prints, furniture, and porcelain. In his choice of paintings he was particularly drawn to the work of James McNeill Whistler and became a friend of the artist, who painted his portrait in 1901.[100] Clarence Luce, the architect for Canfield's East Forty-fourth Street establishment, approached Simmons for the decorative project, which he

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was to work out directly with Canfield himself. Simmons found him an ideal client, a man of character, and a man of his word. As Simmons expressed it, "Richard Canfield was a man in every sense of the word and as much a gentleman as one who lives outside the law can be." When meeting with Simmons, Canfield reportedly said succinctly and right to the point: "I want your best work. You know what that is and I shall know it when I see it. We'll talk the money over later." According to Simmons, "Like Napoleon, when Canfield wanted anything done, he employed the best men and told them to go ahead." When Simmons ran into financial troubles Canfield bailed him out, saying to his secretary, "Bring me a check for a thousand dollars." He then turned it over to Simmons and admonished, "Now run away and do your best work."[101]

It seems that Simmons made decorative paintings for three rooms at Canfield's. For the reception room, he painted Pandora and her box with "a great smoke, interspersed with figures, coming out of it." According to Simmons, in the next room he painted Hospitality with attending figures. He described the challenge of painting the murals in the third room where he was given "two of those difficult cat-claw panels (spandrels) at one end of the room and these were also undersize" (Figs. III:26 and 27). Simmons wrote he "could not use a male figure" and chose his subjects "Morning" and "Night" from Swinburne: "When haughty Day represses, Night's cold and faint caresses."[102]

In her book *American Mural Painting*, Pauline King called *Morning Quitting Night* (Fig. III:26), "one of the artist's finest achievements" and elaborated on the details of Night—shown leaning forward and reaching towards Morning wishing to linger. Night was bare chested with her lower body and shoulders covered with gold

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and silver embroidery with an overlay of black and gray gauze (the cloak of night). In the background was an owl that resembled the one in the Astor Gallery murals. The figure of Morning or Day appears to have been depicted blowing a kiss to Night with her right hand as the fingers of her left were tugged by a playful putto, who counterbalanced the owl.[103] Night's desire to tarry into the realm of Morning seems an appropriate theme for a gambling house.

The composition of the panels of *Morning Quitting Night* demonstrated Simmons's ability to fit strong figures gracefully into awkward spaces. This skill would be put to the test on a grander scale at the Library of Congress, Simmons's other large commission of the 1890s and the subject of the next chapter.

Simmons's broader ability to fit his conception to the situation at hand was already recognized by contemporaries. Commissions for public and private clients covered a range of building types and styles embraced by the civic spirit and eclectic tastes at the height of the American Renaissance. His murals in this exuberant decade in New York comprised the important public commissions for courtrooms at the Criminal Courts Building and the Appellate Division Courthouse, and private commissions for murals at Canfield's gambling house, the Metropolitan Club, the Frederick W. Vanderbilt Mansion, and the Waldorf-Astoria. All of these murals featured mythical or allegorical figures although varied in aspect and mood. Such allegorical decoration suited the tastes of artist and clients alike in this cosmopolitan era.

Simmons wrote of the high energy and spirit he felt in the New York City of the 90s and of his own boundless vitality:

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> [T]here was a spontaneity in the New York folk that has never touched me at any other time in America. I was strong, though never muscular, with the vitality of five men; and to work all day, run to the club in the late afternoon, dine well, and then be in the company of congenial friends most of the night, did not put a dent in my surplus energy.[104]

In less than a decade's time in a field of art still new for himself and for this country, Simmons had laid the foundation of a successful career in mural painting. He had won prestigious public commissions, built social connections with private clients, and gained the respect of architects, fellow painters, and critics. At the turn of the century, he was well positioned and had the experience to take on larger public commissions of national prominence.

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[1] Arthur Hoeber, "Edward Emerson Simmons," *Brush and Pencil* 5 (March 1900): 245.

[2] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 237; File card on Simmons (699), The Hampden-Booth Theatre Library, The Players, New York. Simmons recalled that White and Harrison were his sponsors, but the file card shows that Cox and Harrison were. The Players on the south side of Gramercy Park was next to the National Arts Club. It was remodeled in 1888 without charge by Stanford White who gave it an Italianate loggia and beautiful interior. Simmons wrote that it was not strictly an actor's club but rather "a place where the actor could meet his equals . . . .writers, architects, sculptors, and painters." Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 281.

[3] The file card cited above indicates that he resigned briefly on October 17, 1895, but rescinded his resignation the same day. The card also shows he was dropped and reinstated a number of times beginning in 1903, most likely for nonpayment of dues. Almost every year from 1924 until his death in 1931 he was elected an honorary member exempt from dues.

[4] Correspondence between the two, who often addressed each other with nicknames such as Simmy and Stanny, is signed affectionately and indicates that they worked closely together on projects and joined each other frequently for meals at clubs. Simmons admired White greatly as an artist and a generous friend and devoted an entire chapter of his autobiography to him in tribute.

[5] David Garrard Lowe, *Stanford White's New York* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1999), 160.

[6] Montgomery Schuyler, "The Metropolitan Club," *Harper's Weekly* 38 (10 March 1894): 226.

[7] "The 'Millionaires' Club," *Frank Leslie's Weekly* 78 (1 March 1894): 163.

[8] Schuyler, "The Metropolitan Club."

[9] Lowe, *Stanford White's New York*, 162-163.

[10] Schuyler, "The Metropolitan Club."

[11] "The Metropolitan Club," *New York Times*, 27 February 1894, p. 4.

[12] "Ready for Guests Today," Ibid., p. 5; Yandell was noted for Lincrusta, a wall covering made from fabric coated with linseed oil and stamped to simulate embossed leather. (Porzelt, *The Metropolitan Club*, 86.)

[13] Sarre and Le Lacheur, 45 West 29th Street, New York, estimate for painting and decorating the library ceiling of the Metropolitan Club, Fifth Avenue and 60th Street," 3 October 1893, McKim, Mead and White Collection, Correspondence, Box 83, New-York Historical Society. Sarre and Le Lacheur's estimate for decorating the ceiling was $988.

[14] Paul Porzelt, *The Metropolitan Club of New York* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), 86.

[15] "Ready for Guests Today."

[16] Ibid.

[17] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 215.

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[18] Gregory F. Gilmartin, *Shaping the City: New York and the Municipal Art Society* (New York: Clarkson Potter, 1995), 5-6; Pauline King, *American Mural Painting: A Study of the Important Decorations by Distinguished Artists in the United States* (Boston: Noyes, Platt, & Company, 1902), 145-146, 149.

[19] The Architectural League of New York held annual juried exhibitions of new work in architecture and the allied arts of painting and sculpture from the early 1890s to the 1930s. These exhibitions and accompanying catalogues were important to muralists in promoting their work through the exhibition and publication of their mural studies. Simmons exhibited a number of times.

[20] "To Make the City Beautiful," *New York Times*, 22 January 1894, p. 2; "Competition Open to Artists," *New York Times*, 9 February 1894, p. 8.

[21] "To Judge Art Adornments," ibid., 15 March 1894, p. 5.

[22] "An Interesting Art Contest," ibid., 8 March 1894, p. 3.

[23] According to Simmons in *From Seven to Seventy*, 242-243, he was in New York at the Metropolitan Club witnessing Stanford White's triumph over striking workmen in order to finish the Club on time to meet the deadline of the end of February, 1894. Perhaps he was out of town before or after that because correspondence with White does indicate that Simmons was abroad visiting his family during the 1890s. Simmons's class report for 1899 indicates that his family moved from Saint Ives in Cornwall to Haslemere, Surrey. *Seventh Report of the Class Secretary of the Class of 1874 of Harvard College* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1899), 104.

[24] Ibid., 215.

[25] "A Beautiful Design This," New York *World*, 21 April 1894, p. 9.

[26] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 215.

[27] Ibid., 216-218.

[28] "Oyer and Terminer Painting: Exhibition of Good and Bad Designs at the Fine Arts Society," *New York Times*, 21 April 1894, p. 4.

[29] "A Start for Municipal Art," New York *Sun*, 21 April 1894, clipping from files of William Gerdts.

[30] "A Beautiful Design This."

[31] Edward Hamilton Bell, "Art in Municipal Decoration," *Harper's Weekly* 33 (28 April 1894): 401.

[32] "Oyer and Terminer Painting: Exhibition of Good and Bad Designs at the Fine Arts Society."

[33] Ibid.; Shirlaw's figures were very scantily clothed. Although I found no contemporary comment on this, perhaps the nudity of the figures raised some questions about the use of this scheme in the setting of a criminal court.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Royal Cortissoz, "Mural Decoration in America," *Century Magazine* 51 (November 1895): 121.

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[36] Having accepted the commission for murals for the Library of Congress in February 1895, Simmons was also preparing his compositional sketches for these murals throughout much of 1895, while he was painting the panels for the Criminal Courts Building.

[37] "Art for Oyer and Terminer," New York *World*, 19 November 1895, p. 3. Joseph H. Choate (1832-1917) was a noted lawyer, statesman, and humanitarian. He was involved in many civic efforts including the founding of the American Museum of Natural History and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A trustee of these museums, he also served as an officer of many professional, civic, and social organizations. Choate, known for exceptional wisdom and wit, was a great speaker and was much in demand for both formal and informal occasions. Simmons claimed he was embarrassed by Choate's address: "Mr Choate arrived early and got quite a few data from me. It may have been something about my manner, but I think it was his own disposition—which encouraged, became malignant. . .he spied me in the farthest corner, where I had retired to be out of view. Then, in his oiliest and most oratorical manner, he declaimed: 'Greece had her Apelles, we have our Simmons; Rome had her Michael Angelo, we have our Simmons; etc.' The crowd applauded, but he knew I would get the sting" (Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 218). Simmons's feeling that Choate was making fun of him may be unjustified. Choate was known as a man of integrity, judgement, and diplomacy, it is possible that he was carried by the spirit of the day to link with genuine sentiment Simmons's achievement with that of such great artists of the past.

[38] "Handsomest of Court Rooms," New York *Sun*, 19 November 1895, sec. 2, p. 9.

[39] "Art for Criminal Court," *New York Times*, 19 November 1895, p. 9.

[40] "New York Court-House Decoration," *Art Amateur*, 39 (January 1896): 48.

[41] "Art for Criminal Court." "His wife is said to have suggested the general appearance of the figure and the two youths as pages were taken from his sons," according to "News of the Fine Arts," *Monthly Illustrator* 5 (September 1895): x.

[42] Russell Sturgis, "Painting," *Forum* 34 (March 1903): 411.

[43] Program from Adopt-A-Mural Rededication Ceremony, 2 December 1993, archives, Art Commission of the City of New York. Florence D'Urso donated the $40,000 for the conservation work to the Art Commission and Municipal Art Society's Adopt-A-Mural Program. For more information on these murals see Bailey Van Hook, "Clear-eyed Justice: Edward Simmons's Mural in the Criminal Courts Building, Manhattan, *New York History* 73 (October 1992): 443-458.

[44] In 1891 Sargent decided on the theme of his Boston Public Library mural program. He began working from models for the *Frieze of the Prophets* in 1893 and was painting the murals early in 1894. He made final adjustments to the *Frieze of the Prophets* in January 1895. (Stanley Olson, "Chronology," in Patricia Hills et al., *John Singer Sargent*, exh. cat. (Whitney Museum of American Art: New York, 1986), 279-280.

[45] King, *American Mural Painting*, 139.

[46] Henry J. Hardenbergh designed two towers with 150 studios for artists around and on top of the Carnegie Hall building. The towers were constructed between 1894 and 1896. It is interesting to note that around this period of his residency at Carnegie Hall Simmons was involved in decorating the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel (1897) in New York designed by Hardenbergh and possibly his Hotel Raleigh (1900) in Washington as well.

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[47] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 256. For possible influence for some of Simmons's murals of the 1890s, see the 1889 murals by François Schommer (1850-1935) and Jean-Joseph Weerts (1847-1927) for the Hôtel de Ville in Thérèse Burollet *et al.*, *Le triomphe des mairies: Grands décors républicains à Paris 1870-1914* (Paris: Musée du Petit Palais, 1986), 374-375, 412-413, 460..

[48] I am grateful to Bailey Van Hook for sharing her insights on Simmons's murals for the Astor Gallery.

[49] The Waldorf was erected by William Waldorf Astor and the Astoria by Col. John Jacob Astor on the sites of previous Astor townhouses. Both financiers were members of the Metropolitan Club.

[50] The Salon de la Princesse of the Hôtel Soubise in Paris was decorated by Germaine Boffrand and dates from 1737-1740, during the reign of Louis XV.

[51] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 256.

[52] Charles H. Caffin, "Mural Paintings by Edwin H. Blashfield, Will H. Low, C. Y. Turner, and Edward Simmons," *Harper's Weekly* 41 (16 October 1897): 1031.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 83.

[57] Caffin, "Mural Paintings by Edwin H. Blashfield . . .and Edward Simmons."

[58] "The Observer," *Art Interchange* 38 (November 1897): 111.

[59] "The New Astoria Hotel," *Architecture and Building* 28 (5 February 1898): 54.

[60] King, *American Mural Painting*, 243-244.

[61] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 258.

[62] Henry Bolles Lent, *The Waldorf Astoria* (New York: Hotel Waldorf-Astoria Corporation, Currier Press, 1934), 92.

[63] William Laurel Harris, "The Decorative Arts in America as Seen in Our Modern Hotels," *Good Furniture* 6 (May 1916): 300-302.

[64] Ground was broken 1 May 1895.

[65] Harris, "The Decorative Arts . . . in Our Modern Hotels," 302.

[66] Ibid., 304

[67] Ibid., 296.

[68] Ibid., 303.

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[69] Simmons's designs were described in a review of the Architectural League exhibition where they were shown in March of 1896: "The most ambitious scheme is that submitted by Mr. Simmons, who sent three sketches, which served to complete and define one another—a small general sketch of the hall, showing the appearance of his composition in place, a larger, but very rough color sketch in pastels, giving the color effect of the principal masses, and a third, more elaborate drawing in pencil, which explains the other two sketches." The sketch of the central panel showed a seated figure of New York holding up a key and flanked by "imposing groups of draped and undraped figures bearing banners of the various nations of the globe." This design, with a background of "a view of the city from a height, showing wharfs and shipping, and factories puffing clouds of steam," presented "difficulties of perspective and a more pictorial treatment" than the winning proposal of Turner, which the writer stated could be "much more easily carried out." "Architectural League Exhibition," *Art Amateur* 34 (March 1896): 83.

[70] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 226.

[71] Charles Follen McKim to Stanford White, "Memorandum Concerning Purchases for F. W. V.," 17 September 1897, Stanford White Papers, Box 19: 2, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York.

[72] Nina Gray, "Chapter Three: Resource History and Description of Existing Conditions: Public Spaces and Bedrooms," in Peggy Albee et al., "Historic Resource Study for Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site" (draft), (National Park Service, Northeast Museum Division: Boston, 2000), 122-123. See also a recently published article drawn from this study, Nina Gray and Pamela Herrick, "Decoration in the Golden Age: The Frederick W. Vanderbilt Mansion, Hyde Park, New York," *Decorative Arts* 10 (Fall-Winter 2002-2003): 98-141. I am grateful to Nina Gray for sharing information and insights on Simmons's murals for this site.

[73] White to Edward Simmons, 23 December 1898, White Papers, Letter Book 21, Avery Library.

[74] Simmons to White, 10 February 1899, ibid., Box 38:15. He must have received the requested ceiling sample, because there is an undated letter addressed to "Dear Stanford," and signed "Simmy," referring to the return of "some draperies belonging to you and a piece of the ceiling at Hyde Park," which Simmons had in his studio (ibid., Box 36:11).

[75] Simmons to McKim, 24 April 1899, ibid., Box 38:15.

[76] White to Simmons, 26 April 1899, ibid., Letter Book 22.

[77] Simmons to White, 27 April 1899, ibid., Box 38:15.

[78] White to Simmons, 27 April 1899, ibid., Letter Book 22. I could find no indication of what became of these circular panels that were not used at the Vanderbilt Mansion.

[79] White to Simmons, 8 May 1899, ibid.

[80] Gray, "Chapter Three," 133-136; Snell, Charles W., *Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site* (National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior: Washington, D. C., 1960), 20-21.

[81] Gray, "Chapter Three," 148.

[82] Aurora asked Zeus to give Tithonus the immortality of the gods so that he could be her everlasting mate. Although her wish was granted, tragically she had forgotten to request that he also have the

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eternal youth of the gods. While she remained rosy and youthful as she personified each dawning of the day, Tithonus aged and shriveled and shrank and his once strong voice became weaker until finally he took the form of a chirping cicada. This choice of subject is interesting considering Simmons's own lifelong and self-admitted propensity for constant chatter and long windedness and his ability to attract the company of youth and beauty.

[83] Memorandum for Acting Superintendent, Roosevelt-Vanderbilt, Franklin R. Mullaly to Regional Director, Region 5, 19 February 1962, reporting on a telephone call from Mrs. Louis S. Bruguiere, pp. 1-2, archives, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site; Stephen Hankins, "The Fate of the Mowbray Mural from the Vanderbilt Mansion, Hyde Park," Field Work Project for Ms. [Ella] Foshay, 13 December 1983, pp. 1-5, archives, Vanderbilt Mansion.

[84] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 226-227.

[85] "American Studio Talk," *International Studio* (supplement) 11 (July 1900): i.

[86] Ibid.; Sara Webster, "The Architectural and Sculptural Decoration of the Appellate Division Courthouse," in *Temple of Justice: The Appellate Division Courthouse*, exh.cat. (Architectural League of New York and Association of the Bar of the City of New York, 1977), 24-26.

[87] Charles H. Caffin, "Decorations for the Appellate Court,"*Harper's Weekly* 44 (20 January 1900): 59.

[88] "Mural Decorations in the New Building of the Appellate Court, New York," *Artist* 27 (February 1900): vii.

[89] Caffin, "Decorations for the Appellate Court," 59.

[90] Jane Gregory Rubin, "Introduction," in *Temple of Justice*, 13-14.

[91] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 261; Perhaps with regard to Blashfield's mural, Simmons is referring to another figure or an earlier version of "Appeal," because Blashfield's finished painting still has a prominent kneeling female figure with her back to the viewer representing "Appeal."

[92] "Mural Decorations of the Appellate Court," *Art Interchange* 44 (February 1900): 41; King, *American Mural Painting*, 233-234.

[93] "Mural Decorations in the New Building of the Appellate Court, New York," viii.

[94] "Mural Decorations of the Appellate Court," 41

[95] Ibid.; Caffin, "Decorations for the Appellate Court." 59.

[96] "Mural Decorations of the Appellate Court," 41.

[97] Caffin, "Decorations for the Appellate Court." Richard Canfield, a client of Simmons at this time, dubbed the Mercy group "Crime, Ignorance, and Stupidity," and jokingly asked, "Is that what the Appellate Court stands for?" Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 261.

[98] "American Studio Talk," *International Studio* 11 (July 1900): i [i-iv]

[99] King, *American Mural Painting*, 233.

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[100] "The Living Room of the Late Richard A. Canfield," *The Magazine Antiques* 30 (September 1916): 119. Canfield had gambling establishments in Newport, Rhode Island, and Saratoga, New York, as well. He was world famous and also invented the game of Solitaire.

[101] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 262-265.

[102] Ibid., 263-264. Simmons mentioned that Canfield's had a "back room where was served any kind of drink or food," and wrote that it was "dark, of the dull colors of Spanish leather" in contrast to the light room where the playing went on." It is not entirely clear from Simmons's description for which of these two rooms he painted the spandrels depicting *Morning Quitting Night.* Pauline King said they were in the dining room. (King, *American Mural Painting*, 259.). The caption for the photograph showing Simmons's murals *in situ* in Nathan Silver, *Lost New York* (New York and Avenel, N. J., 1967), 61, identifies the room as a gambling room. However, the room in this photograph appears to be dark, like the back room for dining Simmons described.

[103] King, *American Mural Painting*, 258-260.

[104] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 245-246.

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Chapter IV
The Library of Congress—A Cosmopolitan National Model

As related in the last chapter on New York, the 1890s were the heyday of the allegorical mural in America. Simmons was in top form, still involved in the mural project for New York City's Oyer and Terminer Court in 1895 when another great opportunity arose in the nation's capital. The chance to decorate the Library of Congress (Fig. IV:1) recalled the bold-spirited enterprise of the World's Columbian exposition, where many American artists had their first experience in mural painting. But, while the triumph in Chicago was ephemeral, this endeavor was to be an enduring art monument for the nation and a symbol of its cultural aspirations. Nowhere would the decade's cosmopolitan taste for allegory become more evident or prominent than at the new building for the Library of Congress.

The guiding spirit behind the library and its transformation in function and symbol from the legislative library located in the Capitol and serving the members of congress to a central repository of learning for the nation was Ainsworth Rand Spofford. Spofford, who served as librarian of Congress from 1864-1897, envisioned and skillfully and steadfastly lobbied for a separate building to house the library's collection, which had grown dramatically under his stewardship. Within just a few years in the late 1860s the library added the Smithsonian Library of forty thousand volumes and the Force Historical Library of Americana consisting of twenty thousand items, and would continue to grow even more vigorously and broadly as a result of the copyright amendment of 1865, which secured for the collection a copy of each copyrighted book, map, musical composition, photograph, or other work of art. In

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addition, the international exchange resolution of 1867 insured the continued acquisition of foreign public documents, and, finally and most importantly, the copyright law of 1870 centralized United States copyright registration and required the deposit of two copies of each copyrighted work with the Library of Congress. This growth and potential of the collection helped Spofford convince Congress that a new building was necessary. His vision for a library of great stature in building design and scope of collections was inspired by the British Museum Library, which provided the model he revered for a central reading room and radiating alcoves. He appealed to nationalist and cosmopolitan sentiments alike by advocating that the library be universal in its holdings, reflecting both current American works and the heritage of the ages. In its design it should also rival the great libraries of Europe, and at the same time, incorporate American innovations. He argued,

> In every country where civilization has attained a high rank, there should be at least one great library, not only universal in range, but whose plan it should be to reverse the rule of the smaller and more select libraries, which is exclusiveness, for one of inclusiveness. Unless this is done, unless the minor literature and the failures of our authors are preserved, as well as the successes, American writers will be without the means of surveying the whole field trodden by their predecessors . . . . In every great nation this comprehensive library should be obviously the library of the government, which enjoys the benefit of the copy tax, and has thus supplied without cost a complete representation of the intellectual product of the country in every field of science and literature.[1]

Spofford was persuasive, and Congress responded in March of 1873 by appointing a commission of three, comprised of Spofford; Senator Timothy O. Howe of Wisconsin, who was Chairman of the Library Committee; and Senator Justin S. Morrill of Vermont, head of the Senate Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds; to "select a plan and supervise the location and erection of a building."[2] Spofford drew

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up the design specifications, which included his requirements for "a circular reading room in the center, of one hundred feet diameter, with alcoves radiating from the circumference of the inner circle outward," and for the use of only fireproof materials throughout. He also prescribed the system of shelving and the accommodation of "map-rooms, newspaper files, copyright records, works of art, catalogue-rooms, and a packing room."[3] The competition for architect was announced in August 1873 through advertisements in Washington, New York, and Boston newspapers.[4]

The Italian Renaissance design of the Washington firm of John L. Smithmeyer and Paul J. Pelz was chosen from twenty-seven entries because of its sympathy with the Capitol and adherence to the requirements as outlined by Spofford. It was the design clearly preferred by Spofford, but this easy triumph was short-lived and gave no indication of the troubles that lay ahead for Spofford and Smithmeyer and Pelz. Because of disputes among committee members and other congressmen that ensued over the siting, the design and size of the new building, and even the advisability of a separate building, the authorization was delayed for more than a decade. In 1874 Congress responded to some demands for a grander building by reopening the competition. Smithmeyer and Pelz were among about a dozen architects who prepared design proposals for various sites over the years from 1874 to 1886. It was not until 15 April 1886 that Congress finally passed the bill approving the construction of the building of Smithmeyer and Pelz's revised design in Italian Renaissance style.[5] Problems for Smithmeyer, who had developed some foes in Congress over the long waiting period, continued and came to a head over a conflict with the cement contractor. Following a congressional investigation prompted by the cement incident

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and other rumors of dishonesty and incompetence, Smithmeyer was fired in October of 1888, and Brigadier General Thomas Lincoln Casey, chief of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, was put in charge of building construction. He was aided by civil engineer Bernard Richardson Green as "superintendent of construction" in charge of day-to-day operations. These two engineers had already impressed Congress with their excellent work at the State, War, and Navy Building. Casey wisely used the plans of Smithmeyer and Pelz as his basis and retained Paul Pelz, who had prepared drawings for the firm's original designs to make new drawings. Casey and Green worked closely with Spofford to refine the design and prepared two plans, one for the four-million-dollar building authorized in 1888 and another more ambitious plan for a six-million-dollar building. Congress approved the plan for the larger building in March of 1889, and to the great relief of Spofford, work was underway almost immediately, and progress was swift and constant.[6] Moreover, Casey and Green were so efficient and careful in their management of the project that there was money remaining to support additional decoration of the building and create a monument even grander and more artful than what Spofford had imagined. Although an 1888 rendering of the library's Great Hall by Pelz (Fig. IV:2) reveals a notion of elaborate decoration including murals, obviously inspired by Charles Garnier's Paris Opéra (Fig. IV:3), it is primarily Casey, Green, and Casey's son, Edward Pearce Casey, who in 1892 succeeded Pelz as architect, who deserve the credit for the ambitious and splendid decoration of the interior.

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Edward Casey had studied architecture at the School of Mines at Columbia College, under William Ware, who with Van Brunt designed Harvard's Memorial Hall where Simmons and other American artists did some of their earliest decorative works. Casey then worked for McKim, Mead and White. Stanford White, ever an impassioned decorator to the core, no doubt had considerable influence on young Casey, and McKim convinced him to seek further training at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, where he studied with Victor Laloux. Casey was fresh from lessons in Paris when he was appointed architect for the interior design of the Library of Congress.[7] Critic Royal Cortissoz wrote in 1895 that Edward Casey contributed to the library "exactly the element that was needed most, that of a cultured architect qualified to maintain as pure a style in public work as in the most inspiring of private structures." He added that Casey was architect "in the fullest acceptation of that term."[8]

The selection committee to name the artists to decorate the interior was composed of General Casey, Bernard Green, and Edward Casey. Green was adamant that only American citizens be chosen as he wanted this monument to be a showplace of American craftsmanship. More than forty artists who were invited, including nineteen muralists, rose to the challenge to decorate the nation's library, an honor regarded as so great in the service to one's country, that artists were expected to show generosity of spirit and accept less pay for the glory involved.[9]

Elizabeth Alexander, the wife of muralist John White Alexander, recalled how the opportunity was presented:

> The money that was spent on all those decorations in the Congressional Library was not an appropriation made by Congress but by the contractor, who was General Casey. He made economies in the contract and made up his mind that

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> unless they started decorating buildings here, they would never get started. He wrote letters to several artists, he did not consult anybody about whom he would have do this work, but took a group of men, Mr. Blashfield was one, and he wrote them each a letter, telling them he had this money and that he had divided it proportionately with the size of the decorations and that he knew it was not a sufficient compensation for any of them to do it, but he felt if they were public spirited enough and wanted to help mural painting in America, they would consent to do this.[10]

While Elizabeth Alexander indicated that Casey was free to chose the muralists without consulting a higher authority for approval, he apparently did confer with others. Although the senior Casey and Green were engineers and not particularly experienced in the fine and decorative arts, they were men of an innovative nature, aware of the spirit of their time, and well acquainted with numerous artists and architects. The Caseys were connected by marriage to the Weir family of painters and art teachers, Robert Weir and his sons John Ferguson and J. Alden Weir, the latter one of the dome muralists at the Chicago fair. The committee sought advice from respected arts professionals. A letter from Charles McKim of 8 October 1894 mentions that Casey discussed with him a list of artists under consideration to decorate the Library of Congress.[11] Late in life Blashfield recalled that Charles McKim, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and he had determined the painters who would be commissioned for murals.[12]

A reporter from the *New York Press* stated that General Casey had the counsel of John Quincy Adams Ward, Olin Warner, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens with regard to the sculptural program, and that for the murals Casey "asked every painter of any importance to name a list of his fellow artists who were best fitted to do the many murals paintings that he desired."[13]

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The muralists were called up in three successive groups. The first group of artists, contacted in November 1894, was comprised of artists who had recently painted murals at the Columbian Exposition or elsewhere—Edwin H. Blashfield, Robert Blum, Abbott Thayer, John La Farge, Kenyon Cox, Edwin Austin Abbey, George W. Maynard, William De Leftwich Dodge, and John Singer Sargent. When the program was expanded to additional areas on the first floor, a second group of invitations went out on 31 January 1895 to George de Forest Brush, Charles Sprague Pearce, Elihu Vedder, John White Alexander, Walter McEwen, Edward Simmons, and Carl Gutherz.[14]

A number of artists declined because of other work or because the payment was too low. Sargent refused because of other commitments and suggested contacting Francis D. Millet.[15] Edwin Austin Abbey who was invited to decorate four tympana and a dome crown in a second floor corner pavilion declined, complaining that the time frame was too short and stating that he would not undertake such a project for less than twenty thousand dollars.[16] Records show that the artists were offered between two and eight thousand dollars for their commissions depending on the scope of work assigned.[17] George de Forest Brush wrote an almost identical response to Abbey's, "The appropriation is not large enough for me to undertake anything such as would do me credit and I therefore prefer to remain out of it."[18]

Simmons apparently had similar financial reservations, but the chance to decorate such a major national monument was too important to refuse:

> There was a great question in [my] mind as to whether I should join the group of men who were doing the work. The United States always paid less than anyone else, and I was tempted to take more profitable work. I could have

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> accepted any number of orders and hired assistants to carry them out, but I have always felt this was unfair to myself as well as to the public. A decoration is a creative thing and as such, can be carried out only by the mind that conceives it.[19]

Offered the commission for the northwest curtain corridor on the first floor on 31 January 1895, he accepted just a few days later, writing in a letter of 4 February, "I accept in general the commission for decoration in the Library forwarded by you for Gen. Casey. . . .Since the roll of specifications has not as yet reached me I can not as yet go into particulars but will write again as soon as I have examined the drawings." [20]

He must have received the specifications and drawings by the next day, for he wrote again on 5 February agreeing more officially to the specific commissions and expressing his wish to do all the figurative decorations in the corridor rather than have someone else's work in such close proximity to his:

> I am in receipt of the drawings & photograph and wish to formally accept the commission, including the panels in the domes if it be necessary. If the decision is eventually to have them decorated with figures and in color I should prefer to do them myself than to leave them to another as they come into such close relation to the tympanums and pendentives.[21]

Simmons added that he would be in Washington in a few days, no doubt to visit the site. Elizabeth Alexander remembered her husband's receiving in Paris a similar roll of specifications and drawings and in addition a description of the setting including details of marble and trim. She also recalled that he was required to prepare for approval only a scheme—"no finished sketches, just the scheme."[22]

Simmons's commission was in the amount of eight thousand dollars. He was assigned to paint a total of nine lunettes along one wall and over the doors at each end.

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As he had requested, he was also given the three domes and pendentives in the corridor. That gave him twenty-four additional small panels in the three domes combined and twenty-eight pendentives in seven bays. In July 1895, Simmons wrote regarding the sketches for his designs and acknowledging receipt of specifications for the pendentives:

> Pray excuse delay in answering your letter of the ninth & accept my thanks for the working details of pendentives. They will be very useful.
> As to the sketches; I prepared & submitted some to Mr Casey & supposed that it had been sufficient.
>
> I will, before many days send you a formal set of compositional sketches & description of my designs for filing away.[23]

Simmons and the other artists involved recognized the importance of this project as an example for the nation, a philanthropic effort of benefit to the public. But, of course, at the same time they must have been thinking of the good it would do their own careers—both by providing prominent evidence of their talent and by spurring the demand for the decorative arts. The press was quick to praise the artists and promote expectations for the building. In October of 1895, John Cremer, in a long article titled "An Artistic Home for Books," written for the *Pittsburgh Post*, compared this effort to that at the World's Columbian Exposition, stressing that the fair was a private enterprise whereas the Library of Congress was a project of the United States government and, as such, would result in "a great impetus to American art and an immeasurable elevation in the standard of popular taste." He recognized that because of "the public nature of the work" the artists were "content with much lower prices than they ordinarily receive from individuals or private commissions" for this program.

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which was to be "national and educational in the broadest sense." The project was also touted as "the only one thus far in which each detail of artistic decoration, both outside and inside, has been thought out and provided for beforehand, as is done in the case of European buildings." General Casey and the artists were conscious that they were providing "an object-lesson in art," for future government buildings. They were showing that the arts of architecture, painting, and sculpture, could be united to produce the finest public building possible, still within the budget for the building. They believed, as Casey explained, that art in public buildings would "have a tendency to educate, and soften the asperities of life."[24] Cremer also attested to the selection committee's faith in the artists' abilities as well as their patriotism. He reported that the artists at work on the library were "in the main allowed free rein," and "were let loose so to speak, to pursue their own individual bents and produce their best work in their own way."[25]

It seems as though the committee had no comprehensive unified program in mind for the murals. Richard Murray writes in his recent essay on the murals at the Library of Congress that he finds "no evidence that the committee attempted to coordinate subjects or inform artists of themes chosen by their colleagues, except when subjects were repeated;"[26] and even then the committee was tolerant of some repetition. Yet, overall there was an understanding of at least a general theme celebrating the holdings of the library as representing and further promoting the progress of civilization. Blashfield's mural for the collar of the massive dome in the reading room, titled *The Evolution of Civilization* (Fig. IV:4), an icon for the American Renaissance, is at the core of the Library of Congress both literally and figuratively—

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giving the whole theme for the library in one powerful and prominent work. Blashfield traced the history of civilization with allegorical figures symbolizing nations or epochs that mark advances in human knowledge and intellectual development. In the collar he presents a ring of twelve seated figures: Egypt—Written Records, Judea—Religion, Greece—Philosophy, Rome—Administration, Islam—Physics, Middle Ages—Modern Languages, Italy—Fine Arts, Germany—Printing, Spain—Discovery, France—Emancipation, and America—Science. As the national library of an emerging world power, the new Library of Congress was to be a cosmopolitan resource for the nation and the world--its collections reflecting the knowledge and achievements of the ages.

Allegory was considered appropriate for library decoration both as a universal language and as a continuance and connection with the great civilizations of ancient times and the Renaissance. Although, for the most part, the painters executed their murals on canvas in studios far from the site, largely in New York and also in Paris and Rome, rather than side-by-side or in nearby studios at the site, as they had in Chicago, they were bound by common ideals and aesthetics gained from European academic training and recent exposure to European models—Renaissance buildings and treatises and especially the nineteenth-century public buildings inspired by them. Most of the artists chose subjects that are traditionally symbolic of the fields of knowledge or taken from the arts and literature represented in libraries or subjects portraying important developments in civilization. Many allegorical subjects painted by the various artists throughout the building were traditionally part of library décor used for centuries to illuminate the arrangement of books, functioning as labels to indicate the location of various disciplines. For the principal theme of his corridor, Simmons chose to paint the

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nine Muses, or goddesses of arts and science, traditional motifs in libraries since the Middle Ages. The Muses represented inspiration for intellectual creativity, particularly for artists, poets and other writers, musicians, and philosophers. Each presided over a specific discipline: Calliope, Muse of Epic Poetry; Urania, Muse of Astronomy; Polyhymnia, Muse of Sacred Song; Erato, Muse of Erotic Poetry; Therpsichore, Muse of Choral Songs and Dance; Euterpe, Muse of Lyric Poetry; Thalia, Muse of Comedy; Clio, Muse of History; and Melpomene, Muse of Tragedy.[27] The ancient Muses were also known for praising the deeds of the Greek heroes in song, and are therefore an especially appropriate complement to the heroes depicted by Walter McEwen in the corresponding corridor on the other side of the Great Hall.[28]

Blashfield was the most visible and among the earliest of the artists at work at the site, for he painted his designs for the crown of the lantern and the collar of the dome directly on the plaster. Bernard Green had invented a giant flexible scaffold for him, which was in itself an attraction. Reporters and tourists were drawn to the site when the artists had barely begun. People were excited by the sight of art in progress and by the skill and dedication of the artists at work. They saw these men as recapturing the work spirit and craft of great ages past. The *Philadelphia Press* found in the artists, "zeal and enthusiasm credible alike to their art and to their patriotism." Alice Ewing Lewis writing in the *Washington Post* observed:

> Though the new Library is not within a year of completion, and though the guide books do not yet breathe that it is an interesting spot to visit, it is nevertheless, the Mecca of the tourist who is ever with us . . . . Their attention is turned this way and with good reason, too, for even though a great portion of the building is not open to inspection, and though the part that is on exhibition is beset by scaffoldings, and white-bloused workmen, and lime dust, which

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> makes the investigator quite like the conventional miller, it is yet as exquisite as a half-opened flower.[29]

Simmons's nine lunettes for the corridor walls and the small panels for the three domes were apparently painted in his studio in New York and then later shipped for installation. The figures for the pendentive decorations were painted directly on the prepared plaster. Early in 1896, when Simmons was working on his designs and figuring out some details of the lunettes in his studio, he was also apparently having some financial difficulty, a situation that seemed to recur throughout much of his career as a mural painter. Stanford White was the friend to whom he turned for both financial help and for advice on his work. Correspondence between them and between Simmons and Green helps to document Simmons's artistic progress and financial concerns during 1896, when he accomplished most of the work on the Library of Congress murals.

Letters from January and February 1896 concern a loan by White to Simmons as an advance on his government contract for $8,000 for the Library of Congress murals. On 10 January, White explained to Simmons that by taking his offer, rather than making arrangements with a loan company, Simmons could pay off a previous debt to him of $950 and still come out ahead by a thousand dollars.[30] Correspondence from later in January shows that Simmons accepted White's offer. White acknowledged receipt of a life insurance policy taken out by Simmons and enclosed a check for the "first advance and loan upon our agreement in the matter of the decorations of the Public Library in Washington."[31]

In April Simmons wrote asking White's advice on the borders of his panels and included a sketch and section diagram in the body of the letter (Fig. IV:5):

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> Here is a sketch! My borders are 3 in[ches] wide. I have placed them one inch from the edge of the space. A section of the space would be like this. [diagram] That is they are in a sink in of an inch or two.
>
> Can I make the inch between the border and the edge a diff[erent] color—(plain)—or must it be a continuation of the decoration past & behind the border?[32]

White responded, "I can have no objection to your making the inch between the border and the edge a different color. Or it may be a continuation of the decoration past and behind the border, just as you choose. Either way would be all right."[33]

In his autobiography Simmons attests to White's generosity to artist friends as well as to his passion and intuition for the right decorative detail. Given the number of beautiful frames White designed for painters of this period, it is obvious that he cared a great deal about the art of friends and colleagues and "could never bear to see a work of art improperly dressed." Simmons himself was at least once the beneficiary of a frenzied effort by White to find just the right frame for one of his paintings, a portrait of his grandmother about to be exhibited.[34] It seems natural that Simmons would turn to White for his opinion on decorative work and also likely he would have had special interest in White's approval of his work at the Library of Congress as he had advanced money on the project.

At the end of May, White, who was apparently sending monthly checks to Simmons, returned to the subject of Simmons's panels:

> It is, of course, to a certain extent, none of my business, but I do not see why in the name of Heaven you do not finish one of your panels and put it in place and make it all right; that is, I do not see why you go so far in all your work without first trying <u>one</u> of them in place.
>
> Of course, I know that Architects do not know a damned thing about decoration, but that is the first thing they would think of doing."[35]

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Advice from White and Simmons's own recollections in his autobiography are testimony to some of the difficulty in designing the murals so that the figures would serve the architecture in a bold manner and not be reduced to insignificance by its demands:

> There were nine semicircular panels, nine feet in width at the bottom; therefore the radius was four and a half feet. All such typanums are stilted, making this radius in reality about four feet ten inches. The argument was, how to get the human figure into a space so low. I did not want to make them half size or even under life, and my decision proved very wise.[36]

His solution, as it had been at the Chicago fair, was to depict the figures sitting down. Terpsichore, the Muse of Dance, was a particular challenge, for Simmons wanted to convey the movement of a dancer. He later wrote that, as he was opposed to direct copying of the classics, he could not use a favorite early Greek representation of Terpsichore bending to fix her sandal.[37] Perhaps as well as wishing to avoid copying classical art, Simmons did not want to seem to be copying his contemporaries. Blashfield had exhibited a study for a mural for a ceiling for Collis P. Huntington showing Terpsichore in the pose of attending to a sandal (Fig. IV:6) in the Tenth Exhibition of the Architectural League of New York in 1893, in which Simmons had also exhibited.[38] A decade earlier Francis Davis Millet had painted a watercolor, *Lacing the Sandal*, showing a graceful young woman in classical dress tying a sandal. In the end, Simmons decided to depict his Terpsichore seated but almost appearing to dance—gracefully twisting, striking cymbals, and pointing her foot in a dance pose. Terpsichore (Fig. IV:7) is the most animated of the group; she is the central figure of the seven muses along the length of the corridor wall (see Fig. IV:8). Those on either side create a rhythmic flow as they, for the most part, alternate in static or animated

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poses and culminate at each end with Melpomene and Calliope, respectively, majestically seated with arms outstretched above the doors at each end of the corridor (Fig. IV:9 and Fig. IV:10). These figures, the Muse of Tragedy and the Muse of Epic Poetry (also regarded as the principal Muse), are suitably serious and imposing, seated in a powerful frontal pose and dramatically swathed, one in scarlet and the other in blue drapery, which flies up behind them. The Muses are shown with attributes of their disciplines, for example, Melpomene with the mask of tragedy, Clio (Fig. IV:11) with a helmet signifying wars recorded by history, Euterpe (Fig. IV:12) with a trumpet, Thalia (Fig. IV:13) with the mask of comedy and a playful satyr; Erato (Fig. IV:14) holds a rose and Polyhymnia (Fig. IV:15) a large book; Urania (Fig. IV:16) has tools of astronomy, a sextant and a celestial globe. Some of the figures are accompanied by little Geniuses who help express the character of their Muse. Laurel wreaths symbolize intellectual pursuits and a censer signifies the inspiration of Art and Poetry.[39] Although they sometimes used Ripa's *Inconologie* as a reference, most nineteenth-century artists, including Simmons, also took license with the symbolic attributes and employed them somewhat interchangeably or casually or even invented their own.

Correspondence shows that Simmons was still painting the Muses in the summer of 1896 and was much concerned about Bernard Green's proceeding with the painting of the corridor. On 22 July he wrote to Green,

> Please, pray do not go on with the coloring of the gallery—corridor—till I get to Washington!
>
> I shall be in Washington during the first week of August with four panels to place, & then will look after the matter.

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> If it is imperative to come on now—instead of two weeks from now, why I suppose I must, but I should much prefer to be able to bring four panels instead of two so that I may have a chance to gauge the whole line.[40]

On 4 August Simmons was in touch with Green again, asking for the allowance of a postponement of a few days for the installation of the first of his panels:

> I find that one of my canvasses is not dry enough to roll & I am afraid of injuring it if I come on tomorrow. Therefore, with a feeling that you will forgive the delay I shall be in Washington next Monday morning, with the man to put up the canvas with me.[41]

Two days later he wrote to Stanford White that he had no money, was required to repay a loan of $200, and had to travel to Washington. At the same time he shared the good news that he had been working very hard and had completed five canvas panels for the Library of Congress:

> I have forgotten all business worries & done nothing but work, since my wife left, & have five finished canvasses to show for it.—I have not one cent & must go on Monday with them [the canvas panels] & the putter up to Washington....the work at Washington shall be done by the middle of September.[42]

These letters raise the question as to whether Simmons really had to let his canvas dry or whether he just needed the money to get to Washington. Green's journal entry for 10 August confirms that Simmons arrived in Washington with his panels on the following Monday as promised: "Edward Simmons came in to put up 5 of his pictures in W. N. C. Corridor, 1st story."[43]

It was likely during this August visit that Simmons decorated the twenty-eight pendentives in the domes of the corridor (Fig. IV:17). He painted directly on the plaster and used no models for the figures, "composing as [he] went along."[44] He painted sixteen figurative panels featuring sprightly, mostly seminude females—four

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each for four of the bays (see Figs. IV:18a-d), and laurel wreaths (Fig. IV:19) for the four pendentives of each of the three remaining bays. In his autobiography years later, Simmons still vividly recalled working at the site during the intense heat that summer in Washington:

> It was in the summertime, and a hot spell struck Washington. Anyone who knows the capital will realize what this means. I was under contract to finish it at a certain time, and here I was working in these little sealed domes (which never were and never could be ventilated), while the thermometer was so high that eighty people died one day from sunstroke. It was mephitic. I was so terrified that I almost lived on milk and limewater.[45]

Correspondence from later that month shows that Simmons was back in New York and still involved in the project. On August 23 he wrote to Green asking whether there were twenty-four or thirty-two panels in the corridor domes. Two days later he thanked Green for his telegram, saying that he had mistakenly accounted for thirty-two, but must have been thinking of McEwen's corridor. He also made a pitch for taking over the murals that had been allotted to John White Alexander, asking to be excused if his request was out of line:

> May I here, frankly, ask you whether there be any chance for me to obtain the work which Mr. Alexander was to have done? I am sure to be through with my present construct by Sept. 15th, probably before. I hope to be able to bring on to Washington the five remaining panels and the twenty-four small panels for the domes on Sept. 10-12.[46]

It is possible that the twenty-four dome panels, each with a classical female figure (Fig. IV:20) are partially or even totally the work of Sidney Starr (1857-1925). Art writer William Walton attributed to Sidney Starr the "Ceiling in the Corridor of the Muses . . . in collaboration with Mr. Simmons," in the list of American mural paintings since 1898, which he published in 1906. Starr was one of the artists indicated by an

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asterisk as having personally provided Walton with a complete list of his works. Another list shows both Simmons and Starr as decorators at the Hotel Raleigh in Washington, D. C.[47] Starr may also have been the "putter up," referred to in Simmons's letter of 6 August, who was to accompany him to Washington. During the period of the Library of Congress commission, Starr was engaged in a mural project for Grace Chapel in New York either in some sort of collaboration with Simmons or through the help of Simmons. In a letter to Dr. William Reed Huntington, rector of Grace Church, Simmons wrote concerning the decoration for Grace Chapel: "If you are half as pleased as I am you will not be sorry that Starr has really done it all. I only wish I could get him the whole credit for it, as he deserves it all. To me it is one of the most successful decorations in New York."[48] The project comprised a large arched panel *The Heavenly City* (Fig. IV: 21), and a triptych with a center panel of the *Glorious Company of the Apostles* (Fig. IV:22a) and two side panels, the *Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets* (Fig. IV:22b, and the *Noble Army of Martyrs* (Fig. IV:22c).[49] Starr seems little known today, but it is clear that Simmons thought him a competent painter and likely worked with him on several projects.[50] Perhaps the idea that he could share the responsibility with Starr was an impetus to ask for more work at the Library of Congress.

Correspondence from White indicates that Simmons had probably completed at least most of the work on the Library of Congress murals by mid-September. On 15 September, Stanford White wrote to Simmons concerning their loan agreement declaring that the "whole matter is settled" and urging him to get away for a rest. Regarding the thousand dollars allocated for interest charges and risk he reminded

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Simmons that some of Mrs. White's property had been used to secure the loan and that those interest costs, which he had to charge, were $300, leaving a balance of $700. Saying that he did not want "to benefit in any way by the transaction" White enclosed a check for $200 and told Simmons that the remainder was earmarked for

> that little trip you propose to make across the water to France to see your wife and children and to take a rest. This latter thing, it seems to me, is the most important. I think you look tired, are tired, and perhaps a little stale, and nothing in the world would do you so much good as to go over to France and If I were you, take a little flyer down to Paris. Now you must do this, and you will find it pretty damn hard work screwing the $500.00 out of me for any other purpose.[51]

Simmons later recalled in *From Seven to Seventy* a gift following a loan from White, which may have been this one: "When I paid him, he returned me the interest money the next day, with the words: 'I give you this on one condition, that you use it to go over to Europe and visit your family. You need a vacation.'"[52]

Simmons must have taken White's offer because dated correspondence places Simmons in Europe for nearly all of October and November. Given that he was abroad at the time, a newspaper review in November also seems to confirm that he completed most of his program for his corridor before he left. The review mentions the nine tympana or lunettes and the figures for the ceiling:

> Edward Simmons has practically completed his frescoes for the new Congressional Library, and the small corridor which he has decorated is one of the finest in the building. His work is in the passageway connecting the Pompeian room with the west main entrance hall, and he has adorned the walls with nine lunettes representing the Muses. The figures are dignified in conception, and treated with breadth and simplicity. Mr. Simmons is an able colorist, and a draughtsman of the highest rank, but in his delineation of form he does not suggest so much by the use of line as by a firm handling of light and shade . . . . Terpsichore, holding aloft a pair of cymbals, is in a dancing posture, and there is a fine play of iridescent color in the floating draperies. The action is also good, and the movement of the whole figure is spirited and lifelike . . . .

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> Besides these nine tympana, Mr. Simmons has painted for the ceiling of the passageway a series of little figures, which are exquisite.[53]

On 8 October Simmons wrote to White from Saint Ives, Cornwall, that he was up to doing some fine painting: "I am booming. Never felt so well in my life. Paint every day & am going to do some good marines."[54] He stayed in Europe until the end of November. However, there seemed to be some anxiety on the home-front about his return to Washington, so undoubtedly there was still some unfinished business there—perhaps he needed to make some final adjustments or wax or otherwise finish the work. His colleague Sidney Starr was in New York, likely at Simmons's studio, and on the alert for correspondence regarding the Library of Congress. Starr advised Green on 5 November, "Mr. Simmons cabled me to open and answer your communications to him so that any business I can attend to for him I shall be glad to do. He will, I expect, be here in a day or two at most."[55] But Simmons did not return until the end of the month. He cabled Green on November 26, "Just landed will come on at once."[56] Simmons must have completed the corridor to Green's satisfaction, for he authorized the fourth and final payment in two checks to Simmons on 19 December for "Paintings in Tympanums, Pendentives, and Panels in Domes of Corridor of N. W. Pavilion, First Story, furnished and set in place, as per order No. 426."[57]

Recent study of Simmons's murals in preparation for their conservation indicates that one or two assistants may have helped him with the painting and also furthers our understanding of how and where the murals were painted.[58]
Although it seems fairly definite that different hands were at work, some disparities in the paint surfaces could also be attributed to the variety of weights and weaves of the

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canvas used for both the lunettes and dome panels. The pendentive figures and wreaths were painted directly on the primed plaster as Simmons related in *From Seven to Seventy*.[59] Conservators believe the canvases for the ceiling dome were painted in a studio and then shipped for installation at the library, probably before they were really dry. A sort of "fuzzy' appearance to the surface of some of the panels suggests that they were likely sent piled on top of each other; some abrasion and some fibers from the back of some panels seem to have adhered to paint layers of the ones underneath. There is also evidence that some of the paintings may have been altered or touched up after installation as "the paint layer extends beyond the edges of the canvasses onto the adjoining gilded work and cast iron."[60] The need for later alterations or touch-ups following installation was most likely the reason for Green's wanting Simmons to return to Washington in November.

The building was not formally opened to the public until 1 November 1897, approximately a year after Simmons finished his murals. By May all the muralists had completed their work.[61] Response from the public and most reviewers was exuberant both before and after the building was officially open. Postcards (Fig. IV:23) and other reproductions of Simmons's stunning scarlet-draped Melpomene were among the best-selling souvenirs of the library.[62] His murals were popular with the press as well.

The *Art Amateur* praised "the excellent drawing of the allegorical figures" and "fine effect of color got by the clever management of the draperies" in the lunettes with the Muses.[63] The painter and critic William A. Coffin devoted much attention to Simmons. He noted that Simmons had responsibility for "the entire decorative scheme" of his corridor, including the pendentives and panels in the domes. He

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described the color scheme as ranging from the blue of Calliope to the orange of Clio and admired the alternation of figures with arms extended with those in other poses to "form a chain of arms uniting the series." Summing up he noted,

> Grace and dignity are happily combined in these compositions and Mr. Simmons's authoritative draftsmanship, so well shown in the new criminal courts in New York, is here applied with force and distinction. The color-scheme is sufficiently restrained to comport well with the style of his design, while it is not lacking in such animated notes as befit the treatment of some of the details of his theme.[64]

In June, shortly after all of the murals were in place, critic Montgomery Schuyler expressed his view that the success of the interior was largely due to the respect for and coherent articulation of the plan, including the focus on the rotunda, the subjugation of the parts to the whole, and the muralists' concern for working with the architecture. He gave Simmons's corridor as an example:

> As much may be said of the system of corridors and dependencies, which are nowhere a "maze" but in which everywhere the "plan" is manifest, and of which even the most successfully adorned, as by Mr. Simmons's series of the Muses, are primarily attractive by the successful study that has gone to their proportioning, to their lighting, and to the modelling of their parts.[65]

Architect Russell Sturgis who had high praise for Simmons's work at the Oyer and Terminer Courtroom in the Criminal Courts Building found his series of Muses at the library "somewhat marred by patches of deep red and other hues which are less connected with any possible color composition than are with one another the forms, the light and shade, the larger and the smaller masses." Yet behind what he considered faulty coloring, he saw their decorative strength:

> The composition is nearly always more architectural than is seen in the New York building [Criminal Courts Building], and that for the obvious reason that the strictly limited space, semi-circular in form and closely attached in its very nature to the structure and essence of the building itself, calls for such

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> architectural treatment. If there were a sculptor who had shown himself as skilled in treating architectural problems as Mr. Simmons is in painting, the way to a revival of the lost art of architecture in its more brilliant forms would be visible.[66]

Simmons's letter to White concerning the painting of the border of his panels showed his concern for details in treating the border in relation to the architectural framework. The sensitivity and ability exhibited by Simmons "in treating architectural problems" were recognized by Russell Sturgis.[67] Sturgis must have delighted in these qualities in the now mature artist whom years before he had encouraged to take up painting.

While Sturgis seems to have been perplexed by Simmons's areas of strong color, recent examination of the lunette series for conservation seems to advance a better understanding of Simmons's color scheme. Through the conservators' study of the iconography, they concluded that Simmons intended the colors to orchestrate his symmetrical flow of figures out from Terpsichore as the center: "'Terpsichore' forms the fulcrum around which the rest of the paintings move symmetrically, which accounts for the graduated intensity in hue moving out from 'Terpsichore' to both ends of the corridor," where the red and orange drapery of Melpomene and Clio at one end and the blue drapery of Calliope at the other add bold notes.[68]

From a series of articles by Elizabeth Ellison Newport on the Library of Congress murals for the periodical *Art Interchange* in 1896 and 1897 we learn more about their contemporary reception. Her first of these articles, on Blashfield, appeared in April 1896, The fourth in the series, published in January 1897, was devoted to Simmons and McEwen. Of all of the muralists at the library, Blashfield and Simmons appear to have won her highest regard. Newport wrote that Simmons's corridor was

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attracting the curious even before the scaffolding was removed. Melpomene, "in a cloud of red drapery," presiding over the entrance door as well as the dramatic art of tragedy, drew her first words of praise. Newport thought the mesmerizing "far-seeing gray eyes . . .[seemed] to embody in their depths the very soul of tragedy." At the same time she found "something very real and also very modern about this face," and was therefore "not surprised to hear that it is a likeness of the artist's wife."[69] She noted that the extended arms of the Muse direct the viewer's eyes to the cherubs on each side, one with a laurel wreath, the other holding a censer.[70] Calliope, Muse of Epic Poetry, facing Melpomene at the other end of the corridor, commands equal attention as "an exquisite conception" robed in a blue drape, which swirls above her head casting a mysterious shadow across her face and falls across her breast to her opposite hip, "folding her limbs in massive lights and shades." Newport particularly admired Calliope's face, calling it "extraordinarily simple" and yet so "exquisitely painted that one carries in mind its loveliness for many days after." She added, "[T]he drawing of outstretched arms and hands is perfect, and altogether lacking in that over-detail which is destructive to mural painting."[71]

Newport's response to what she described as Simmons's "butterfly figure," Terpsichore, recalls the praise of his figures for the Astor Gallery of the Waldorf-Astoria: "A more airy and gracious presentation of choral dance and song. . .could not be conceived."[72] She closes with the following tribute to Simmons, finding in his work a perfect balance between classicism and original conception:

> There is nothing trite, nothing at all in the orthodox line here, and yet decorative purity and simplicity are marvelously preserved. One is roused but not fatigued; one admires and wonders without being startled into emotion; and

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> one feels that Mr. Simmons was born for just such work as this—the embodiment of poetry in color and form.[73]

Likewise, Pauline King gave glowing recognition to Simmons's corridor. King noted that he was granted "entire control of the decorative plan," for the space and credited him with making it "a comprehensive whole" and "one of the most distinguished features of the house."[74] She was particularly sensitive to the qualities in Simmons's work that distinguish it as freshly conceived and decisively, skillfully, and quickly painted:

> There is nothing strained or studied about Mr. Simmons's methods. Each bit of painting shows the nervous vital force that allows him, first, to see his purpose in a very large way, and then to carry it into execution rapidly, almost impatiently, leaving life and originality in the train of his hasty brush. He never thinks of ringing variations on past successes, as is too often the case with artists the world over, but is ever in a new mood, and puts his whole personality into it, in a way that leaves no choice in the accomplishment of so versatile a nature.[75]

King noted "rare dignity" in the "striking arrangement of the colour masses and the large outline of the draperies." She felt the Muses were "weighted with overpowering fatefulness of Greek thought" and that such "majestic, inscrutable, mysterious presences produce a feeling of awe."[76]

About a decade later, writer Selwyn Brinton also had high praise for Simmons's corridor. Of his nine lunettes he stated, "These mark the highest point reached here [in the Library of Congress] in purely decorative art." Like Newport and King he admired Simmons's Calliope, "draped in loose flowing folds of blue, which shade the half of her face, while they leave unveiled her bosom and throat, and her superbly-formed shoulders" He compared the composition to the work of Michelangelo "in strength and simplicity":

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> For, like the great Florentine, Edward Simmons uses as his entire theme the human figure, nude or very simply draped, and with the fewest possible accessories. Like him too, his types are grandly forceful, and hold us by their sheer sincerity of purpose and strength of design. *Terpsichore*, clashing her cymbals; *Urania*, draped in grey silk that is shot with gold; *Polyhymnia* looking upwards, her book opened at the lines:
> "Say, will you bless
> The bleak Atlantic shore
> And in the West,
> Bid Athens rise once more?"
> seem to give us the very message of the new art which we have been studying here, and which is continued in the magnificent series of mural paintings which fill this building.[77]

The above variation on lines from Alexander Pope's *Two Choruses to the Tragedy of Brutus*[78] is painted beneath Polyhymnia in the same manner as the quote from the same poem which appears in the border under *Terpsichore*: "O Heaven-born sisters / Source of art / Who charm the sense, / or mend the heart." Two more lines, these selected from Pope's *Ode on Saint Cecilia's Day*, are inscribed beneath *Thalia*: "Descend, ye nine / Descend and sing; / Wake into voice / each silent string."[79]

Pope's fitting lines entreating the Muses were likely chosen by Simmons. Although many of the inscriptions and quotations in the Main Reading Room and other areas including the second floor of the Great Hall were selected by Ainsworth Spofford or Charles W. Elliot, president of Harvard University, those in the muralists' assigned areas were probably chosen by the artists with some advisement by the committee of the Caseys and Green.[80]

The literary selections throughout the building reinforce the cosmopolitan vision of the library as the storehouse and showplace of the great works of Western civilization. Critics like Brinton, King, and Newport, commended Simmons in particular for giving traditional allegorical subject matter his personal stamp—infusing

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it with a vitality and power that was recognized as new, modern, and American. Advocates of the new classicism took the cosmopolitan view of the progress of civilization. They saw American artists as the most fit to draw from and, build upon, all the best from the past to bring art and culture to new heights. For those who liked allegory and tradition, the new Library of Congress building seemed like a glimpse of heaven. One awed visitor exclaimed to librarian Spofford, "not until I stand before the judgement seat of God do I ever expect to see this building transcended."[81] The decoration provoked some in the opposing camp of cultural nationalists to begin to call for another kind of national art for public buildings.

While William Coffin had few complaints about specific works of any artist, he had some concerns about the program as a whole. He found "if not too many abstract themes, at least too many similar ones." He gave an example of the repetition of the arts and sciences as subjects and suggested that "[h]istorical subjects of a certain class would seem to be well fitted for use in the decoration of a library if the abstract themes do not suffice to give variety to an extensive scheme of decoration."[82]

Barr Ferree, secretary of the Department of Architecture of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, (now the Brooklyn Museum of Art) offered a bolder contemporary voice of criticism in his lantern slide lecture, "A Journey in the New Congressional Library Building at Washington," given on 7 April 1898 at the Brooklyn Institute.[83] Comparing the Library of Congress to the great public buildings of France exemplified by the Panthéon, he praised the decorations sponsored by the French government for exalting French history and thought rather than "episodes from classic times" or "symbols of foreign races":

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> They glorified French history and French ideas, and made and are making the Pantheon in Paris not only a great memorial of French art, but a great memorial of French greatness and supremacy. The foreigner, visiting that great church needs perhaps, a guide to remind him of incidents in French history, but to the French boy and girl, man and woman, all is intelligent, satisfying, understandable.[84]

Ferree favored "wholesome lessons of American greatness" over "all the Greek gods and goddesses . . . multiplied a thousandfold." He called for more "Americanism and less high-class art," for images to "touch the hearts of the people" and speak "plainly and directly to them." He believed that more accessible decoration would be self-promoting in the sense that the average citizen could better appreciate art and be more convinced of its value in public buildings:

> I am firmly convinced that had the painting with which the library has been decorated been conceived in a spirit closer in touch with our American life and manners, the cause of art would have been more abundantly helped and more splendidly served than by the most sumptuous allegory or the most pointed symbolism that now adorns it. Art cannot hope to be national, cannot hope to be popular, cannot hope to be lasting while it is concerned with subjects and themes far beyond the conception and the knowledge of ordinary man.[85]

Certainly among the strongest nationally prominent voices for local history in public mural painting was that of mural painter and spokesman Charles Shean. One of the original officers of the recently established national society, the Mural Painters, Shean believed passionately that "art should be indigenous." He specified that of the two branches of decorative painting: the one, allegorical or "pure ornamentation," which relied mainly on the figure or architectural ornament, was suited for private buildings; the other, historical, or "that which impresses a lesson," the much more appropriate decoration for public spaces. The private decorator was free to immerse himself in "color for color's sake . . . .the pleasure of the eye, the joy of the senses,"

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and choose from "the flora of the world, the costumes and fashions of all times, the myths and mythologies of all peoples."[86] But for buildings constructed for "public uses . . .and with public funds—our libraries, court houses, city halls and state capitols—mere splendor should be tempered by appropriateness and the use of the building:" In such buildings he expected the artist to "commemorate and beautify, the one as well as the other."[87] Responding to the Library of Congress and to a recently completed public building in New York [probably the Appellate Division Courthouse], he appreciated the technical excellence of the murals but lamented that the subject matter was "exotic, without savor of the soil and having no roots in the rich mould of this western world."[88]

Shean believed that such a great national building should be more than a treasure house of art reflecting world civilization, "more than an academic echo," or "Renaissance reminiscence." He called for artists to "make the walls of our public buildings splendid with pictured records of American exploit and achievement, of American industry and commerce, of American life and culture."[89]

He gave the nineteenth-century French decorations in the Panthéon, the Hôtel de Ville, and the Sorbonne as models for civic art in their decorative treatment of episodes from French history—"stories familiar to every French girl and boy." He added that such "picture books of the people" could be found throughout France and Germany and in the Low Countries and Great Britain.[90] Shean insisted that the United States had a history brief but brimming with possibilities for the painter: "There is not one of the original colonies whose annals do not teem with acts of heroism and daring,

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whose wild and picturesque setting does not make it a natural subject for the muralist."[91]

In a later article on this subject Shean lamented specifically that, in spite of its beauty, the Library of Congress "unpleasantly suggests a building given over to a group of talented and learned foreigners. . . . [who] seem to have assumed that the people whose resources furnished the means for their work, were without a history or literature."[92]

Irene Sargent responded to Shean in "Comments upon Mr. Shean's 'Mural Painting from the American Point of View.'" She agreed with Shean's view of easel painting as elitist and the province of the rich, whereas mural painting was the expression of the democratic spirit and a cohesive society. She was in accord with Shean and Blashfield on many points including Saint Augustine's maxim that murals are the picture books of the poor. With Shean and other spokesmen of the period, she believed that the spirit of democracy needed to be bolstered by public art "to keep dramatically before the minds of the citizens the effort, self-sacrifice and unity necessary to the maintenance of a commonwealth and community." She wrote that, by viewing incidents from the history of their city, residents could gain "inspiration and incentive," and she gave as exemplary the "city republics of Belgium" including Bruges and Antwerp whose civic art "shows a relevancy of subject, a perfect preservation of racial and local tradition, a thoroughness of system which the promoters of the same cause in our own country can not do better than remember, when advancing their ideas among the people and when practically working out their schemes." She was allied with Shean in his advocation that local scenes and stories were appropriate for railroad

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stations, village and county libraries, and that the history of its business was a well-chosen decoration for a commercial establishment.[93]

Sargent parted from Shean's nationalist position in regard to the Boston Public Library and the Library of Congress. She did not agree that the decorations of such major repositories should be restricted to narrative paintings of native history. Rather she expressed her view that their holdings of the great literature of the world's civilizations, past and present,were correctly reflected in more cosmopolitan decoration:

> The commissions of both great libraries in choosing the themes of decoration—one of the most important of their tasks, if moral effect be considered—merged patriotism into cosmopolitanism. Both edifices are repositories of the world's treasures of thought, and only the highest, the most epoch-making attainments should there receive recognition.[94]

She believed that American citizens should welcome in their national library pictorial references to their literature's position as a new tributary of the great flow of civilization, the "mighty river, penetrating into a late-discovered continent."[95]

The yearning for more of the landscape of this new country to be featured in mural art was part of the vision of mural painting as the new national art. Russell Sturgis was a strong advocate for the use of landscape in American murals. He cited landscape as the most true and pure theme of American art and especially commended the work of La Farge for the elegant and appropriate use of landscape, and as an example to students. While he also cited the work of Frederic Crowninshield for its early inclusion of landscape, it was La Farge's "gift of *coloring*," his study of "color itself and colored light upon objects," and his sympathy with nature that Sturgis so admired.[96] It was the lack of that kind of sensitive, painterly work that he particularly

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lamented in some of the allegory of the Library of Congress. As mentioned in his criticism of Simmons's work at the Criminal Courts Building and the Library of Congress cited earlier, Sturgis was not totally opposed to the figure or to allegory—he admired work that demonstrated boldness and originality of conception and that featured noble figures well drawn and modeled. But he saw, at the Library of Congress and elsewhere, including in contemporary European buildings, too many vapid representations that were no credit to the field of painting, and tiring and confusing to the viewer who must wonder "which figure . . . is meant for Eloquence and which for Physics."[97] In conjunction with his review of Vedder's *Government* series for the library, he decried the "rather wearying sequence of metaphorical, symbolical, non-natural subjects in our mural painting" and stated, "Personification as a theme for design has been overdone by our painters." Moreover, he was most aggrieved that such "hard and harsh" abstract figures as those of Vedder were devoid of soft, natural color and "the higher charm of light and shade," the beautiful qualities of good painting. He charged muralists to turn away from models of European allegory and make decorative art more painterly and more closely tied to nature.[98]

The Library of Congress presented an unprecedented richness of decoration and a display of native talent that was a point of great national pride and set a standard for public buildings. But at the same time, its preponderance of allegory (for some an overdose) elicited thoughtful reactions and questions about the appropriateness and intelligibility of the images, such as those from the above critics.[99] Because of the library's prominence and stature as a national monument, it brought to the forefront

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considerations about the direction of "our national art" as represented by mural painting and sparked debates between the cosmopolitans and the cultural nationalists. The stage was set for more controversy between those favoring allegory or "abstract," universal, and more decorative paintings, and those wanting more narrative paintings telling the history of the nation, region, or locale. The next decade witnessed a growing clamor from the cultural nationalists and a new course for American mural painting.

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[1] U. S. Library of Congress, *Annual Report of the Progress of the Library During the Year Ending December 31, 1872* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1872), 10. cited in John Y. Cole, "Struggle for a Structure: Ainsworth Rand Spofford and a New Building for the Library of Congress," in Cole and Henry Hope Reed, eds., *The Library of Congress: The Art and Architecture of the Thomas Jefferson Building* (New York: W. W. Norton in Association with the Library of Congress, 1997), 40.

[2] Ibid.

[3] *Specifications for the Guidance of Those Who May Submit Designs for a New Building for the Library of Congress* (Washington, D. C., 1873), 1-3, as cited in Cole, "Struggle for a Structure," 41-42.

[4] Ibid., 41.

[5] Ibid., 42-48.

[6] Ibid., 49-53.

[7] Henry Hope Reed, "The Decorators," in Cole and Reed, eds., *The Library of Congress*, 178-181.

[8] Royal Cortissoz, "A National Monument of Art: The Congressional Library at Washington," *Harper's Weekly*, 28 December 1895, 1240.

[9] Cole, "Struggle for a Structure," 56, 60.

[10] Typescript of De Witt Lockman's interview with Elizabeth (Mrs. John W.) Alexander,February 1928, 4-5, roll 1731, John White Alexander Papers, 1870-1942, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[11] Letter Book 1894-1895, p. 350, Charles McKim Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

[12] Richard Murray, "Painted Words," in Cole and Henry Hope Reed, eds. *The Library of Congress*, n.10, 308.

[13] "Pride of the Nation: New Congressional Building a Triumph, Creation of American Artists," *New York Press*, scrapbook clipping, Box 120, Thomas Lincoln Casey Papers, Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, Harrison Gray Otis House, Boston (hereafter TLC Papers, SPNEA). The reporter then added, "Painters are very jealous of one another, and if the choice had been placed in the hands of one man, he doubtless would have selected only those members of his own school or clique. As it was, the diplomatic warrior [Gen. Casey] had only to take the names most often mentioned in the vote." I am convinced that the Caseys sought the advice of artists, especially Blashfield's , but I have found no other evidence to support such a contrived solicitation of names as suggested by the *New York Press*. I believe the committee quite simply and directly asked for opinions and recommendations from those they respected.

[14] "Mural Paintings" [undated chart of dates of offers and acceptances from artists], Box 48, TLC Papers, SPNEA.

[15] John S. Sargent to Bernard R. Green, 16 December 1894, Bernard R. Green Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (hereafter Green Papers, LC).

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[16] Edwin A. Abbey to Green, 20 December 1984, Green Papers, LC.

[17] "Mural Paintings"; Murray, "Painted Words," 205.

[18] George de Forest Brush to Green (received 8 March 1895), Green Papers, LC.

[19] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 233.

[20] Simmons to Green, 4 February 1895, Green Papers, LC.

[21] Ibid., 5 February 1895.

[22] Lockman interview with Elizabeth Alexander.

[23] Simmons to Green, 14 July 1895, Green Papers, LC.

[24] John D. Cremer, "An Artistic Home for Books," *Pittsburgh Post* undated clipping in scrapbook [probably 27 October 1895], Box 3, ibid. The same article appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Cleveland World* for 27 October 1895, scrapbook, Box 120, TLC Papers, SPNEA.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Murray, "Painted Words," 203

[27] See Irene Aghion, Claire Barbillon, and François Lissargue, *Gods and Heroes of Classical Antiquity* (Paris and New York: Flammarion) 196-198; Cesare Ripa, *Iconologie*, trans. by Jean Baudouin (Paris: 1644; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, 1976), 71-76.

[28] Murray, "Painted Words," 205. Murray noted that Walter McEwen had initially handed in a list of subjects in January, including the Muses and heroes of antiquity. He had preferred the Muses, but the committee favored his painting the Greek heroes. A month later Simmons took on the Muses. Murray wonders whether the committee recycled some themes. (n. 15, p. 308.) As Murray points out on page 207, some artists departed from traditional library allegory and represented the era's devotion to sensory knowledge and perception, for example Robert Reid with *The Senses*, and Carl Gutherz with *The Spectrum of Light*.

[29] Alice Ewing Lewis, "Winged Forms Aloft," *Washington Post*, 23 February 1896, clipping from scrapbook, TLC Papers, Box 120, SPNEA.

[30] White to Simmons, 10 January 1896, Letter Book 15, Stanford White Papers, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University, New York.

[31] White to Simmons, 24 January 1896, ibid.

[32] Simmons to White, 2 April 1896, White Collection on microfilm, S-V, Manuscript Division, New-York Historical Society.

[33] White to Simmons, (date illegible, probably 3 April 1896), White Papers, Letter Book 15, p. 399, Avery Library.

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[34] Simmons told the story of how White, all dressed up for a social affair on Easter Sunday ran to his office with the portrait and rummaged through frames covered with dust to find some that suited so that the painting could be properly presented in an exhibition of the Ten, which was being hung to open the next day. Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, p. 249. The exhibition must have been the 1902 exhibition of the Ten in New York at Durand-Ruel Galleries, which had an "informal opening and press preview" on 30 March 1902 (Easter Sunday) and officially opened the next day. Simmons exhibited a portrait and two marines. William H. Gerdts, "The Ten: A Critical Chronology," and Carol Lowrey "Index to the Exhibitions of the Ten," in Gerdts et al., *Ten American Painters*, exh.cat. (New York: Spanierman Gallery, 1990), 21-22; 184.

[35] White to Simmons, 28 May 1896, Letter Book 16, White Papers, Avery Library.

[36] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 233-234.

[37] Simmons wrote: "If I had not been fundamentally opposed to that kind of theft, I would have used the idea; but a copy of anything, no matter how great, is never so good as one's own conception. It is always unwise for an artist to have the classics about him at any time, and he should *never* have any of them near by to influence him when he is doing compositional work." Ibid.

[38] Simmons showed a cartoon for *The Light Bearer.*

[39] Herbert Small, *Handbook of the New Library of Congress* (Boston: Curtis and Cameron, 1901) 111-112.

[40] Simmons to Green, 22 July 1896, Green Papers, LC.

[41] Ibid., 4 August 1896.

[42] Simmons to White, 6 August 1896, White Collection on microfilm, S-V, NYHS.

[43] Green, "Journal of Operations on the Building for Library of Congress," continued from 2nd Book, 16 March 1891, Green Papers, LC.

[44] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 234

[45] Ibid.

[46] Simmons to Green, 25 August 1896, Green Papers, LC. It appears that nothing came of the bid for Alexander's work as Alexander, who was in Paris, completed his six panels on *The Evolution of the Book.*

[47] William Walton, "The Field of Art: Mural Painting in this Country Since 1898,"*Scribner's Magazine* 40 (November 1906): 640; *Brochure of the Mural Painters*, New York, 1916, 68.

[48] Simmons to William Reed Huntington, 23 October 1895, archives, Grace Church, New York.

[49] *The Heavenly City* is still visible but has been heavily, if not completely, repainted. The other murals have been painted over and can no longer be seen.

[50] Starr and Simmons were acquainted in Saint Ives and may even have been introduced through Whistler. Starr was reportedly another follower of Whistler who had been attracted to Saint Ives. He stayed with Simmons there before meeting up with him again in New York. See Peter Davies, *The St*

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Ives Years: Essays on the Growth of an Artistic Phenomenon" (London: The Wimborne Bookshop, 1984),6. The following information appeared in the obituary for Sidney Starr in the *New York Times*, 5 October 1925, p. 21: "an artist known especially for mural painting, died on Saturday at his residence, 501 Park Avenue. He was born at Kingston-upon-Hull, England, in 1857, and received his education at University College, London. He won the Slade medal in 1875 and silver and bronze medals at Paris in 1889. The best examples of his work are the mural decorations in the Congressional Library, Washington; in Grace Chapel, this city, and in the Prudential Life Insurance Building, Newark." (From notes of Alex Neel. I am grateful to Alex Neel and Stephen Beal for sharing information on Starr with me.)

[51] White to Simmons, 15 September 1896, Letter Book 16, White Papers, Avery Library.

[52] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 248-249.

[53] "Art and Artists," (Washington, D. C.) *Evening Star*, 21 November 1896, p. 17.

[54] Simmons, Saint Ives, Cornwall to White, 8 October 1896, White Collection on microfilm, S-V, NYHS.

[55] Sidney Starr, Carnegie Hall, New York, to Green, 5 November 1896, Green Papers, LC.

[56] Simmons to Green (telegram), 26 November 1896, ibid.

[57] Voucher dated 19 December 1896 for $400.00, fourth and final payment to Edward Simmons, as per order No. 426 of 18 February 1895 on account of the appropriation for "Building for Library of Congress-Construction," files of the Architect of the Capitol, Washington, D. C.

[58] Charles E. Moberly may have assisted Simmons at the Library of Congress. According to an article by Will P. Kennedy, "Moberly Restoring Brumidi Decorations at the Capitol," which appeared in the *Sunday Star* of 14 August 1921, "he was assistant to Edward Simmons on his corridor, distinguished as depicting the nine muses in panels," and also worked with George Maynard and Blashfield at the library. This article presumably resulted from an interview with Moberly. A letter from George M. White, architect of the Capitol to Barbara R. Moberly, niece of Charles Moberly, dated 7 July 1987, says, "Our records show that Charles Moberly was first employed as a decorative painter in July 1899, after applying to the Architect Edward Clark in 1894." (Files of the Architect of the Capitol). Simmons's murals were finished by December 1896. It is likely Moberly was paid directly by the painters he assisted in the years before he was officially hired by the government as a decorative painter.

[59] They appear to have been quickly and somewhat unevenly painted. This appearance may be due in part to previous restoration treatment and surface coating.

[60] Richard Murray, Senior Art Historian, Smithsonian American Art Museum, has pointed out that variations in paint application suggest that as many as three different artists—Simmons and one or two assistants, may have worked on Simmons's paintings. Lunettes and dome panels were painted on two kinds of canvas—one light weight and finely woven, the other medium weight with a larger open weave. Following their study and analysis, conservators believe that "the artist first toned the entire pendentive a blue-green/grey" in oil and then "painted the figures . . .[allowing] the background to show through as a design element in several of the pendentives." Conservators also noted in their original examination report that the pendentive figures appeared "dark, unevenly executed, and schematically rendered." Some of this effect could have been the result of a pervious treatment in which a coating was applied unevenly and in streaks. This coating became fused or "crosslinked with

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the original paint layer," making conservation difficult and damaging the visual effect of the paintings. "A Report on the Conservation Treatment of Murals by Edward Simmons Located in the Northwest Corridor, First Floor, Jefferson Building, Library of Congress," Perry Huston and Associates, 1994, Vol. 2, p. 249, and Vol. 3, pp. 484, 506, files of the Architect of the Capitol.

[61] Cole, "Struggle for a Structure," 60.

[62] Murray, "Painted Words," 200.

[63] "Architectural League Exhibition," *Art Amateur* 34 (March 1896): 83.

[64] William A. Coffin, "The Decorations in the New Congressional Library," *Century Magazine* 53 (March 1897): 704-706.

[65] Montgomery Schuyler, "The New Library of Congress," *Scribner's Magazine* 21 (June 1897), 722.

[66] Russell Sturgis, "Painting," *Forum*, 34 (March 1903), 411.

[67] Ibid.

[68] There were additional findings regarding the colors and traces of Simmons's work methods. Originally, conservators believed that some of the lunettes had significantly faded due to light from opposing windows. Further consideration, especially the discovery that the color intensity of painted areas covered by moldings and hidden from light was the same as that of exposed areas, caused conservators to conclude that what appeared to be fading was actually the effect of the "deposition of a whitish component of the original paint in the paint surface." Conservators also found evidence of "a pencil grid underdrawing" in the panels for Euterpe, Clio, and Melpomene. From "A Report on the Conservation Treatment of Murals by Edward Simmons," Perry Huston and Associates, Vol. 1, p. 5. These grids may indicate that Simmons or an assistant used the traditional Renaissance method of squaring for transfer to enlarge his drawings, rather than the newer photographic method favored by Blashfield and many others using a lantern slide of their drawings to project, enlarge, and trace the design on the canvas. It is also possible that Simmons employed a combination of squaring for transfer and photography. Regarding the Grace Chapel murals of about the same time, which are at least in part the work of Sidney Starr but also involved Simmons in some way, Simmons wrote to Reverend William Reed Huntington on 23 October 1895 about a photographer, I. Paxson who had done some enlarging work. Letter from the archives of Grace Church.

[69] [Elizabeth Ellison Newport], "Mural Decorations in the Congressional Library," *Art Interchange* 38 (January 1897): 14.

[70] Ibid.; Herbert Small, *Handbook of the Library of Congress* (Boston: Curtis and Cameron,1901), 111. These cherubs appear in several of the lunettes to reveal some of the characteristics of the goddess they serve. For example, the laurel wreath traditionally symbolizes "intellectual pursuits," and the vapors of the censor signify inspiration. Notes on a visit of grandchildren and great grandchildren of Simmons with Barbara Wolanin on 19 October 1993 identify the cherubs in the Library of Congress murals as Simmons's sons George and Will. Files of the Architect of the Capitol.

[71] [Elizabeth Ellison Newport], "Mural Decorations in the Congressional Library," 14.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid., 15.

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[74] King, *American Mural Painting*, 174.

[75] Ibid., 175.

[76] Ibid., 176.

[77] Selwyn Brinton, "Modern Mural Decoration in America, *International Studio* 42 (January 1911): 188-189.

[78] The opening and closing lines of Pope in Antistrophe I in the Chorus of Athenians in *Two Choruses*...are: "Oh Heaven -born sisters! Source of art! / Who charm the sense or mend the heart; . . .Say, will ye bless the bleak Atlantic shore? / Or bid the furious Gaul be rude no more?" Alexander Pope, *Collected Poems*, Introduction by Clive T. Probyn, edited by Bonamy Dobrée (Everymans' Library; M. M. Dent and Sons Ltd.: London; Charles E. Tuttle Company, Rutland, Vermont, 1991) 52. The Twickenham edition of the Poems of Pope notes that Pope originally wrote the poem in 1717 but revised it in 1723, 1736, and 1740. The notes also explain that Pope wrote the choruses at the request of the Duke of Buckingham "who tried to improve on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* by splitting it up into two tragedies (called *Brutus* and *Julius Caesar* respectively) and making other alterations, [and] had the further inspiration of inserting lyrical choruses between the acts." See Alexander Pope, *Minor Poems*, Norman Ault and John Butt eds. (London: Methuen and Company, reprint ed., 1970), 151-155. I am grateful to Michael Adams, reference librarian, Mina Rees Library, City University of New York, Graduate School and University Center for this reference. I also appreciate the help of Georgianna Ziegler, Head of Reference, Folger Library; David Kresh, Reference Specialist in Poetry, Library of Congress; Professor David Richter, City University of New York; and Professor Alexander Gourlay, Rhode Island School of Design. Their research and opinions help confirm my own belief that Simmons or someone else involved in selecting the inscriptions incorporated in the decorations at the Library of Congress altered Pope's lines to reflect aspirations for America as the new Athens.

[79] Two of the four opening lines from *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day* were selected: "Descend, ye Nine! Descend and sing; / The breathing instruments inspire, / Wake into voice each silent string, / and sweep the sounding lyre!" Pope, *Collected Poems*, 48.

[80] "On these Walls: Inscriptions and Quotations in the Buildings of the Library of Congress," from the website of the Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/loc/walls/intro.html.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Coffin, "The Decorations in the New Congressional Library," 711.

[83] *Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences Yearbook*, 1897-1898, 133.

[84] "Library of Congress: Barr Ferree's Lecture before the Brooklyn Institute," [Brooklyn] *Daily Standard American*, 8 April 1898, clipping from scrapbook, Box 122, TLC Papers, SPNEA.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Charles M. Shean, "The Decoration of Public Buildings: A Plea for Americanism in Subject and Ornamental Detail," *Municipal Affairs* 5 (1901) 710.

[87] Ibid., 710-711.

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[88] Ibid., 712.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Ibid. 713-716.

[91] Ibid. 717.

[92] Charles Shean, "Mural Painting from the American Point of View," *Craftsman* 7 (October 1904):24.

[93] Irene Sargent, "Comments upon Mr. Shean's "Mural Painting from the American Point of View," ibid., 29, 32-33

[94] Ibid. 34.

[95] Ibid.

[96] Sturgis, "Mural Painting," *Forum* 37 (January 1906): 370, 376.

[97] Ibid., 372-373. Here Sturgis is referring to Puvis de Chavannes's *Hemicycle* for the Sorbonne in Paris, but he could just as well have been speaking of the Library of Congress or another building with a profusion of allegory.

[98] Ibid., 368-369.

[99] For an important study of this subject see Sarah J. Moore, "In Search of an American Iconography: Critical Reaction to the Murals at the Library of Congress," *Winterthur Portfolio* 25 (Winter 1990): 231-239.

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Chapter V

American History as Decoration
Murals for the Massachusetts State Capitol and the New Amsterdam Theater

A strong vote for Massachusetts history and tradition was cast in 1886 when the State House Commission decided to retain Charles Bulfinch's 1798 Federal-style State House and increase government facilities by adding a separate neo-colonial building as an annex. This plan not only preserved the historic building but also insured Boston's status as capital, for there had been eagerness on the part of some legislators to move the capital westward if Boston's old landmark were demolished. The design of the Boston firm of Brigham and Spofford (Fig. V:1) was chosen over those of twelve competitors in the fall of 1888. Brigham & Spofford's plan for the annex included a number of desirable features that would bring the State House complex up to date with American Renaissance tastes while complementing the exterior of the Bulfinch building (Fig. V:2). The new annex would add ceremonial spaces including a grand stair hall and rotunda. Interiors furnished with rich marble, mosaics, murals, and other details recalling either Renaissance precedents or the European roots of eighteenth-century American architecture would put this building in step with the current fashion for sumptuous, art-filled government buildings, so recently exemplified by the Library of Congress and the nearby Boston Public Library.[1]

In 1892, with work well underway on the annex and Boston's status as state capital thereby secure, the Bulfinch landmark was again in peril. The commissioners and architect Charles Brigham saw an opportunity to promote renovation rather than restoration of the old front, arguing that it could be made "new" and more sympathetic

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to the annex, which was by far the larger building. But again sentiment rose strongly, and in 1896 Acting Governor Roger Wolcott informed the commission that the legislature was firm in the decision to preserve the old building. The Bulfinch front was restored as a separate building by architects Charles A. Cummings, Robert D. Andrews, and Arthur G. Everett and was finished in 1898 in time for the centennial celebration of the State House. In a triumphant address for the occasion, the Honorable Alfred S. Roe of Worcester, one of the staunchest defenders of the old Bulfinch front, declared that while some may have briefly dismissed this relic of their history, "The Farmers came in as they did at Lexington."[2] He was comparing the response of ordinary citizens—"farmers"—who rose up in support of saving the old building to that of the earlier patriot farmers who at the beginning of the Revolutionary War took up arms at the signal of church bells and raced to join the battles at Lexington and Concord.

Simmons's murals for the Boston State House would glorify both the farmers who fought at Lexington and Concord and the building's old Bulfinch facade. Among the first of the major American Renaissance muralists to answer the call for more native history in decoration, Simmons responded strongly and purely, with no trace of allegory and using his considerable skill in landscape painting—that very American of genres. His murals at the State House in Boston were to mark a new direction in his own career as a decorative painter and give force to a growing trend in American mural painting.

But Simmons gained his commission only after a good deal of controversy and stalling within the legislature. Available legislative reports did not elucidate how and

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when Simmons was first approached with the commission. What is clear, however, is that there was a reaction to his selection. The question, which would be raised again and again in association with mural commissions for state capitols, was whether the best men for the job were those with experience in, and national reputations for, mural work or whether in fairness to all artists, and especially to homegrown talent, open competition should be the means of selection.

Apparently, early in 1899, after Simmons had first been offered the work and was involved in negotiations, a group of Boston artists led by Walter Gilman Page protested that Simmons, in light of his many years abroad, was not a true son of Massachusetts, and they demanded an open competition. A writer for the *Artist*, who was clearly familiar with the demands of mural painting, defended in general the choice of accomplished muralists by invitation and of Simmons in particular, whom he recognized as unquestionably capable as well as "a Massachusetts man, born and bred." The author warned more broadly of the pitfalls of holding a blind contest for mural commissions. He pointed out that knowledge of the artist's work is important in judging whether he has the experience and skill to turn the promise of an attractive and ambitious sketch into a successfully realized mural. He cautioned too that unless all entries were compensated, few of the best artists could afford the time to enter the competition:

> Making a sketch is very different from executing the same on a large scale, and the conditions of mural painting are so different from those of easel painting that only experience will discover a man's ability to meet them. . . . The practical conclusion is that if the citizens of Massachusetts wish to secure the best work, they will have to seek it from among the best mural painters, and if a competition is resorted to, it must involve compensation to all competitors.

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The writer also stated firmly that it was unwise to award contracts to different artists for murals that were to be placed in such close proximity. Under these circumstances, he felt, harmony would likely be impossible; rather the entire commission should be awarded to one painter.[3]

Such opinions as those expressed by the author of this article must have had some effect on the legislators, for it seems that the open competition was not held. The annual report of the State House Commissioners stated that the plans approved by the commissioners included four paintings for Memorial Hall and one over the entrance to the Senate staircase hall. The commissioners called for "early action" on the appropriation for the mural paintings and urged that the mural project be "confined to artists whose established reputation will be a guarantee that the result will be a source of pride to the citizens of the commonwealth, and not one calling for apology or explanation." [4]

In May of 1900, the bill to provide for the completion and decoration of Memorial Hall in the State House (Senate 147) was passed with an amendment added by the House Ways and Means Committee stipulating that the murals represent scenes from the history of the state: "The decorations herein provided for shall consist, so far as paintings are concerned, of subjects illustrating historical events connected with the history of Massachusetts." In June at the 413th meeting of the State House Construction Commissioners, the chairman was authorized to offer a contract for two paintings to Henry Oliver Walker, the same to Edward Simmons, and for one painting to Abbott H. Thayer, with payment of not more than six thousand dollars for each painting to be installed in Memorial Hall or "the approaches thereto."[5]

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Thayer did not accept and Robert Reid was later awarded the commission. Records show that Reid submitted a sketch of his design representing *James Otis Arguing against the Writs of Assistance in the State House of Boston in 1761* at the 414th Meeting of the State House Construction Commission. The commissioners approved the sketch and offered Reid the same terms as were specified in the contracts with Simmons and Walker.[6]

Simmons's contract dated 15 September 1900 was an agreement with him to "execute and set in place on the wall of the Memorial Hall . . . two mural paintings . . . to be designed and finished to the best of his ability and to the satisfaction of" architect Brigham and the commissioners. Simmons was to make the cartoons or drawings for this work on or before 1 July 1901, and to complete and install one of the murals by 1 December 1901, and the other by the following June. The contract provided for four payments for a total of twelve thousand dollars, that is six thousand dollars for each painting.[7]

For his themes relating to the history of Massachusetts, Simmons chose two events separated by nearly a century, but with multiple connections that spanned generations and promoted veneration of early settlers and their descendants. The first of his murals to be painted (Fig. V:3) represented the later subject in history—*The Return of the Colors to the Custody of the Commonwealth*—an occasion that took place at the end of the Civil War in 1865 on Forefather's Day, an annual celebration held on 22 December, in honor of the landing of the Pilgrims.[8] The scheduling of the return of the flags on that day was meant to link the spirit of the Founding Fathers with their heirs who had just defended the cause of liberty in the Civil War. The four

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murals of Memorial Hall, which also include Simmons's second work, showing the *Battle at Concord Bridge* (Fig. V:4), as well as Walker's *John Elliot Preaching to the Indians* (Fig. V:5), and especially his *Pilgrims on the Mayflower* (Fig. V:6), all glorify the Pilgrim fathers or their descendants. Simmons was certainly on familiar ground here.

Simmons's and Walker's murals seem the perfect response to Charles Shean's contemporaneous "plea for Americanism" discussed in the previous chapter. Shean lamented that outside of the Capitol in Washington, where the Rotunda bears art by "a past generation of painters who both knew and loved the land of their birth or of their adoption," American buildings were for the most part "bare and innocent of America." He admonished:

> And yet we have a history and a past—short it is true in point of time. But how filled with achievement, how varied and overflowing with suggestion, as rich a mine for the painter as for the historian. There is not one of the original colonies whose annals do not teem with acts of heroism and daring, whose wild and picturesque setting does not make it a natural subject for the muralist, and whose import and effect on the growth and later commonwealths in which they occurred does not justify its recording for the lessons they convey to the citizens of the day—the beneficiaries of their sacrifices.[9]

Simmons wrote that his "subject was War," a most appropriate theme for the hall that was to serve as repository and exhibition space for the historic battle flags of the state. He was daring in his choice for his first mural *The Return of the Colors to the Custody of the Commonwealth*—a comparatively recent event just following the Civil War and one with surviving witnesses or their relatives who could make their own demands for representation and accuracy. His autobiography recounts experience with such fervent citizens. He reported that when they knew of his subject, most

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people had expectations for portraits of the governor and prominent officers to be featured. Simmons took a different approach. He wanted to capture the spirit of the event in a manner that would be picturesque. He also wanted the scene to have anonymous figures that would serve to commemorate all who fought—not just the officers or specific soldiers—and be both meaningful and decorative long after those who could recognize individual faces were gone themselves. He described how he envisioned the scene:

> I did not wish to do a group of portraits, but a decoration, so I imagined myself in the park, looking up at the State House, with a line of color sergeants marching up the steps to present the flags to the governor and officials waiting above. As they were two or three hundred feet away from the gate, I had to reduce them to twelve or fifteen inches in height, thereby making lifelong enemies of several who were still alive. When the G[rand] A[rmy of the] R[epublic] found I was not to do the officers, but the color sergeants, my trouble was by no means over, for the wives and relatives of more than a dozen sent me photographs of their beloved ones, some of whom had lost an arm in the war. Many of the likenesses were of the individual thirty years later than the day he carried the flag! *All*, of course, expected to be represented in the decoration by a life-sized portrait.[10]

Simmons explained that he avoided the burden of making portraits by creating a more realistic view—"making them march up the stairs away from one, as they naturally would have done, and a back view is not a good portrait."[11]

Even though the Boston scenes represented his home turf, Simmons, like a number of his colleagues, prided himself in his historical research and accurate portrayals. At the same time, he was even more concerned with aesthetics and the making of a great painting. Through his research Simmons knew that the event had taken place on a cold winter day and that there had been snow the previous night. He needed to find an army greatcoat. He remembered them well and thought it would be no problem to get one for his model: "I had seen many of them in my boyhood: all of

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the farmers wore them in the fields." He approached the GAR offices in Boston. New York, and Washington, as well as an old friend who was assistant secretary of war. For a while there were no results except an invitation to view some examples in army archives. But Simmons needed to have one he could use for poses in his studio. About to give up, he muttered gloomily about his difficulty to his handyman, who replied about a neighbor, "Why, old Jackson wears a coat like that." Simmons found on Jackson the real thing, exactly what he had wished for—"a beauty, stained by time and faded by the sun; a real work of art," which he traded with the incredulous owner for a new coat.[12]

He was likewise lucky to locate a man who had made flags during the Civil War and still kept one. He found that it too "was all battle worn and just what I wanted." Simmons favored the war-torn, faded fabrics not only because they represented the hardship and danger of battle, but also because they were more picturesque. Just as he had selected old peasant dress and sun-blanched sails for his figure paintings and seascapes in Brittany and Cornwall, he preferred here too the time-worn fabrics for the grace of their softer colors and folds. His opinion on the garishness of the flag further explains his preference for older faded examples:

> This United States flag is one of the most undecorative things that an artist has to use. Made like a crazy quilt, absolutely without an aesthetic excuse, even the Barbarians do better. It is based on the Washington shield, but is an exceedingly ugly arrangement of the colors. At a distance it looks like a sweet pea; pretty but never dignified. We love it—not for its looks—but, as Desdemona loved Othello, "for the dangers he has passed."[13]

Fellow artists often complained of the awkwardness of contemporary dress for figures in mural paintings. Kenyon Cox called modern dress—meaning that of the previous three centuries—"formless and ugly."[14] Somewhat more flexible, Edwin

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Blashfield saw some possibility for "artistic treatment" as long as a garment did not appear "fresh from the tailor" and was handled knowingly so that "folds and pleats" could "emphasize muscular effort."[15] Simmons, like Blashfield, adapted modern costume to function much like the robes and drapery in his allegorical murals, enhancing the strength, grace, and movement of his figures and their ability to fill a composition. Their contemporary clothing takes on an almost classical appearance and gives the wearers an enduring beauty.

In addition to departing from allegory in the Massachusetts State House murals, Simmons turned from another mural tradition—that of a flatness in composition and effect that respects the plane of the wall. Yet his murals still work with the architecture. What better place to "punch a hole in the wall" than under a massive marble arch, a classic weight-bearing feature that would normally allow for, or at least imply, an actual opening in the wall? His figures move in an arrangement that echoes the lines of the arch, and his painted arches of the Bulfinch facade in the background are further repetitions of this form.

Simmons wrote at the time that he was "greatly proud" of his Boston murals.[16] When the first mural was unveiled in May 1902, writers for the Boston newspapers generally appreciated the difficulties posed by historical murals and Simmons's achievements. The *Boston Globe* called his work "a splendid addition to the mural decorations in this city" and noted its importance:

> The decoration by Edward Simmons represents one of the great historical incidents of the civil war in so far as Massachusetts was concerned. It shows "the return of the colors" to the state by the men who had fought for four years and preserved those colors through all the great trials of battle on many bloody fields. It is the close of a momentous incident and it has been most adequately treated both from a decorative and a picturesque point of view.

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The scene is carefully described:

> That day was cold. It was the 22nd of December, 1865, and the soldiers with their tattered and picturesque flags are heavily clad in the old blue of the army. The great war governor, John Andrew, who had handed these flags to the soldiers of the state and had warned them to return the colors unsullied, stands at the head of the main stairway of the state house, just outside the portal to Doric hall. There he received flags which the artist has made to appear as flapping in the cold wind. The whole feeling of this painting, in color and composition, is excellent. The curved, blue line with the flags against the cold architecture is admirable.[17]

An even more perceptive, not entirely favorable, and very extensive review appeared in the *Boston Herald* for the same date. The "decorative value" of Simmons's *Return of the Colors* and Walker's *The Pilgrims on the Mayflower* was considered at length, because, as the paper reported, this was the first instance in Boston of the works of more than one artist decorating the same space. The writer questioned how the murals looked with the surrounding marble and with one another, asking, "Have they been considered in their making with due reference to themselves—that is, to the effect of the whole on themselves, as well as to their effect on the whole?" He answered his own query—"they cannot have been so considered." Acknowledging the difficulty of two artists attempting to "carry out their works in harmony, and practically in the same spirit," as Blashfield and Simmons had managed to do in their panels for the Appellate Division Courthouse, he wrote that such collaboration would "hardly be possible" with "artists so different in temperament as Messrs. Walker and Simmons," and expressed the wish that in the future such a space be given to just one artist.[18]

Turning to the rotunda itself (Fig. V:7), this critic found the space not very sympathetic to murals because of the heavy use of Siena marble, making it "too high

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colored." He wrote that the murals had to compete not only with "a prodigiality of warmth in surrounding tones," but also with the "fussy sort of triviality" of the "colored glass ornamentation of its skylight," which "distracts the attention and complicates the ensemble." The large stained-glass skylight features the seals of the original thirteen colonies with the seal of Massachusetts at the center.[19]

The surroundings were pronounced especially harmful to Walker's mural—"depriving it of all atmospheric vitality." This work seemed to the writer old fashioned—"It has not a suggestion of modernity, and in the spirit of its conception it harks back as far as Trumbull." The composition was found not well balanced and dominated by the allegorical group, which was termed "by far the better part of the picture" and described as "genuinely beautiful" with "grace of form." The Pilgrim figures were seen as less convincing—"They do not stand well on their feet, and the whole composition is lacking in positive quality." In spite of these shortcomings, the work was still deemed "full of interest; with a feeling of old-time grandiosity it has a fine dignity, and it keeps its place well on the walls."[20]

The mention of John Trumbull is important with reference to American Renaissance goals of creating murals that are integrated with the architecture and play a strong supporting role. The paintings of Trumbull and others, whose works were executed for the United States Capitol Rotunda roughly a half-century before, were considered humble beginnings, less ambitious and sophisticated—not true murals but merely large easel paintings of historical scenes hung together to decorate a room.

With Simmons's panel, the *Herald* continued, "we are in another world of art, as well as another century in time." The continuing thread of New England heritage

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connecting Walker's and Simmons's subjects is noted again: "The two subjects most appropriately belong together, for the date set for the return of the flags was intentionally made Forefathers' Day, Dec. 22 1865." The reporter stated that Simmons's is "a modern subject, almost contemporary in character, with but a little more than a generation gone since the event." He acknowledged the difficulties presented—the demand for "a practically literal treatment of the theme" and the unsolicited opinions offered by "actors and spectators," who would know or care little of the aesthetic and decorative concerns. Here the *Herald* credited Simmons with finding a harmonious solution:

> . . .a mean has judiciously been chosen in the presentation of the spirit of the occasion with the environment largely as it really was and as it very largely remains today. Had it been attempted to depict the whole scene as it actually was—as described by many who were there—the result would have been so unpicturesquely prosaic as to lack all semblance of verisimilitude.[21]

The reviewer went on to recognize that Simmons had made modern dress work to create a dignified scene: "There is a simple, heroic responsiveness in this presentation of the long single file of blue-coated standard bearers, holding aloft their fluttering burdens of tattered silken folds ascending the wide steps to the State House portal." He concluded by giving the following sympathetic assessment, with words and sentiment remarkably close to Simmons's own:

> The work has strong movement of flowing line. The atmosphere, its keen sparkle of winter sunshine, has tonic vitality. The decorative quality resides particularly in the largely conceived color masses and relations, and in the spectacular array of standards whose time-toned and battle-stained folds have lost the garish hues that make the stars and stripes a trying thing for artistic treatment. The mural quality is expressed more in broad masses than in flatness of handling. Indeed, the picture is characterized by striking relief that brings forward the figures and flags in the foreground with uncommon effect of standing strongly out in their modelling.[22]

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In spite of his modern interest in light and his unusual viewpoint, Simmons's strong draftsmanship and his well-modeled figures that seem to occupy real space link him more to the tradition of the nineteenth-century French murals of Paul Baudry than to the more strictly decorative ones of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes. Puvis's work was currently much in vogue, particularly because of the recent installation of his series in the nearby Boston Public Library. Simmons's murals complement the architecture in a very different way. Unlike Puvis, he works with the curves and function of the arch rather than preserving the flatness of the wall. Perhaps this new direction was partly responsible for provoking the following negative review from Charles Caffin in *International Studio.*

Caffin praised the Puvis panels in the stair hall of the Boston Public Library as already "old friends," beloved for their "admirable harmony with the chaste dignity of the surrounding architecture, to which [they add] the final accent of human interest and elevation." Next, he gave his attention to the murals of Edwin Austin Abbey in the Delivery Room of the same building. Although he noted a lack of the spiritual quality evident in Puvis's work, Caffin found the murals of Edwin Austin Abbey for the Delivery Room very appealing in their virility and in their harmony with the setting. He was delighted to see in the development of the series "strength and freedom, an increase in plasticity in the composition and more abundance of decorative resourcefulness as the work proceeds," signs that gave him hope for the future production of the artist.

Turning to the first three paintings completed by Simmons, Reid, and Walker for the Boston State House, Caffin is somewhat appreciative of Reid's *James Otis*

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Arguing against the Writs of Resistance before the Court of Appeals, but highly critical of the works of the other two, especially Simmons's. In Reid's painting he admires the "flood of sunshine" that illuminates the scene "making the scarlet fairly glow, and the white wigs almost incandescent, enlivening also the black costumes with a labyrinth of reflections." He concedes, "Technically this is very fine, giving an aesthetic quality to the picture that mingles audacity with subtlety; an admirably ingenious way of securing a decorative effect. But, he continues on a more sour note: "this is about the measure of its excellence; for the device of lighting lends a prominence to the judges at the expense of the importance of the central figure, and it can scarcely be said that the significance of the episode has been adequately expressed." He sums up his opinion of Reid's panel, calling it "an agreeable rather than an impressive painting," but, giving hint of strong opinions to come, pronounces it in view of its "technical skilfulness" far better than the work of the other two painters in the next hall."

Of Walker's *Arrival of the Mayflower*, which he notes combines history painting and allegory, Caffin complains: "The composition is a very labored one, tangled and wooden, the color rather dreary, and the whole picture lacks inspiration." But he clearly preferred this mural with all of its shortcomings to that of Simmons, of which he says:

> Considering that this is the performance of so able a painter, the triviality of this representation puts one out of all patience. The flags make a scroll work of brilliant colors, otherwise the main feature of the composition is a sartorial arrangement of overcoats in perspective, for the procession is viewed from the rear, so that nothing of manhood is visible save one or two side faces, brushed in in the most perfunctory manner. The façade of the building is a skilfully economical sketch, while the central figure, a little in advance of the group of

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> automata which welcome the procession, is a small squat gentleman with the action of a puppet.

He closes with these disappointing words—"The painting would arouse derision but for the stronger feeling of regret."[23]

Caffin clearly did not appreciate the intended aim of Simmons's mural to commemorate all those who fought for Massachusetts by depicting the return of the colors of each regiment, borne by anonymous soldiers, who together with their flags stood for all those who survived and all who had been lost. He also may not have realized the importance of the event itself. Another writer questioned the choice of this event, calling it "episodical rather than integral."[24] But this event was highly symbolic of Massachusetts' very significant role in the Civil War. Contemporary historians called the ceremony "the nearest possible to a general review and reception of the surviving Massachusetts soldiers" and "one of the most imposing and touching spectacles of that memorable time."[25]

Massachusetts militias had been the first to respond to Abraham Lincoln's call for a Union Army. Governors of other states hesitated, but John Andrew reacted immediately, and Massachusetts provided nearly one hundred thousand soldiers in the opening months of the war. Approximately 169 flags of volunteer regiments were returned to the governor that day in 1865, accompanied by more than one thousand soldiers who had fought under them, many with obvious wounds including loss of limb: "in single file, the men of the Massachusetts volunteer units . . .filed up the State House steps, greeted by Governor John Andrew, as accurately depicted in the 1902 Simmons Mural from Memorial Hall, in a snowy setting."[26]

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Andrews was not a physically imposing figure as both Caffin and Simmons indicated,[27] but he was an important supporter of the Union cause and gave a heartfelt, moving speech in the scene portrayed by Simmons. The *Boston Herald* and contemporary histories reprinted the following parts of Andrews's address:

> These banners are returned to the government of the commonwealth through welcome hands. Borne one by one out of this capitol, during more than four years of civil war, as the symbol of the nation and the commonwealth, under which the battalions of Massachusetts departed to the fields, they come back again, borne hither by surviving representatives of the same heroic regiments and companies to whom they were intrusted.
>
> . . . .Proud memories of many fields; sweet memories alike of valor and friendship; sad memories of fraternal strife; tender memories of our fallen bothers and sons, whose dying eyes last looked upon their folds; grand memories of heroic virtues sublimed by grief; exultant memories of the great and final victory of our country, our union and the righteous cause; thankful memories of a deliverance wrought out for human nature itself, unexampled by any former achievement of arms; immortal memories with immortal honors blended,—twine around these splintered staves, weave themselves along the warp and woof of these familiar flags, war-worn, begrimed and baptized with blood.[28]

Irene Sargent was perhaps the most ebullient in her praise for the State House as a symbol for Massachusetts' contribution to the nation's history. She compared it to the Roman Forum, and to the Pantheon and the Sorbonne in Paris, and considered Simmons and his colleagues Reid and Walker worthy decorators in league with their French counterparts:

> The hill upon which rises the Capitol of the old Bay State finds but two rivals in the whole course of profane history, if its political memories be considered. As Cicero said of the Roman Forum, here also: "Wherever we turn, we tread upon some trace of history." The son of the commonwealth approaching the Pilgrim City by land or by sea, turns in love, pride and reverence to the mountain home of the old beacon of liberty, which now shows a crown of gold by day and a wreath of fire by night. Even the stranger, however traveled he may be, acknowledges that the site of these legislative halls is one of the most imposing in the world, and that it commands the finest outlook of city and ocean in America. To commemorate by art in such a place the action of

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> certain of the most enlightened, the purest minded, and the most zealous of the founders of the nation, has fallen, as was fitting, to the natives of the State, who are also three of the five most experienced mural painters of the country. Having therefore their sectional patriotism, as well as their artistic conception, to kindle their enthusiasm, they gave themselves heart and soul to their tasks, similarly to those Frenchmen who are called to aid in the decoration of the Pantheon or the Sorbonne."[29]

Sargent also observed that, like Puvis de Chavannes at the Boston Public Library, the artists of the Boston State House considered "the architectural scheme and scale of the spaces with which they have dealt, the colors of the marbles by which their pictures were to be framed, and all details which could possibly affect them." She stated that these concerns are what set them apart from their predecessors, "who executed mural paintings largely after the manner of easel pictures; trusting to Fortune to place them in congenial surroundings of light and color." To Sargent the Boston State House murals were evidence of the "exceedingly rapid rise of American mural painting." They were proof of American muralists' ability to produce "true decorations," which she characterized as "something more, something less than pictures . . . creating in the great spaces focal points which are produced as by natural gathering, increase and culmination, at certain spots, of lines, color, and light; which are never aggressive, and become pictures and narratives only when closely questioned by the eye."[30]

Simmons had considerable experience in mural painting in the 1890s as well as what Sargent referred to as his "sectional patriotism" or inspiration from his boyhood home and heritage to draw on for his Boston murals. As Simmons himself wrote of his familiarity with the setting of his second mural, *The Fight at Concord Bridge*, " I had shot, fished, and traveled over this land all my life—it was only just across the

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river from our house." Yet with his usual interest in getting the feel of the scene, he researched the circumstances of the opening battle of the Revolution, which occurred at the bridge at Concord on April 19, 1775. He wrote that he had recollections of school history lessons on the subject and had begun a composition showing redcoats when he decided to check for accuracy by contacting a noted British historian of the Revolution. Referred to the *Gentleman's Magazine* of June 1775, Simmons found the information he needed "and a lot more." When he came across a letter from "the American commander at the Bridge," which said, "I then sprang to my feet, crying, 'Fire, fellow citizens! Fire!,'" Simmons was prompted to look further to find from what kind of cover the man had leaped to his feet. After he discovered there had been a wall in colonial times to keep people's feet dry when the river was high and overflowing in spring, he altered his composition to include that wall, which had also offered protection for the soldiers. A letter from a woman, stating she saw "green grass waving" from her window, provided documentation of an early spring that year, giving Simmons reason to use the fresh green he wanted for the grass.[31] Diaries of the time noted that the trees were already in leaf but that the day was cool and windy although fair. Simmons also wrote of his research on the uniforms of the day. Although he had discovered that the "King's Own" were "a flying wedge of two hundred men in dark blue-and-black uniforms," and that "only one out of ten British soldiers at Concord were redcoats,"[32] he must have decided that artistic license was necessary to carry the scene, for through the haze of smoke on the far side of the bridge, the redcoats are unmistakable. However, it was both picturesque and accurate

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to show the "embattled" local farmers in the fore and middle ground in their everyday garb, as there were no standard uniforms for the patriots even later in the war.

With this scene surely Simmons could avoid a question about whether or not his subject was important or "integral" enough. Here, after all, in popular legend and literature, was the moment of "the shot heard 'round the world," made famous in Simmons's cousin's poem *Concord Hymn.* Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem was presented on 4 July 4 1837, at the dedication of the Battle Monument at the bridge. Emerson's grandfather, and no doubt other Simmons forebears, had fought at the bridge. The first stanza of the poem is cut into the marble below the mural:

> By the rude bridge that arched the flood
> Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,
> Here once the embattled farmers stood
> And fired the shot heard round the world.

Simmons's painting was unveiled in December 1902. The next day the *Boston Globe* reported a very favorable response:

> The painting depicts the "Fight at Concord Bridge," the first armed resistance to British aggression, which took place on the morning of April 19, 1775. On all sides the work was highly commended. The whole color scheme is admirably adapted for the place, and the painting shows off excellently against the darker marble of the hall.

The writer remarked on the strong lines of the composition, which seem to reinforce the form of the arch: "the patriot line, just come down from the parade ground on the hill" starts in the foreground "and forms a crescent from right to left, winding toward the bridge, on the further end of which stand the redcoats." He also appreciated that Simmons has accurately conveyed the time of day and vegetation: "The light and shadows indicate the hour to be about 10 in the morning. History says that 'the grass waved' that morning and the coloring of the artist is in conformity."[33]

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After stating that "Massachusetts can probably show in her history more world-famous events worthy of commemoration than any other State of the Union," another reviewer focused on the forceful composition and the local landscape features of Simmons's mural:

> In the "Battle of Concord" Mr. Simmons has opposed the semicircular line of the head of his panel by the crescent-shaped curve of the road leading to the historic bridge along which the minutemen, firing as they go, advance to the fight. The British troops have descended the hill on the far bank of the river and hold the bridge at that end. The center of the composition is occupied by the river and its marshes, which strike a characteristically New England note.[34]

To do the Boston work, Simmons had established himself in East Hampton, Long Island, where he built a home and studio to accommodate the murals. He wrote cheerfully to his Harvard classmate "du Reno" [Francis Child Faulkner], "I've bought a few acres and built a cheap house and studio combined and given up the town life for good. Am now planting trees and in a recrudescence of alleged youth, which is delightful."[35] It was fitting that Simmons was in such a rural setting and immersed in nature at the time he produced this, his most impressionistic and landscape-filled mural.

Perhaps no one appreciated the strong landscape elements of the mural more than Simmons's early mentor, Russell Sturgis. His review is worth quoting nearly in its entirety because it recognizes issues of much importance to mural painting and its new directions. While the demand was for more native history and landscape, there was still a reverence for the traditional canons of preserving the wall plane and union with the architecture, strictures more easily accommodated to the earlier focus on allegory. Sturgis's view, like my own and that of other art historians today,

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maintained that even though it could be argued that Simmons breaks classic rules, this painting is so skillfully and beautifully designed and painted that it triumphs over convention and is exactly right for its place:

> Certainly no one has ever seen a more fascinating historical picture than his Concord Bridge. . . .If one were to say that the Concord Bridge was more of a picture than a mural decoration, he would have some obvious reason for his comment, but this is merely because the extent of country shown, the conception of the central incident, the artistic vision which made the scene possible, called for a depth and a marked perspective in the picture which is often found to mar the solid and reposeful look which we ask for in a mural painting. The young farmers are running along a raised country road, and some of them stop to fire over a low stone wall; for, two hundred yards away, the road and the bridge are wreathed in smoke lighted up by the blaze of musketry. The charm of the picture, the free movement of the figures, the delicate coloring of spring-time green, the well-understood and well-handled masses of white smoke—all these are quite beyond description; and the most ardent believer in the decorative importance of mural painting might hesitate to order its modification in the least-important feature.[36]

From this point Simmons produced both historical and allegorical murals as well as the sort of hybrid for which both he and Blashfield became noted, each in his own distinct style. But the Boston murals stand out not only as the first but the best of Simmons's historical murals. No others would be so painterly, so filled with light and landscape, or so at one with the architecture.

New Amsterdam Theater, New York

For his next project following the Boston State House, Simmons painted another series of historical murals, those for the New Amsterdam Theater. The New Amsterdam is the Art Nouveau masterpiece by architects Henry Herts and Hugh Tallant constructed between 1901 and 1903 on Forty-second Street in New York. At the time of its opening in October 1903, the *New York Times* declared:

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> In the New Amsterdam, Art Nouveau, first crystalized in the Paris Exposition of 1900, is typified on a large scale in America. The color scheme is of the most delicate resda green and dull gold. Such painters as E. Y. [*sic*] Simmons and Robert Blum, sculptors, George Gray, Hugh Tallant and Enid Yandell and such designers as Wenzel and Ostertag have worked in harmony and with inspiration! The allied arts of painting, sculpture and architecture, have through their exponents, combined to produce a result that astonishes and delights, and whose effect and feeling are that of permanence, durability, and extreme beauty.[37]

The New Amsterdam reigned for more than thirty years as the outstanding musical-comedy theater in New York. It was dubbed "The House Beautiful"[38] because the theater's rich decoration provided as much of a show as did the dramatic activity on the stage. The theme for the painted and sculptural decoration was in general allegorical, representing "drama" or "the stage." The Simmons murals were part of a historical program for the Amsterdam Room (Fig. V:8), a smoking and lounging space on the floor below that of the main auditorium. Simmons's late involvement in the project provided the material for another of his stories of eleventh-hour painting prowess. He recounted that once again he was in dire financial straits when he was approached by one of the architects at the recommendation of artist James Wall Finn. The architects were desperate because the theater was to open in two weeks, and the artist previously commissioned to do the entire series for the frieze, George Da Maduro Peixotto, had been able to complete only half the work for the project, which had been under contract for two years. There were still six panels to be done, and Finn had said Simmons was "the only man who could do them in a hurry."[39]

Simmons's theme was the development of the North River and he chose subjects ranging from "Eric the Red" to a recent international yacht race. The titles of

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his murals describe his subjects: *Eric the Norseman's Discovery* (Fig. V:9), *Governor Andrus Takes the City for the English* (Fig. V:10), *The British Retreat* (Fig. V:11), *The Sailing of the Monitor*, *The Return of the U. S. Fleet from Santiago*, and *The Reliance Winning the International Race* (Fig. V:12).[40]

Simmons told of his working conditions with his usual flair for a good story. His studio was a former stable with a cement floor sloping to a central hole connected to the sewer. The sewer was clogged and following a heavy rain, the studio floor was covered with four inches of water. With no money or time to fix it, Simmons stacked "a line of bricks to walk from [his] easel to [his] painting table," and another to "get a point of view" of his work, and a third "from the door to the bed." He managed to finish the six panels in two weeks.[41]

In the 1980s, the New Amsterdam was severely damaged by leaks. Holes in the roof had been neglected for years. Three of Simmons's murals, *Eric the Norseman*, *The Sailing of the Monitor*, and *The Return of the U. S. Fleet from Santiago*, were completely destroyed. These three were reconstructed from old postcards and photographs. The remaining three, which had been heavily overpainted in the 1960s and damaged in the 1980s, have been recently restored by Evergreene Painting Studios to recreate the original effect as nearly as possible. It seems clear that these paintings were more in the vein of the illustration-like murals of his contemporary Howard Pyle and earlier ones in Trumbull's time—easel paintings for the wall rather than organic decorative elements. Significantly, they were termed "wall pictures of New York" by Charles de Kay when he wrote about the theater's

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painting and sculpture and complimented the artists for their "fidelity to the costumes and ships of each period."[42]

By necessity the Amsterdam Room murals were done very rapidly and appear almost like scene painting in contrast to Simmons murals done in a more reasonable time frame of several months to a year, such as those for the New York Criminal Courts and the Boston State House, which have rich painterly depth and dash. They do not rank with the Boston murals in advancing history painting with a fresh palette and more modern vision.

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[1] Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1976), 206-207.

[2] Ibid., 208-209.

[3] "Proposed Competition for Mural Painting in the Massachusetts State House, *Artist* 25 (May-June, 1899), xiv-xv.

[4] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Legislative Documents, House No. 77, January 1900, from the files of the Massachusetts Art Commission, State House, Boston, hereafter: MAC.

[5] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Minutes of the State House Commissioners, June 19, 1900, *Commissioner's Records, Vol. II* (1894-1900), MAC

[6] Ellen Burrill, Notebook, Vol. I , p. 196, Special Collections, State Library, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

[7] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "Contract with Edward Simmons for Paintings, " Commissioners Records, Vol. II, 1894, State Archives.

[8] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Human Services, Office of Commissioner of Veterans' Services, Report, "Information Regarding the Historical Background of the (1902) Simmons Mural Depicting the Return of the Colors by Massachusetts Volunteer Regiments on December 22nd, 1865," from Michael G. King, II, to Commissioner John Halachis, 2 February 1986, MAC.

[9] Charles M. Shean, "The Decoration of Public Buildings: A Plea for Americanism in Subject and Ornamental Detail," *Municipal Affairs* 5 (1901), 716-717.

[10] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 272-273.

[11] Ibid., 273.

[12] Ibid., 273-274.

[13] Ibid., 274-275.

[14] Kenyon Cox, "The Subject in Art," *Scribner's Magazine* 50 (July 1911) 12.

[15] Edwin H. Blashfield, *Mural Painting in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 197.

[16] Edward Simmons to du Reno [Francis Child Faulkner], 27 March 1901, Simmons correspondence, undated-1915, American Academy of Arts and Letters, New York.

[17] "Two Beautiful Paintings Unveiled at the State House." *Boston Globe*, 30 May 1902, 7, clipping, MAC files.

[18] "Paintings in Memorial Hall at the State House Unveiled and the Other Two of the Four Are Still Being Painted," *Boston Herald*, 30 May 1902, 12, clipping, MAC.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid.

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Charles H. Caffin, "Recent Mural Decorations at Boston," *International Studio* 27 (July 1902), lxxix-lxxxii.

[24] "Paintings in Memorial Hall at the State House Unveiled ," 12.

[25] Thomas Wentworth Higginson, *Massachusetts in the Army and Navy during the War of 1861-1865*, vol. 1 (Boston: Wright and Potter Printing Co., 1896), 147; George E. Ellis, *Dictionary of Boston* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1886

[26] Office of Commissioner of Veterans Service Report, "Information Regarding the Historical Background of the (1902) Simmons Mural."

[27] Simmons wrote he was "an admirable man and did a great deal toward winning the war, but in actual fact was about five feet high, 'pot-gutted,' bald headed, and not an attractive object from a painter's point of view," *Seven to Seventy*, 272-273.

[28] "Paintings in Memorial Hall at the State House Unveiled," 12; Higginson, *Massachusetts in the Army and Navy*, 153.

[29] Irene Sargent, "The Mural Paintings by Robert Reid in the Massachusetts State House," *Craftsman* 7 (March 1905), 699.

[30] Ibid., 699-700.

[31] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 270-272.

[32] Ibid.

[33] "Fight at Concord Bridge, *Boston Globe*, 18 December 1902, 3.

[34] Hamilton Bell, "Recent Mural Decorations in Some State Capitols," *Appleton's Booklovers Magazine* 7 (June 1906): 724-725.

[35] Simmons to du Reno, 27 March 1901, Simmons Correspondence, American Academy of Arts and Letters. Attached to the letter is a handwritten note from the artist Barry Faulkner explaining that the letter is from his father, who was a Harvard classmate of Simmons. Simmons's letter offers advice on the training of Barry Faulkner, obviously in response to a request for such.

[36] Russell Sturgis, "Mural Painting," *Forum* 37 (January 1906), 376-377.

[37] As quoted in Joel Lobenthal, "The New Amsterdam Theater," Theater Historical Society, *Annual*, No. 5 (1978), 2-3.

[38] Ibid., 2; In the recent book about this theater by Mary Henderson, *The New Amsterdam: the Biography of a Broadway Theater* (New York: Hyperion, 1997), there is a chapter devoted to "The House Beautiful." The sobriquet also appeared on programs and postcards.

[39] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 326. James Wall Finn worked as a muralist for Tiffany Studios. His work included ceiling murals for the main reading room of Carriere and Hastings' New York Public Library Building at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue and at Vernon Court, the private residence the firm designed for Mrs. Richard Van Nest Gambrill in Peapack, New Jersey. Finn and Simmons could have had numerous connections through Tiffany Studios or through architect friends and colleagues they shared.

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[40] Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman, "Edward Simmons: The New Amsterdam Murals." *American Art Review* 11, No. 5: 186, 188, 191.

[41] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 326-327.

[42] Charles de Kay, "Sculpture and Painting in a Theatrical Environment," *New York Times*, 1 November 1903, 21.

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Chapter VI
American Genius Goes West--The Minnesota State Capitol

Art on a grand scale had come to the heartland with the Columbian Exposition in 1893. For millions of citizens and for scores of government officials, the exposition was an enlightening vision of the "City Beautiful." Many of the same artists who had their first experience as muralists there, including Edward Simmons, went on to decorate the Library of Congress. The opulence and ambition realized in the decoration of the Library of Congress proved the competence of American artists and set a standard for government buildings that would be emulated across the nation as state capitals and other major cities strove to rival the beauty of the great cultural centers of Europe and at the same time create a national art expressive of American ideals.

Chicago's exposition also supported the faith that the Midwest, with its rich expanses of land and resources and hearty pioneer heritage, held special promise for the progress and expression of civilization and culture in this nation. In 1893 Minnesota was approaching a half-century since designated a territory in 1849. Statehood had followed in 1858, and Minnesotans were proud of the adventurous spirit that fostered the achievements and growth of the last decades and were ready for a new and larger statehouse that would be a fitting monument to their transformation from a wilderness territory to a prosperous modern state. Following a study for the need of a new building presented in February 1893, the Minnesota legislature of that year approved an appropriation of "not less than" $2,000,000 for a new capitol to be built at Saint Paul under the supervision of the Board of State Capitol Commissioners appointed by the

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governor, with one representative from each of the state's seven congressional districts.[1] The governor was the nominal chairman of the commission, but it was Channing Seabury, the vice president of the board, who for twelve years served as the head of the this body and who with the architect, Cass Gilbert, nurtured the realization of this exemplary monument of the American Renaissance. The dedication and integrity of the principal figures involved made this project a model in its own day and still a marvel today.

Typical American Renaissance nativist-versus-cosmopolitan contests were played out in Saint Paul, along with the usual challenges in erecting a large public building such as politics, labor strife, and public sentiment and opinion. But, these challenges were handled with notable wisdom, skill, and finesse. For example, Gilbert's innovative use of local Kasota limestone for much of the interior was soothing to nativists, allowed the use of more exotic stone for accent, and saved money for the ambitious mural program he envisioned. Further, the choice of nationally known rather than local artists for the murals was attacked at first, but successfully defended by Gilbert. The stories of the construction of the Minnesota State Capitol are particularly well documented in the frequent detailed correspondence between Gilbert and Seabury, and theirs with the artists, other records of the architect and state capitol commission, news articles and reviews, and reminiscences. These documents show the progress of the work from the viewpoints of the artists and from the experience of their employers Cass Gilbert and the commissioners. A rare personal reminiscence of Seabury's daughter,[2] who grew up with the Capitol and had great recall of the artists, remains a

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charming and very personal assessment of their talents, strengths, and, in some cases, weaknesses of character.

Cass Gilbert was awarded the contract for the Minnesota State Capitol as a result of a second contest. After the first open competition to chose the architect in 1894 was criticized by Gilbert and other architects and failed to attract outstanding design proposals, the commission reviewed some of its restrictions, including the fixing of the architect's fee at 2 ½ percent rather than the usual 5 percent recommended by the American Institute of Architects, and considered conditions for a new competition. A second competition judged solely by Edmund M. Wheelwright, the city architect of Boston,[3] was held from August to October 1895, and Gilbert was among the five finalists. After tie votes on several ballots failed to select a winner from the finalists, the commissioners took a four-day recess. When they returned, Seabury suggested forsaking the balloting and made a motion to award the first prize to Gilbert. The vote was then unanimously in favor of Gilbert, who was given the commission and the appointment as supervising architect for the project.[4] For Gilbert this was an important chance to establish his career and build a monument for his home state, and he defended his vision unfailingly. Part of this vision from the start was a mural program to rival those of the Library of Congress and the Boston Public Library. In March of 1896 the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* published a rendering of Minnesota's new building (Fig. VI:1) and indicated the architect's intent "to follow the example of the Boston library and the Congressional library at Washington, and employ artists of the first rank to decorate some of the more notable rooms on an extensive scale."[5]

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The project caught the attention of a new national society, the Mural Painters, which had been formed in New York in 1895 to encourage the use of mural paintings. Its mission statement declared that "its object shall be to promote the delineation of the human figure in its relation to architecture, whether rendered in pigment, stained glass mosaic, tapestry, or other appropriate medium, and . . . to foster the development of its ornamental concomitants."[6] The Mural Painters apparently immediately saw the possibilities of the new Minnesota State Capitol as a grand showcase for mural painting where painters of top rank could be involved in a project from the beginning.

Letters were rapidly exchanged between Charles R. Lamb, corresponding secretary of the Mural Painters, and Cass Gilbert. Lamb first wrote to introduce the society to Gilbert and inform him of its purpose of promoting the "enrichment of the interiors of our public, civic and religious buildings, and to do so in collaboration with the architects and the building committees, so that the best artistic results will be secured."[7] Gilbert passed on two letters from Lamb to commissioner Seabury noting that he had already answered them with the assurance that he "believed the Board would give this matter very full consideration when the time came to arrange for such decoration," but that currently the allotted funds would barely cover the cost of construction.[8] Lamb suggested a letter sent directly from the Mural Painters to the building commission. In that letter of 14 March, he wrote of the need for mural painting in this country, mentioning the example of civic buildings in Europe which would be considered incomplete "without the adornment of figure interest both in color and in form." He stated that, although some might think it early in the project to be concerned about decorative work, "experience has taught us that the Mural decorations

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of a building should be considered from its inception so that the proper spaces may be provided for their display, suitable structural conditions for their reception, and in the appropriations an amount set aside for their execution." He pointed out that "men of talent" were often called in at the eleventh hour to paint murals, and these artists were then sometimes hampered by dwindling funds and lack of time and therefore unable to produce their best work. He closed by offering the society's assistance "in any way possible."[9]

The Board of State Capitol Commissioners took seriously their stewardship of this great project. At the cornerstone ceremony on 27 July 1898, Commissioner C. H. Graves referred to the history of a state that only forty-nine years earlier was a frontier territory with a log cabin for government offices and in just a half century had grown to a state of "nearly two million people." He referred to the "careful study" of the commission and their finding that "no building smaller than the one whose massive foundations are before us today, would answer the requirements of this state....[and] that public sentiment, educated by familiarity with the great capitol building at Washington, required that this should be a domed building, with impressive approaches and extensive rotunda." He also took the opportunity to make the case that current funding was nearly expended on basic accommodations and that additional appropriations would be necessary for a fitting interior: "The interior of such a building ought to be finished with the most beautiful of native and foreign stone, and made an object of art, educative of the taste of our people and inspiring their pride."[10]

The commissioners wanted to educate themselves to be able leaders and advocates for the best capitol public money could buy. In 1902 they made an extensive

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trip with Cass Gilbert to visit existing government buildings of similar stature and function to study the use of materials and find what they liked and what they believed did not work.

Following the trip Gilbert made a report for the board, noting the impressions of various sites upon the group. This report provides the following chronicle. Their first stop was Albany, New York, where they visited the State Capitol. They observed that the materials used on the interior were of "variable character" and of "hap-hazard" selection and application. For example, the library displayed "the cheapest looking wood work," and the corridors appeared to be "a sample board" of marbles. They judged the overall color decoration of the interior "unimportant and stupid" and that "in general the interior is gloomy, expensive, and disappointing."[11]

Next the board visited several New York City sites, paying special attention to various stones and marbles and how they were finished. At the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine in Morningside Heights, they were impressed by the warm golden tones of the Frontenac stone. They examined in detail a number of buildings at Columbia College and were especially impressed by the "unity and repose" of the trustees room, achieved not by "lavish use of expensive materials, but by combining the materials properly; the Indiana limestone and low colored decorations of the walls forming an effective foil for the marbles."[12]

On the way to Boston the group visited the State Capitol of Rhode Island where again they focussed on the interior. Here Gilbert noted, "The pendentives of the dome are interesting in the use of color which contains the light gray and blue tones found in the marble and which are combined with great skill with dull gold and light

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warm colors." The senate chamber's furniture was deemed by the board to be "out of style" with the rest of the design and was in fact not designed by the architect but rather under separate contract, even though it fell under his general supervision. Both the Senate and House of Representatives were described as having "an unfinished appearance owing to a lack of decorative painting." Overall this building "while...handsome and attractive...appeared to be very plain and to lack a finish in certain parts which might be expected in a public building of this character."[13]

At the Boston Public Library the group was most admiring of the "warm cream color" of the stone they saw in the first-story hall and likened it to the stone from Frontenac or Mankato, Minnesota. They realized that not only was this stone very compatible with the elegant Siena marble of the grand staircase but that the impression of the hall "is very rich and at the same time light and soft in color and gives an effect of space in excess of its actual size." The report briefly noted the "rich decorative paintings by John Sargent."[14]

The group split up to examine other Boston buildings individually and then gathered again in Philadelphia where they visited a number of sites including Independence Hall and the United States Mint. The Baltimore Court House was next on the itinerary. The board took note of the "extensive use" of metal furniture—especially file cases and shelving for books, and admired the rich interior finishes including the African marble in the main hall and the use of African and Siena marble for a number of important rooms and corridors. They also liked the handsome woodwork of oak and mahogany. The board was "very favorably impressed by the character of this building throughout." Washington D. C. was the final destination.

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They visited the new Corcoran Gallery of Fine Arts where the entry spaces including the grand staircase were finished in a combination of Indiana limestone and Keene cement. The Library of Congress was, of course, the main attraction. Here they remarked on the abundance of white marble in the main corridor and grand staircase and on the effect of this white marble in combination with both "rich and elaborate color decorations painted on the wall panels" and with "elaborate colored floors." Blashfield's decoration of the dome and Vedder's mosaic for the stairway were noted as well as "specially fine decorative painting in one of the minor corridors by Simmons and one of the main corridors by H. O. Walker." The report elaborated: "In each of these decorations it was noticed that the artist had produced most successful results where the color scheme was made to conform with the surrounding marble work and made harmonious therewith."

Following their visit to the Library the group made a quick visit to the Capitol resolving to return individually for closer examination. They met at the Willard Hotel for a summary review of the buildings they had visited on this trip. Gilbert underscored the "extensive use of lime-stone" as interior finish and "the fact that much of the marble work was given a dull finish rather than a polish." He also stressed the "great value" of decorative painting and sculpture in the buildings most admired. Additional notes in Gilbert's handwriting show his concern for economy in the choice of interior stone and marble. He was in favor of using Keene's cement for many areas, but was afraid the board was leaning toward expensive marbles.[15]

This research trip was influential in determining an ambitious mural program in a number of ways. The noted effective use of limestone and dull or mat rather than

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highly polished stone for rich interiors led the way for Gilbert's innovative use of Minnesota's warm-toned limestone from Kasota and Mankato employing local materials and workmen. Furthermore, local stone saved money that could be applied to an ambitious mural program.

Gilbert lobbied devotedly for the funds to secure the best artists in order "to complete the State Capitol in an absolutely first class manner." He explained to Seabury that the Pennsylvania capitol commissioners had appropriated $500,000 for decorative painting and sculpture and that such an allotment would cover the services of the principal muralists and sculptors. He mentioned specifically La Farge, Blashfield, Vedder, Saint-Gaudens, French, Simmons, and others who had worked at the Library of Congress[16]

Underscoring the importance of mural painting and sculpture in his conception, he wrote to the Board of State Capitol Commissioners at the end of the year following their tour, reminding them: "Nothing will give the building greater distinction or lend more to its educational value and to the evidence of the advancement of civilization and intelligence of the State than the recognition of the arts as represented by the great painters and sculptors of the present day." He made reference to mural sites particularly admired on the tour as fine examples—the Library of Congress, Massachusetts State House, Boston Public Library, and the new Court House at Baltimore.[17]

Gilbert wanted to create the quintessential American Renaissance public building, exemplifying the Beaux-Arts ideal of unity of architecture, painting, and sculpture. He was to supervise all aspects of design, construction, finishing and

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furnishing the building and the grounds. The project was conceived as a whole, and he wanted to control it "down to the last blade of grass."[18] Mural painting was a vital component of his vision, and he had reason to be anxious about the program he planned. He wanted to secure the top muralists for his team, but he could not get the conservative, conscientious Board of Capitol Commissioners to commit funds for decorations before they were sure there was enough money to cover the cost of construction and furnishing the building with the necessities for operation. Gilbert knew that unless he had the muralists under contract, they could be stolen away for other appealing projects and become too committed otherwise to work with him in Minnesota. So he kept working both sides—coaxing the commissioners by convincing them of the importance of the murals and suggesting splitting the whole decorative scheme into smaller, less intimidating components of varying priority—and engaging the muralists by enlisting them in preparatory activities.

On 26 December 1902 Gilbert held a meeting at his New York office with La Farge, Blashfield, Simmons, and Elmer Garnsey to discuss the murals.[19] He expressed his belief that the people of Minnesota and the legislature and the board of commissioners as their representatives "earnestly desired to make the building first class in every respect." He explained that while he was not as yet authorized to enter into formal contracts with the artists, he had the approval of the board to meet with them about the murals and request preliminary sketches. Gilbert asked those present "to take their chances" with him in producing this preparatory work on the faith that the funds would eventually be made available to carry on the work and complete the murals. Gilbert promised them that he would make every effort to insure the support

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of the murals. To help the cause by encouraging appreciation of the artists' work, he wanted to arrange an exhibit in Saint Paul to be open to the commission and others, asking each of the artists to lend "original studies, either in color or pencil, for the decoration of other important buildings, particularly the Library of Congress and the Baltimore Court House." All expenses, including packing, shipping, and insurance, would be taken care of by Gilbert. After the artists agreed to make preliminary sketches and lend drawings for exhibit, the group moved on to discuss possible subject matter and assignments. Gilbert went over the plans and stated that he had assigned to Garnsey, who had supervised the decorative painting at the Library of Congress, the "general architectural color decoration of the corridors" and certain rooms allotted to him. He also mentioned some other muralists he was considering for later in the project, for example Herman Schladermundt, Crowninshield, and Maynard for some of the corridors and or vestibules, as well as Sargent, Vedder, Low, Douglas Volk, Bert Harwood, and George De Forrest Brush for some of the figure paintings. But wanting to avoid alarming the Board of Capitol Commissioners, he maintained that at the moment the four artists present at the meeting were enough to meet with him and "to organize the work." Gilbert spread out the plans of the building and brought to their attention his idea that the color scheme should relate to the fact that the grand staircases lead to the Supreme Court and Senate. He proposed various historical themes as possible subjects, including the early history, exploration, and settlement of the area, Civil War events and distinctions, the "great industries of the state, agriculture, mining, lumber, manufacturing." He also mentioned the importance of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers and the Great Lakes in relation to Minnesota. Noting

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Simmons's suggestion that "the immigration of races would form a most interesting subject, wherein types of Scandinavians, German, French, and New Englanders could be represented," Gilbert added that the history of Spanish and French rule was also appropriate in view of Minnesota's situation within the Louisiana Purchase. Following the discussion of possible themes and subjects Gilbert directed those present to consider the spaces they would choose to decorate. It appears that La Farge was asked first, and he selected the Supreme Court. Blashfield, who wanted the Senate chamber chose next, and then Simmons. Simmons requested one of the main staircases to decorate. All were of the mind that should Sargent decide to take part, he would be given the option of taking one of the main stairways or the spandrels in the rotunda. If he were to want one of the stairways, then Elihu Vedder would be offered the spandrels. Because of cost concerns, the matter of considering figurative mural decoration for the House of Representatives was put aside.[20]

They also discussed a reasonable cost for the work, and the group gave Garnsey the task of estimating cost by the square foot for works on a similar scale in comparable buildings such as the Library of Congress, Boston Public Library, and the Baltimore Courthouse. He calculated that the cost per square foot averaged between $50 to $55, although some work had cost as much as $65 or $70 per square foot. Given his faith that the board wanted "the best services of the best men" and wanted to pay a "fair" price, but not more than "customary" for such works, Gilbert proposed that he could support before the Board a price of $50 per square foot for the major figure paintings. In order to keep the cost of the decorative project in control, he stipulated that the color decoration outside the actual tympana and spandrels should be

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done as part of the general decorative work rather than counted as part of the mural project, but with the cooperation of the figure painters in order to produce a pleasing and integrated result.[21]

Gilbert depended on John Rockart of his New York office to help coordinate the exhibition of muralists' work scheduled to open in the Senate Chamber of the new building on 14 January 1903.[22] By 6 January Blashfield's two large color studies for the dome collar of the Library of Congress had already arrived in Saint Paul, but Simmons had sent a letter received on 13 January saying that he had been "laid up," but had forwarded some studies that Gilbert expected the next day for the opening of the exhibition. Gilbert explained to Rockart that he had been asked "not to make too much of the artistic end of the exhibit" by those interested in getting the bill passed for a $1,500,000 appropriation of additional funds for the building. Consequently, Gilbert advised Rockart to let artists know it was not necessary to send on any additional work—the exhibition had already been set up in the Senate chamber, and he was selecting only "a few of each of the pictures" artists had provided. He explained that "under the direction of the Commissioners" the exhibition was "taking on a little different form" from his original intention.[23]

The exhibit, or at least part of it, seems to have been extended and transferred to Gilbert's Saint Paul office. Thomas Holyoke of that office wrote to Gilbert in early February that the "private exhibit of decorative sketches that you arranged in the office before leaving St. Paul has been a decided success, and . . . many people in both St. Paul and Minneapolis have apparently enjoyed the drawings very much." He reported that the exhibit was still on display, "excepting those pencil sketches hanging on the line

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at the end of the room," which were obstructing drawers in a large case. He wished to keep the exhibit a few more days because a professor at the state university wanted his students to see it.[24] There are photographs in the Gilbert collection at the New-York Historical Society that appear to document this exhibit in Gilbert's office.

No description of the studies sent by Simmons has come to light, but when Rockart wrote regarding the return of the "drawings, photographs, etc. used in the Capitol exhibit, loaned from Mr. La Farge, Mr. Blashfield, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Garnsey and Mr. Willett," he informed Gilbert that "the drawings and photographs" insured for return to Blashfield were valued at $2,000, to Simmons at $75, to Garnsey for $900 and to La Farge for $5,000. The much lower amount for Simmons's material suggests that he may have sent smaller pencil studies, and/or photographs or prints, whereas it is recorded that Blashfield, for example, sent large color studies.

When the exhibit was being set up in Saint Paul, Blashfield expressed to Gilbert his eagerness for the work in Minnesota. On 10 January 1903 when he wrote about sending studies for the exhibit in Saint Paul, he noted that he had a number of other commissions that could materialize, but reassured Gilbert, "Now I want to be <u>in it</u> when the St. Paul Capitol things are started for there is nothing that interests me more."[25]

When Blashfield returned signed drafts of his contract to Gilbert on 1 May 1903, he enclosed a description of his lunettes as requested and a letter noting that occasionally he might want to talk over some of the details with Gilbert and have the benefit of his opinion. He explained that "in painting a decoration [he saw] the ensemble <u>at once</u> like a picture thrown on a wall," and after that he never changed

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much in the way of the large conception. But, as he worked along, he would "modify the details enormously" much to the good of the final result. It was for these small changes that he hoped to have Gilbert's counsel. His letter also explained that he felt a strong commitment to the project for the following reasons: "one—because of the importance of the building—two because of the situation of the state in the middle of the continent—three—because this is one of the best paid commissions that have been given . . . for all of these reasons it seems to me important that the people of Minnesota should get their money's worth."[26]

Gilbert expressed to Commissioner Seabury that the artists were all "quite in the spirit of doing something in the West." He wrote that "even Mr. La Farge" was enthusiastic and asked Seabury to consider the importance of signing on the artists as some already had conflicting commissions. For example, Sargent declined taking on such a large commission, for he was already committed to years of work on the Boston Public Library. In order to convince Seabury to act more quickly, Gilbert recommended contracts for only the principal subjects—the Supreme Court to La Farge, the Senate to Blashfield, the spandrels of the rotunda to Simmons instead of Sargent, and general decorative work to Garnsey. This work Gilbert believed could be accomplished within a budget of $175,000, a considerable savings from the earlier estimate of $250,000. The remaining $75,000 could be reserved in a "contingency fund" for less essential decorative work to be assigned at a later time. Gilbert was urging the commissioners to act because some of the muralists were already involved in or being offered conflicting commissions, and Gilbert wanted to be able to sign on the best men for his project. In May he wrote again concerning his research on costs and

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contracts for decorative work in buildings of similar stature. He reported that costs per square foot for large figurative murals averaged between $40 and $60, and that in consideration of the grand scale of the work at the Minnesota State Capitol, La Farge, Blashfield, and Simmons would commit to the work at $50 per square foot. He also related that the artists believed "the period of two years a short time in which to execute such important commissions." The paintings would be executed in the studios of the artists "on specially prepared canvas" and then be shipped to Saint Paul and put in place by the artists and would be "retouched as...necessary to bring out the important parts, and be corrected for local lighting."[27]

He advised that the "special figure paintings in the Supreme Court consisting of 964.12 square feet, be placed in the four lunettes of semi-circular spaces...and...be assigned to Mr. John La Farge at $48,206.00," and that the two large lunettes in the Senate measuring 648.78 square feet be given to Blashfield at $32,439.00. Simmons was to have the "four large spandrels in the Rotunda, comprising 931.2 square feet at a cost of $46,550.00. For a total of $127, 205, Minnesota would have "ten great works of mural painting which should equal the best which have been produced in this country." As discussed in the earlier meeting between Gilbert and the muralists, the "architectural painting" assigned to Garnsey would be covered separately. At the end of this letter Gilbert informed the Board of State Capitol Commissioners that he had asked several artists to form "an advisory Board of Decorative Design, without additional compensation," to offer "joint counsel and advice on all matters of painting and sculpture, to the end that the Board of State Capitol Commissioners shall have the best possible results."[28] In addition to its express purpose of promoting "unity of

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effort" the Board of Decorative Design was a means for Gilbert to keep control of the decorations for himself and the artists.[30] Gilbert had apparently already sent out drafts of contracts for review by the artists as Simmons wrote to him on 5 May 1903 apologizing for delaying the contract: "I have no word to say how sorry I am to have caused trouble by being late in forwarding this contract...Unforeseen circumstances have put me out of communication with the mail & leave me too late for you today at St. Paul."[31] Another letter written the same day explains some of his ideas for the spandrels: "In regard to the question of the spandr[e]ls, that—on the basis of what I have been enabled to gather from plans and photographs--& without a personal view of the spandr[e]ls or the dome that it seems to me that some dignified treatment of the "Power of the State," in its possible branches of Executive, Judicial, Law Making, & the ______ power, the People, (the votes), would be something which would be in keeping with the place the spandr[e]ls occupy." He added that he would like to confer "with those in authority that I might be in accord on this important point."[32]

The board was divided on the immediate awarding of the contracts at this time because while everyone seemed to want the paintings, there was still concern about running over budget. Some members, including Seabury, felt that although they were in sympathy with all those who wanted the murals, they were obligated to take care of more practical and functional aspects of the building first. During a meeting on 7 May 1903, there were a number of resolutions in favor of the murals, but at the end of the day, none could achieve more than a tie vote and were therefore not passed. Many of the board members were still not comfortable letting the contracts for the large decorative paintings until they knew the definite cost of work already under contract.

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Not for several months would they be ready to agree officially to contracts with the principal muralists. Still the board wanted to keep the artists interested in the project, and it was Gilbert's job to involve the artists, at least intellectually, as much as possible and assure them of his confidence that the contracts would eventually be awarded to them.[33]

In a letter to Seabury on 19 May 1903, Gilbert related points made during his meeting in New York with Simmons to explain the delay. He stated that he "[placed] it wholly on the ground of business caution" and asserted his belief that the postponement was only temporary until the other contracts essential to outfitting the building were awarded. He wrote that he had asked Simmons "to keep his interest in the work," and that he would have the same discussion with Blashfield and La Farge. Writing again to Seabury on 30 June, he reported that he had met with Blashfield and La Farge as well.

Also on that date, Gilbert responded to an editorial and letter in the *Pioneer Press* of 24 June, the previous week, brought to his attention by Seabury and concerning appropriate subjects for mural paintings. Gilbert replied briefly that he saw no problem with the proposal of "The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux." The suggestion about the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux had appeared in a long letter written on behalf of the Minnesota Historical Society from committee chairman General James H. Baker to Seabury and was subsequently published and acknowledged by the editor of the *Pioneer Press*. The letter and responding editorial indicated that Minnesotans knew what they wanted depicted on the walls of their capitol and it was clearly their state's history—"our own battles, our own heroes, our own barbarians, our own lakes or rivers," not "Greek or Roman antiques, however classic, no dancing nymphs or

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goddesses." Baker made a strong case for the significance and majesty of the signing of the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux as perhaps the nation's most important and visually best-documented treaty with the Indians. Calling Penn's treaty with the Indians much "overrated" because the transaction was purely verbal and purchases were in three separate stages, and saying the depiction by Benjamin West was skilled but fictional, Baker commended the dignity of the occasion in 1851 at Traverse des Sioux and its accurate recording by Baltimore artist Frank Blackwell Mayer. Mayer had made an eye-witness sketch, preserved in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society, as well as additional portrait sketches of prominent Indian chiefs, still in the possession of his family. Baker extolled the nobility of the scene at an important Sioux crossing point and trading center with its specially constructed rustic council chamber made with tree poles and branches and its impressive assemblage of officials, including Governor Alexander Ramsey, Indian chiefs, warriors, "border barons" or traders, missionaries, and "French and Scotch voyageurs," as well as the presence of several thousand Indian men and women "on the ground." Even more than for its picturesque qualities, the event was notable for its effect. As Baker expressed in the imperialistic view of the day, the treaty took nineteen million acres of the best land in the territory from the control of "a barbaric people with savage ways," opening it to immigration and "thousands of noble farms," and precipitated "an empire of wealth and Christian civilization."[33] The occasion of the "Treaty of Traverse des Sioux" eventually became the subject of one of Francis Davis Millet's murals (Fig. VI:2) for the Governor's Reception Room at the capitol, but Simmons would interpret the more general theme of the Treaty's legacy of rich lands developed by immigrants and settlers from the east.

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General Baker went on to suggest other suitable subjects for murals, concluding that Minnesota's natural beauty and colorful history presented an overabundance of rich subjects for murals but none so undeniably fitting as the Treaty of Traverse des Sioux to decorate the state capitol he called "the most noble structure yet reared in the West."[34]

Responding to General Baker's call for local history in murals, the *Pioneer Press* expressed concurrence on every point including the importance of the Treaty event, and its great potential for accurate and picturesque representation. The editorial, "A Valuable Suggestion," confirmed great expectations for mural decorations of the highest quality by "leading American artists" who had brought American mural painting to world attention and renown, and underscored that their decorations should represent local history in accord with public preference: "The suggestion that the decorations should embody scenes from Minnesota history and typify its progress, not in classic allegory but in the spirit of the prairies, lakes and woods, is also one which will meet general approval, and that will without doubt be adopted by the capit[o]l commission."[35]

This discussion of historical mural subjects gave Gilbert the chance to remind Seabury that in addition to the main commissions already assigned, there should be new work awarded under Garnsey to "such men as Kenyon Cox, Abbott Thayer, Etc." He implied that one of these men could take on the representation of the "Treaty of Traverse des Sioux" for one of the large lunettes at the head of the grand staircases. Provision for this painting as an additional mural was part of subsequent negotiation for the budget for the murals, and Gilbert was undoubtedly using it as part of his case for

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hiring more muralists.[37] Later Gilbert was indeed able to engage additional artists to paint scenes from Minnesota history for the Governor's Reception Room including Douglas Volk, who had earlier helped to establish the Minneapolis School of Art.[38]

It was not until a meeting of the board on 12 August 1903 that Gilbert was finally officially authorized to make contracts with the principal artists. He documented his negotiations with the artists and his own thoughts in the process in correspondence with Seabury. In order to try to keep the cost for the work of La Farge, Blashfield, and Simmons to the set amount of approximately $100,000 for the large figurative murals, Gilbert lowered the cost per square foot to $39.30. Then realizing that the "Treaty of Traverse des Sioux" painting should be covered as well, he made a further adjustment allowing approximately $6,000 for that painting, leaving $37,500 for La Farge, $25,000 for Blashfield, and $32,500 for Simmons. Gilbert gave Seabury the reactions of the artists to the new, proposed contract amounts. La Farge reportedly was willing to accept $40,000, provided that "the Board would accept two of the lunettes fully developed as originally discussed, and the other two more simply developed with say two or three figures in each," or alternatively if two of the lunettes were even more simplified to "consist largely of arabesque ornament or inscriptions" or the like, he would agree to the figure of $37,500. Blashfield assented to do his work for $25,000, in sympathy to the situation as Gilbert explained it to him, although, as Gilbert reported, this was "quite a concession" for Blashfield.[39] Simmons, who at an earlier meeting was "not disposed to stick out for the last dollar and thought that in view of the importance of the work they might all be willing to make some concession,"[40] seems to have been called upon to make the biggest one here. Gilbert elaborated on his

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discussion with Simmons reporting that Simmons had been offered work in Baltimore (at the Baltimore Courts Building) and felt that he had to come to a decision as both commissions would be too much at once. Simmons agreed to take the Minnesota job with the stipulation that the commission be confirmed immediately, in view of his settling for a lower price and giving up other work in Baltimore. In an effort to lure Simmons, Gilbert "urged upon him the importance of this work from a decorative standpoint," and promised him "a free hand to develop his conception to the fullest extent, without interference on the part of the Board as to the nature of the subject, considering that in point of subject he will have to meet my views as the Architect." Gilbert continued, telling Seabury that the muralists greatly valued artistic independence and relating how frustrating it was for them to have to bend to the opinions and suggestions on "subjects that are insisted upon by various members of committees" after designs had already been made. He explained to Seabury that he therefore guaranteed Simmons "the opportunity to do an ideal thing in an ideal way," and that was the prime attraction for him. In closing, Gilbert said that while all of the artists agreed to do the work under the conditions he described, which brought the total cost for decorative work to $219,000, including Garnsey's portion for the general decoration at $124,000, he strongly urged the board to consider paying the artists a little more to equal the $225,000 originally stipulated in the resolution. Gilbert believed this small adjustment would go far to foster good spirit and "get the best results."[40]

Artists were sent copies of their contracts at the end of September.[41] And, Gilbert must have won his point about rounding the figures up a bit, for Simmons's

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contract, signed by him and Seabury and dated 2 October 1903, had $500 added, bringing the figure to $33,000, for "four large spandrels." The contract stipulated that the sketches for the design of these were to be approved by the architect and that all "designs, preliminary sketches, studies and cartoons," were to be the property of the artist," unless he were to die or become incapacitated before completing the work. In case of the death of the artist, the board would have the right to use such preparatory work together with the paintings in progress in order to complete the work with the aid of an artist of "recognized ability" to be "recommended by the Advisory Board of Decorative Design." Payments were to be made as follows: fifteen percent upon approval of the preliminary sketches, twenty five percent upon completion of the cartoons, fifty percent at the time of the paintings' installation, and the final ten percent when the murals were "finished and approved." The paintings were each "to be done on canvas, properly stretched and secured to the walls...in such a manner as to be permanent, without wrinkling or cracking," and completed and installed within two years of the date of the contract.[42]

Simmons commented congenially on the contract in an accompanying letter to Gilbert: "Here is the contract –signed. It seems to me unexceptionable. I have tried to find some criticism, & preserve my self respect—but failed. Now comes a serious attempt to satisfy you sir—as well as myself."[43] On 9 October he wrote to Gilbert again to thank him for his efforts on behalf of the muralists, and to put himself at Gilbert's disposal for a trip to Minnesota. He added the hope that, "D. V. [*Deo volente*] you shall not fail to see a dignified advance in the art of the country as far as my labor goes."[44]

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By mid-December Simmons notified Gilbert that he had made "a good start on the sketches" and would have "two—at least—ready" to give Gilbert an idea of the color and tone.[45] Reporting to the board in writing, as he could not be present for the meeting on 4 January 1904, Gilbert stated that he had witnessed "excellent progress" in sketches made by Blashfield and Simmons. He described them as "in the shape of oil paintings about 2 ½ by 5 feet." He was especially enthusiastic about Simmons's sketches for the four spandrels of the rotunda and stated, "I unhesitatingly pronounce them one of the finest things of the kind in this country." He described the subject of the murals: "The subject in general may be said to typify the development and progress of the West, in which landscape forms a very important part, being used as a background in each painting, and in each picture there are four to six figures of heroic scale." He added that he had requested that Simmons have photographs of the sketches available for the board meeting but that bad weather made conditions too dark for good photographs to be made in time. He noted that he had drawn the certificate for Simmons's first payment, due upon the completion and approval of these sketches.[46] In the Gilbert Papers at the New-York Historical Society there is a handwritten outline dated 4 January 1904 (Fig. VI:3) of Simmons's conception for the four panels. Given the resulting artwork itself, as well as descriptions in the official guidebook and contemporary news clippings and in Simmons's autobiography, it seems that this outline is best interpreted as follows: 1. The American Genius, guided by Wisdom [Minerva]—follows Hope-- 2. The American Genius guided by Wisdom banishes Savagery-- 3. The American Genius breaks the ground. 4. The American

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Genius as Minnesota gives her [?] products to the four winds—American Genius as a male figure.[48]

An attached typescript (Fig. VI:4) of these handwritten notes with the same date, titled "Description of Mr. Simmons's pictures for the Minnesota Capitol" and initialed by Gilbert, seems to have misinterpreted the ditto marks and therefore confused the accompanying figure of Wisdom (a female figure) with American Genius, (a heroic male figure).[49] Examination of the finished murals confirms that American Genius, is indeed the hero in all four panels.

There were more months and many more tribulations ahead than anyone involved expected before Simmons's vision of "American Genius" was realized. Up until this point relations between Gilbert and Simmons were relatively easy and cordial, but Gilbert and Seabury were frustrated by Simmons's taking up residence in Paris immediately after completing the sketches and receiving his first payment. A number of times Gilbert tried to convince Simmons to stay in this country, and he sent his son Samuel chasing after Simmons on 16 January to try to catch him as he was about to sail. On that day Gilbert received a letter from Simmons saying

> My lawyers and my doctor have combined on me & I sail tomorrow for Paris. I wish it were possible for me to stay and go out to St. Paul now but they tell me my foot will never get well till I stop this worrying and rushing up & down. I therefore must take my compositions with me, for, d. v. I shall be back here before the 15th of May with at least two cartoons for your judgement.
> Rest and a chance to work undisturbed together with economy of money are essential to the proper completion of this my great chance, & so I go.

He added that in accordance with Gilbert's advice he had "made all of his money over to [his] wife" and had a letter of credit from Munroe & Co. in Paris and would be receiving mail there.[50]

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Cass Gilbert made notations on this letter that he had received it at 10:50 on the morning of the 16th and "immediately began telephoning to ascertain which line he sails on & see him if possible." He also noted that he sent a messenger to the house and the steamer.[50] There is a handwritten message to Cass Gilbert from his son Samuel stating that he found that Simmons "had no telephone at 150 W 36th St" and was registered to sail on the S. S. Patricia out of Hoboken at 4 p.m.[51]

Word from Gilbert must have reached Simmons somehow, because he wrote to him on Players stationery on 16 January at 1 p. m., that he was going to Europe in order to devote himself to the work at hand and be able to get away from troubles with his first wife:

> You don't understand—It is to escape supplementary proceedings [illegible] & a crazy—divorced—mother of my boys who is jumping stiff legged at my second marriage that I go—in order to give all my time—absolutely to this work-- I have even chucked the Baltimore contract so as not to be divided in interest.[52]

No doubt Gilbert wanted Simmons to visit the state capitol to see the site of the murals, take all necessary measurements needed for his own work, and be present for face-to-face discussion of any concerns or challenges. He must also have wanted him to be otherwise accountable for his work and available for the board's planned trip to New York to visit artists' studios.

Seabury had notified Gilbert on 7 January that he had a "surprise" for him—that the board would travel to New York to check on a number of details such as lighting fixtures and more importantly, would like to view "sketches of mural decorations now so well under way by all four of the gentlemen who are preparing them." This letter is one of several that reveal Seabury's dedication to getting the best work for public

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money and his wariness and frustration in that regard concerning the muralists, most of whom seemed to operate much too independently, elusively, and according to their own schedule for the comfort of the commissioners. He and Colonel Graves were particularly concerned about Garnsey's work as the most extensive—to be "everywhere in evidence," and "the connecting link between the marbles, the stone-work, the picture painting and every other color scheme inside the building." He continued describing the unease of the commissioners:

> To have all these important things being prepared down there [in New York], without our having any knowledge of them, other than photographs and small sketches, does not quite suit some of us. . . . Ignorant as we all are, in the realm of art, we yet feel that we have brains enough to know what we like, and to form some opinion as to what the great mass of our people will like.

He added that it was even possible that one of them might "throw out a suggestion, that would not utterly ruin or dishearten the gentlemen who are working on these things, but, on the contrary, might be useful to them." The plan was for the commissioners to leave on 3 February and be met by Gilbert for the touring. In a postscript Seabury warned that the board did not want to be wooed with lavish treatment:

> Do not let these artists think that each one of them must give us a separate dinner. That is the first prompting of a New Yorker, but you know our crowd, and know that such an idea would be positively distasteful to several members, while none of us would want such a fuss made over us. We are in business relations with them now, and they are not called upon to "wine and dine" us, especially as we are not that kind of outfit.[53]

Gilbert's letter to the Board of State Capitol Commissioners of 3 February 1904, noted that he had informed the artists of the postponement of the above trip by the board. Although the letter did not mention the reason for the postponement, it was

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most likely the complaints and action by Minnesota painters' unions against the commissioning of Eastern painters. Beginning in mid January and continuing through March, newspapers were carrying stories of local painters' unions from Minneapolis and Saint Paul protesting that Garnsey was using painters from the East who belonged to a different union, when there were local union men who could do the job, which should have been put out to bid. Blashfield commented on the subject in a letter to Gilbert, "I gather from something I heard that they wish to use the work of local men in Minnesota."[54] He then went on to elaborate on the importance of experience in mural painting with the perspective of ten years' devotion to the field:

> No form of art demands so much experience as mural painting. . . . Each problem solved and piece of work carried out is an astonishing help towards the solution of the next problem. It is only through such work that a man can gradually develop into a mural painter. New men no matter how clever by nature cannot attack important mural work with chance of much success. They should begin with minor work and develop.[55]

While sympathetic to the patriotic spirit of Minnesotans, he warned that, "If the local test is to be applied it will in my belief gradually cripple mural painting in America." His reasoning was that no one state could provide enough decorative work to support its artists, and the profession would not grow without the most experienced artists to lead new talent in developing.[56]

The petition on behalf of the local painters' unions for an injunction against proceeding with contracts for decorative painting was finally dismissed at the end of March by Judge William Lewis Kelley on the grounds that the work was "of such artistic nature that it would have been absurd to submit it to open competition by

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advertising for bids." He went on at length about the qualities demanded by mural painting in words that might have been written by Blashfield himself:

> Beauty is universal and eternal. Only the very few specially gifted can make this beauty manifest to us common men. The poet, the artist, the musician, the architect, illustrate this truth. . . .
>
> Mural decoration is in itself a distinct branch of artistic work [requiring] the skill and genius of an artist. . . .
>
> The power to create fitting designs in keeping with the situation, so to apply and produce colors that time will intensify and bring out, not destroy their beauty; to complete the whole building in entire harmony with its character and its uses, is necessarily the work of an artist, an artist of the highest ability.[57]

In closing, the opinion as printed by the newspaper, called Garnsey, and by implication the other mural painters, highly fit and appropriate for the task before them.

Just days after the resolution of this suit, the Board of State Capitol Commissioners finally made their postponed trip to New York to visit artists' studios and see the works in progress. In Blashfield's studio in the Carnegie Building they saw small pencil and color sketches and a full-size cartoon he had started. Blashfield explained the steps he took to develop a mural from initial sketches to the finished painting, showing examples of his work to illustrate his talk as he went along. The board was very pleased with Blashfield's work. They also visited La Farge's studio, but he was ill and not available. His assistant, Grace Edith Barnes, showed a pencil study and a small color sketch and a full-sized cartoon for the mural on the eastern wall. [check]. They viewed another cartoon located in a studio at Fortieth Street and Broadway. At the invitation of Blashfield and Garnsey, among others, the board dined at the Century Association on 4 April.[58]

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At this point Seabury was content with the work of Garnsey and Blashfield but increasingly worried about the progress of La Farge and Simmons. He wrote to Gilbert, "I have been, and still am, feeling more anxiety about these (financially) irresponsible painters than almost anything else we have ever done, because we have so little security, and are holding ourselves liable for so much possible criticism hereafter, should untoward things happen."[60]

In June, when they were checking furnishings at Herter Brothers in New York, Gilbert and John Rockart made another visit to La Farge's studio on Tenth Street, where Simmons became a topic of conversation. Gilbert relayed to La Farge that the capitol commissioners were "in a very peculiar state of mind"; they felt they were paying out these moneys for the paintings but did not see that they were getting any returns for the money thus expended." He explained that it was understandably difficult for the commissioners to grasp fully the various steps and work involved for each of the artists and that they wanted "evidences that work was being pushed forward." He added that Simmons had sailed for Europe "immediately after having received the first payment of some $4,000.00 or $5,000.00," and that he had "no record of his sketches" or other signs of progress in the work. Further, he was not getting any response to his inquiries. La Farge seemed "very much surprised" at this news but was reportedly certain that "Simmons could be depended upon to finish his work and always done so."[61]

La Farge and Simmons were in similar circumstances, both had been sick and were in tough financial straits awaiting their contract payments. They handled the situation differently. La Farge with nasty, patronizing letters to Seabury, and Simmons

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trying for sympathy and benefiting from the references and aid of his colleagues in the arts.

Gilbert's letter to Simmons of 7 June 1904 stated that there had been no answer as of that date to his letter of 24 May and that he had received another request from Seabury for some proof of progress on the murals for the rotunda. Gilbert again asked for a letter bringing him up to date and some photographs of the work. He explained that he had asked the same of La Farge and Blashfield who were having their work photographed to show the board how it was developing. Requesting that the photographs be signed and dated he urged, "Can't you also send me small, rough sketches which will give the general color scheme of your pictures? They need not be more than a few inches square and simply blocked in, so the decoration in the rotunda can be harmonized with your color." He advised Simmons that the governor and commissioners wanted the building completed before the legislature convened in the fall. "The interior is coming out magnificently; our stone and marble are superb in color and will afford the finest background for decorative painting that I have ever seen," he wrote, and further noted that Blashfield was well along in his work and that La Farge had designs drawn in on three canvases and was working on the fourth. Adding that both artists planned to accompany him to Saint Paul in July, he pleaded, "I wish you could be with us."[61]

Gilbert was most anxious about Simmons's work and wanted him to return to the United States, where he would be more assured that Simmons was working steadily and in harmony with the other artists developing the interior decoration. He begged Simmons, "Why can't you return now, place your canvas on the wall and complete the

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work in place?" He promised him good working conditions—a temporary studio set up in the rotunda:

> The rotunda would make a fine studio, good light and everything just right. It is a glorious climate in summer, and a few month's residence there would be very attractive. You could then work right in the surroundings where your pictures are to go, and I can guarantee all the privacy that you want while the work is going forward; this is to say, screens could be built around your scaffolding so that no one could see the pictures until you were ready to show them."[62]

On 10 June Simmons wrote to Gilbert from Paris informing him that his work was going "right well" at the moment, but that he had been laid up and unable to work for a couple of months and was in the country—likely reasons for his failure to answer Gilbert's letters earlier:

> For two months I have been so sick that I could not leave the house, much less work, and what with installation & getting ready to work & the two months of illness I broke down so that the doctor sent me to the country—the [1st ?] of May. I could then hardly hold a fork—to say nothing of a brush—the gout has a pinch left for me—in the right hand—but I can handle tools & the first cartoon is practically completed[63]

He promised to take photographs of the cartoon the following week and send them off immediately. Expecting Gilbert would be pleased enough to authorize the next payment, he added that he had improved his composition by the addition of four figures, and he was "crazy to get at the paint." To Gilbert's request that he finish the murals in Saint Paul he responded, "As to the question of completion –in place—of this first panel it is not wise to be too certain of results in such an important thing, but I think I can get it up before the end of October, providing the photographs shall seem to you sufficient and I remain well." In closing he asked that Gilbert send "exact

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measurements height—lower width—top width & length of radius of curves at sides of the eastern panel."[64]

Simmons wrote again from Paris on 1 July, indicating that he had not had a response from Gilbert about the photograph of his cartoon for the first panel and describing his first panel:

> Before this, I hope you have received a photograph of the completed design—life size on the final canvas for the first panel. The large studio I have here was hardly large enough to photograph it well & the right hand end is foreshortened—rather hurting the drawing of the girlish figures. As I have developed the idea it is this. The spirit of America—a youth—going forth, at the call of Hope & her handmaidens, watched by Minerva & challenged by a figure who will [hold ?] a sword to suggest that the wilderness has usually been conquered by the sword, the sword that the youth waves aside. Behind are those who will not dare. Thesea, at dawn behind him with ancient buildings, town, and shipping to typify the older world. A figure of Conservatism, Timidity, Home, or whatever you wish, restrains or attempts to restrain him.
>
> I shall place athwart the sky a line of wild geese, flying North, to show the springtime, and also show that the path of Hope is North West.[65]

The letter goes on to describe his health and financial problems:

> Now for matters of business, my hand is, as you see, not well enough to write very well but I am well & better every day. The two months—really ten weeks I lost in bed have put me so that I am now two months behindhand—I am in hopes that you will find the photograph good enough to give your authorization to the second payment, which—if the board do not meet till August, will come to me so late that I shall have practically starved to death. If you wish to see that the canvas is on the walls before the first of November, you must help me through the next two months. I owe rental here on the fifteenth of this month and see no way to pay it. Can you not cable me 500 dollars & take this letter as an authorization to stop it out of the 2000 I shall eventually receive? I would not ask this if it were possible to work at all this next month without it.
>
> I was able to bring with me here enough to last me till now & had hopes of being so far along with my work that this condition should never happen again. I counted without sickness, something I have never been troubled by before.[66]

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Simmons closed by reminding Gilbert to send measurements, promising to forward the color sketches the following week, and offering the compliment that he has heard "from all sides" that the Minnesota capitol "comes next to the Capitol at Washington"—"a fine impetus" for his mural work.[67]

Not until July 23 did Gilbert reply to Simmons's above letters of 10 June and 1 July. He explained that although they were delivered to his office ten or twelve days after they were sent, they were not brought to his personal attention because he was dealing with a serious illness in his family[68] and that since the photographs sent by Simmons did not arrive in time for the board meeting of 5 July there was no approval of further payment for Simmons. Reminding Simmons that the board had never seen a drawing, photograph, or any other evidence of his work in progress, Gilbert stated that the board decided that, owing to the public nature of the work and the obligation of the board to uphold the spirit of the contract, no more payments would be made until the cartoons were available for inspection in the United States. He informed Simmons that he felt personal and professional discomfort and harm as a result of Simmons's behavior and would no longer put himself on the line for him until evidence of his work arrived:

> Your long absence has seriously embarrassed me personally and officially in connection with this work, and I would be less than frank if I did not tell you plainly that I think you should have given me better treatment under the circumstances. I recommended you for this commission under conditions that were as nearly ideal as possible. I gave my personal word that you would not disappoint us, and yet the moment you received your first payment, you sailed for Europe without giving me time to see you, and seemed at least, to have forgotten the work until the need of more money arose. If you will reflect a moment as to what position this leaves me in, I think you will fully appreciate the situation, and I shall personally use no effort whatever to change the view now held by the Board until I see your work on this side of the ocean.[69]

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Complaining further that Simmons had ignored his request for sketches indicating the "general color scheme" for the murals, Gilbert indicated that Simmons was delaying the decorative painting of the rotunda surrounding the spaces for the figurative panels. He urged Simmons again to come to Saint Paul where he would be provided at no charge with a temporary studio in the capitol for five or six months where he could be at peace to complete his work. Asking Simmons on the one hand to inform him immediately if he felt health or other reasons would prevent him from completing his contract, on the other hand, he reassured him that he and the board still maintained "the highest respect and admiration for his artistic skill," and that he personally would be "bitterly disappointed" if Simmons's work failed to materialize as part of "this noble scheme, to which I have devoted so many years of my life, and so much earnest thought."[70]

In spite of his frustration at Simmons's delinquency and seemingly cavalier attitude toward the project, Gilbert still treated Simmons with respect, which was probably both genuine and also the best path to get the product he wanted. Simmons answered in a similar tone, but was clearly in serious financial difficulty, yet still not ready to leave Paris and take up Gilbert's offer of a studio in the capitol:

> Your letter of July 23rd has just reached me. It is so carefully written & I think and believe so just a view, based upon what you know, that I ought to take the time to answer it with respect. The mail leaves in a few minutes. I will write again, in a few days. The panel is nearly completed. May I request that the measurements of the panel—from the wall—the East panel—are at least something which you have no right to refuse me. It will delay results of interest to us both. If the panel meets with such approval from you as it does here, you will be . . .contented. I hope to put it on the wall by the end of October—but I see that you cannot help me & I may fail for simple want of means.[71]

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He added a note in the margin countering Gilbert's complaint that he was holding up the decorative painting in the area of the rotunda: "The color scheme you know & knew. The decorative scheme has already been decided between us."[73]

Simmons also sent by telegram the desperate message: "Must leave Studio Monday unless you help answer Munroe."[74] Gilbert wired back "Cant help personally. Blashfield endeavoring raise money."[75] The effort by Simmons's colleagues Blashfield and Robert Reid in July and early August to raise money for Simmons and affirm his ability to do the job for Saint Paul, gives insight into their respect for his work and attests to the loyalty among artist friends and colleagues. The evaluation of Simmons's work given in letters of support collected by Blashfield and Reid is of special interest because official criticism of these murals is rare—they were installed so late, after several important reviews of the building and its artwork had already appeared. Augustus Thomas's letter to Reid also establishes that Grez was where Simmons had gone to rest and recover from his illness when the doctor sent him "to the country." Thomas, a noted playwright who probably knew Simmons from the Players and the Lambs clubs, wrote that he saw "Simmy" frequently in Paris where he was at work in Whistler's old studio and going at it "like a beaver." According to the letter Simmons had been stricken by "some salt rheum or something of the kind" which he suffered for about two months before the trip to Grez, which made him "magically well & vigorous in a week." Thomas attested that he had never seen anyone with such "rapidity & accuracy combined" and by the time he left Paris on 17 June, Simmons had produced "a stunning cartoon for the Minnesota Job, the biggest canvas I ever saw & was ready to go at it in color." Simmons informed him he was to finish the panel by October and

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Thomas vouched "if anybody kin he kin." The letter also gave a glimpse of Simmons's social life:

> The new wife seems a good influence—Simmy does 2 days work every day before 4 p.m. He then knocks off for a pipe & a gab which is so essential to him with a crowd of Americans that round up at the sidewalk tables of the Café du Dome—you probably know them—Walden, Robbins, Shorty Lazare & others. The talk is art & and the atmosphere is art. At six he goes home to take the wife to dinner & the day ends with some rational amusement.[75]

Walter Hale also wrote to Reid and commended Simmons's cartoon in detail:

> Victor Harris & I went together to see the first big cartoon for St. Paul and we both agreed it was quite the finest thing he's done. The composition is splendid, the figures grouped harmoniously and the inspiration on the face of the central male figure really wonderful. There is a bully Minerva back of this figure and the handling of the drapery is most graceful.
> He has been quite ill but is hard at work now & the great North-West has a treat in store for it when these decorations are finished.[76]

Early in August, Blashfield forwarded the above letters collected by Reid and also mentioned a "very enthusiastic" letter from Booth Tarkington that Reid could not locate at the moment but expected to send on later. In closing Blashfield added, "It is a great pleasure to hear that S. is so well again and coming on so finely. I am a firm believer in his great talent."[77]

Later that month Gilbert met with Thomas in Easthampton to discuss questions regarding Simmons's "work and health." As Gilbert explained to Seabury, Thomas had sent another letter on behalf of Simmons, to summarize that meeting and explain Simmons's situation.[78]

Thomas wrote, giving a short history of Simmons's illness, and with the "keenest pleasure" to "report well" on both his physical condition and his work:

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> When he first came he was suffering from an eruption in the palms of his hands which while it did not greatly impair his health, did make it impossible to even hold a brush. This lasted nearly three months and caused him great worry. His recovery was finally complete & when I left Paris—June 17 he had a splendid cartoon finished on a canvas some 30 by 12 feet I should judge. The subject was Youth being led West by a young Hope which preceded him. He was putting aside a sword that Military Ardor offered. Behind him Minerva typifying Wisdom was speaking encouragement—secondary figures on each side and in the back ground, representing I think the peaceful arts. The Cartoon had spirit, vigor and grace.
>
> I have had letters from Mr. Simmons since, reporting that his canvas was completely covered with paint since my leaving and more than half finished. He expects to sail with the finished canvas about Oct. 15th.
>
> I have known Mr. Simmons many years but never saw him working with more enthusiasm than when I left, and never saw him more content with his work than his letters since then indicate. [79]

Just when it seemed that Simmons was back on track, he encountered a serious setback in completing the first panel for installation. When, on 7 October, he received the template from Gilbert's office that he had requested in July, he found a substantial variance from the original dimensions an assistant of Gilbert's had supplied the previous fall. In a letter of 13 October Simmons reported to Gilbert that his painted panel measured approximately seven and a half feet longer than the template along the top and two feet longer at the bottom. The height of his panel and the template was the same. Were the difference not so great, he explained, he could trim off some without great harm; or had it been proportional, he could stretch another canvas and copy his design at a smaller scale. As it was, he would have to cut out "four full figures and half of two others" ruining what he considered "a fine compositional rendering in grouping of line effect." Simmons declared, "I flatly do not know what to do," and asked Gilbert to be "gentle" if he was "long in making the changes necessary" to

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correct and finish the panel. He reminded Gilbert that if he had been provided with the measurements in July when requested, it would have been much easier to alter the cartoon before the painting had begun.[80]

Gilbert was obviously feeling somewhat defensive about the situation. He made notes on a typed copy of Simmons's letter that his office furnished measurements solely for use in making the preliminary sketches and that the measurements were Simmons's responsibility—"He was repeatedly told to take his own measurements." Gilbert reported the problem to the board, stating that Simmons had finished his first panel only to discover the dimensions were incorrect and thus had to make major changes. He noted that he and Simmons were still corresponding about the matter.[81]

At this time Seabury was apparently already exasperated by the muralists and their ways, including the "volumes of letter writing" they deemed necessary to explain their work and its development. In Seabury's opinion, La Farge cared only about the money and not about the job. He expressed to Gilbert that he was "disappointed" by both La Farge's and Blashfield's paintings although he admitted that Blashfield's pictures were possibly unfinished and could still improve. He expected to be unimpressed by Douglas Volk's painting as well after months of his "floundering around," and stated of correspondence from Volk and Cox that he thought it was mostly puffery, each artist promising "the best work he has ever done":

> It is astonishing to me how much literature these artists can get rid of, and what an exceeding quantity of words they find it necessary to divest themselves of, concerning something strictly and wholly within the line of their life professions. I confess that I am not profoundly impressed with the greater part of it, and feel it is unnecessary surplusage.[82]

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In the next six months the Gilbert's and Seabury's concerns about Simmons continued as well. Gilbert's frustration was obvious in his letter to Seabury of 19 April 1905. Apparently, Augustus Thomas had lent Simmons money and had a claim on Simmons's contract. Reporting this to Seabury, Gilbert also relayed the news that he would meet with Simmons at Robert Reid's studio in New York to see the first painting and the three cartoons for the four spandrels. He did "not for a moment doubt Simmons's personal intention to do his work," but he let Seabury know he was apprehensive about the artist's financial entanglements, "conditions of health, extravagance, foreign residence, etc." In order to protect himself and the interests of the state, Gilbert said he was "thinking out what kind of an arrangement we can make to so handle the matter that we can be sure of getting the remainder of his work without the annoyance and anxiety which has prevailed up to the present time." He suggested that perhaps the best tactic would be to "express indifference as to whether he completes the rotunda spandrels or some one else does it for him." After acknowledging that it would be hard to get someone else to carry it out "in the same spirit," he then offered the more comforting thought that Simmons "has the reputation, however, of always finishing his work."[83]

About a week after this letter, Gilbert wrote to the Board of State Capitol Commission that he had visited with Simmons at Reid's studio, where he examined a full-size cartoon on canvas for another spandrel. As for remedying the situation over the dimensions of the first panel, he reported that Simmons was "unwilling to put up anything in the Capitol that [did] not represent his very best work," and that if the Board would extend his contract six months in reference to this particular panel, he

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would like to paint it again "at his own expense."[84] Gilbert regarded the offer to repaint the mural without charge as "highly creditable to Simmons" and the sign of a man "much more interested in his art than in the income he receives from it."[85]

Gilbert was indeed impressed by the new cartoon he saw at Reid's and called it "one of the most beautiful designs and splendid pieces of draughtsmanship that I have seen by an American artist." Consequently, he decided to draw a certificate for the contracted amount for the cartoon, "25% of the price for one picture, $2062.50" and enclosed it for the board's approval. As Gilbert related, he also tried to persuade Simmons to finish this cartoon in New York and to have the others sent over from Paris to be completed in the states. But, Simmons replied that staying in the United States was not an option, for his family was in Europe and his "financial condition [was] such that he would be harassed and unable to work without interruption here." Gilbert noted Simmons's frankness in declaring that he was "without resources financially, and would have to find some financial assistance to carry on his work." He stated that he felt obligated to "place the facts fully before the board," and did not feel that he should advise other than to say that because of the "unusual merit" of Simmons's work, he would welcome any consideration given him within the interests of the state.[86]

He enclosed for the board a copy of his letter to Simmons of the same date. In that letter he notified Simmons that he had approved his cartoon and therefore had prepared a certificate for payment to be sent to the board in time for their May meeting. Gilbert tried once more to tempt him to stay in the States by writing that, if Simmons

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were to stay and adjust the first panel and also complete the mural planned in the cartoon he had just shown, the Board would likely pay a "considerable amount."[88]

All the coaxing and promise of payment apparently could not dissuade Simmons from returning to Paris. Although clearly Simmons had integrity with regard to the quality of his artwork, he seemed careless about finances and the difficulties his actions or and inactions caused for others. While his financial problems were real enough, and did stem at least in part from his illness and the resulting delay in work and payments, there were plenty of other times in his life when he had cash problems and wrote boyishly and boastingly of how he squandered payments when he got them. Poverty did not seem to move him to thrift. Undoubtedly, he was enjoying a good life in Paris—a new wife and convivial friends. When well and urged on by necessity, he could reportedly work as hard as anyone and seemingly enjoyed the challenge. But he was also known to have good times in the style of his friend Stanford White, who could indeed spend money freely when he didn't have it. It appears that Paris had too much to offer—large inexpensive studio spaces and a community of friends, cheap living and dining, escape from creditors, and according to him, from an angry former wife.[89]

Simmons was still in Paris on 6 September 1905 when Seabury, responding to his letter about plans to arrive with the murals by the end of October, wrote "When you have seen the building yourself, you will feel honored to have some of your work as a component part of its interior decoration." He enclosed a clipping from the morning paper, an example of the growing attention to the capitol and added, "It is said to be one of three or four notable buildings in the United States."[90]

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The *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* reported that Simmons arrived in that city on 9 November and went to see the capitol and inspect the rotunda. Simmons explained that he was installing three of his panels with scenes two, three, and four. The first panel that he had made too large would be corrected and, according to him, be in place in January. (It was not in fact installed until April of 1906[90]). He described his subject as the "Civilization of the Northwest" (Fig. VI:5) and elaborated:

> Beginning with the southeast panel, I have attempted to express the idea of the American spirit leaving home a young man held back by a figure representing "Timidity" or "Convention" or whatever word describes the meaning of those qualities of the mind which are against emigration or home departing. He starts forward to follow the beckoning of a figure expressing the idea of "Hope," who in each panel is clothed in green, a color in my opinion, fit. She is accompanied by handmaidens. "Wisdom" stands at her shoulder, clothed in draperies which she wears in this and the two following panels. In the fourth panel she is not represented; wisdom having come to him, and he, therefore, wears her cloak, and her shield rests against his knee.
>
> I have designed for a shield the owl instead of the gorgon-head. The background of the first panel, with its glimpse of the sea looking eastward, suggests the Eastern seaboard. The figures to the left are to typify those who will not leave home.
>
> In the second panel [Fig. VI:6] the same figure led by "Minerva" and "Hope' is scourging from the land figures typifying the bear, savagery; the female figure, sin; the cougar, cowardice; the figure of the male in the foreground, "stupidity," The figure of the woman bears the plant deadly nightshade, the man stromonium, both evil plants.
>
> The third panel finds him lifting a stone, thereby breaking the soil, the stone itself bearing crystals and gold. Beside him stand the figures of "Hope" and "Minerva." From his breaking of the soil, come out figures bearing maize and poppies, another, with a child, indicating fertility; another strewing flowers, the fields behind him carrying the sense of advancing agriculture.
>
> The fourth panel to the northeast, he sits enthroned, clothed in the draperies of "Minerva," with her shield lying against his knee, and giving orders to the four winds, who bear to the four corners of the earth, products of the state, such as wheat, minerals, the fine arts, and a torch signifying the qualities of the mind. Beside him sits "Hope," no longer leading, but watching, with jewels and

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> flowers, indicating prosperity and wealth. The color scheme is an attempt to cling as closely as possible to the idea of blue and gold.[91]

On the same date, the *Minneapolis Journal* covered the story of the installation of the murals under the supervision of the artist with a similar, but abbreviated, account of the story representing "the progress of civilization in the northwest" in the four panels. Simmons's high regard for the building was also reported here.[92]

Simmons's murals were installed too late for proper notice in articles that appeared in some major art journals. When the *International Studio* covered the "Mural and Sculptural Decoration of the St. Paul Capitol" in October 1905, "Simmons [was] still at work on decorations for the rotunda." Writing for *The Craftsman* Grace Whitworth mentioned Simmons's murals but described them incorrectly as featuring Wisdom as the heroine rather than American Genius as the hero as also had the above mentioned typewritten note and a small printed pamphlet (Figs. VI:7a and b) in the Gilbert papers.[93] This writer and others were most impressed by the harmony of color throughout the building and the warm tone provided by the background of the Kasota stone, so sympathetic to the murals. Whitworth reported, "Mr. Garnsey regards the interior of the Minnesota State Capitol as the finest piece of work, as a whole, that he has yet achieved, a success largely owing to the unusual understanding of color values possessed by the architect, Mr. Gilbert." In this regard Whitworth wrote particularly of the rotunda and corridors that "many strong colors [are] used—a great deal of Pompeian red, deep blue, and gold—but the coloring is so blended that the whole effect is quiet in tone."[94]

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Concern for such unity and harmony of color is one reason Gilbert had wanted Simmons to be nearer and able to make visits to the capitol. To insure the best results possible under the circumstances, Gilbert had sent him "samples of the marbles and all colors that were to be used in immediate nearness."[95]

Julie C. Gauthier (1857-1924), the author of *The Minnesota Capitol: Official Guide and History* published in 1907, recognized Simmons's assignment as the "most prominent" and "also the most difficult" in the building. The rotunda (Fig. VI:8) is the core of the building and the most dramatic and formal architectural space where numerous strong architectural elements and colors come together. Gauthier wrote that Simmons was considered "equal to the task of putting himself in touch with the surroundings, and of making his work a unit of the whole scheme." In her opinion, no one who viewed the "magnificence of the rotunda" could doubt Simmons' ability. Her words should carry some critical weight. The guidebook was approved and endorsed by Gilbert and Seabury, after Gilbert had read and corrected her manuscript. A true colleague of the muralists, Gauthier shared their Beaux-Arts training. In fact, she had attended the Académie Julian, even studying with Simmons's teacher LeFevbre as well as with Benjamin Constant. She was an art instructor and supervisor of drawing in Saint Paul high schools and lectured frequently on art, including on the subject of American decorators.[96] Certainly equipped to judge a good mural, Gauthier particularly admired the way Simmons used his colors—emphasizing blue and gold in keeping with the colors of the dome but adding strong greens, purple and flesh tones, "making an effect at once daring and harmonious." She wrote: "There is great

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boldness in the treatment of the many brilliant unadulterated colors, and they are juxtaposed in a most fascinating way."[97]

The theme of Simmons's murals, the young American spirit or American genius going west, is symbolic, of course, of a cultural Manifest Destiny and the hopes for the burgeoning of Western civilization in the country's heartland. This theme, at least, if not the allegorical rendition, would have been approved by the noted advocate of historical murals Charles Shean who asked, "For sheer picturesqueness, what equals the march of the pioneers of the west, restless emigrants from communities not yet old picking their way through the forbidding forests ever on the alert or guarding the lines of prairie schooners moving across the plains—wanderers but empire founders?"[98]

For Simmons the theme of youth going west is also autobiographical, recalling his own journey of self-discovery following his graduation from Harvard. The reference to New England scenery in the first panel for *The Civilization of the Northwest* recalls Simmons's roots and his vision for cartoons of "New England with Her Child America," described in *From Seven to Seventy.* At first the Child was just a babe in the arms of the figure symbolizing the young New England. But, then he "slipped quietly from home to go out and mingle with the rest of the world, leaving her, a toothless and old grandma, to sit by the fire and dream that she is still the young mother."[99] The mural series is also loosely reminiscent of Simmons's idea at the earliest meeting of the Minnesota capitol artists. At that time he proposed that immigration would make a good theme, and he suggesting that the "races" represented "types of Scandinavians, Germans, French, and New Englanders."[100] To Simmons, New Englanders were so homogeneous as to constitute a type or race after "two hundred years of the same

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climate, the same food, and the same life,"[101] and he, while sometimes speaking of himself and his heritage with deprecating humor, was also clearly proud of the Yankee heritage shared by many of his fellow muralists. In Simmons's murals, the single hero symbolizes in allegory the pioneer spirit going west to cultivate the land and the arts, bringing civilization westward to a savage land. In this era of optimism for progress in the arts and industry and commerce, there were also conflicting fears that rapid changes in industry and the labor force and massive waves of new immigrants would challenge and undermine the founding father's principles and American social and political values. The pioneer spirit was among such themes as courage and hard work that were celebrated in the murals to inspire the public to honor the past.

Gauthier declared that the capitol stood majestically as "a liberal education to all." With regard to the subjects for the murals, she wrote that those representing "the growth and progress of the Northwest in the direction of manufactures, commerce and agriculture from pioneer days to the present time" had been considered most appropriate. While there was understanding that "the subjects would probably have to be treated allegorically," artists had been cautioned "not to fill the building with Greek gods and goddesses, as these were considered inappropriate for a building devoted to the transaction of business."[102]

Despite the acceptance of some that a certain amount of allegory was called for in their capitol, other outspoken Minnesotans did not forget their wishes for realistic representations of their history. On 16 January 1905 the *Minneapolis Journal* published a letter from General W. D. Washburn expressing disappointment that the heroic charge of the Minnesota First Regiment at Gettysburg was not counted among

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the mural subjects. While he thought the allegorical subjects would produce "satisfactory" results, he could not accept the neglect of "Old First."[103] The next day the paper reported that the First Minnesota Regiment would indeed be glad of recognition.[104] The allegorical honoring of the pioneer spirit by Simmons's series must not have been sufficient for public-spirited citizen Julia Sherman Upton. The *Minneapolis Journal* of 25 November 1906 carried her letter to the editor asking for "something commemorative of the men and women who laid the foundations of empire in this great north star state.". She wanted among the decorations of the capitol, "a realistic painting . . .a true historic picture of the long trains of moving wagons." She requested that the legislature "do something" to "have this phase of our early life as a state properly perpetuated on canvas for the benefit of rising generations."[105] Either the symbolism of Simmons's murals was not clearly conveyed to her or she did not appreciate such abstract lessons. Simmons himself had an amusing tale regarding the misunderstanding of his symbolism. He told of an enthusiastic capitol tour guide who in his interpretation mistook his female figure of Hope "veiled in chiffon" for Sin, ignoring the nude female figure below with a vulpine head.[106]

Gilbert acceded to some of the demands for history painting, particularly those for commemoration of the Civil War, by accommodating more paintings in the Governor's Reception Room. Rufus Zogbaum's representation of the above request, *The Battle of Gettysburg* (1906), was accompanied by Howard Pyle's *The Battle of Nashville* (1906), Frank Millet's *Treaty of the Traverse des Sioux*, 1905, and *The Fourth Minnesota Regiment Entering Vicksburg* (1907), and Douglas Volk's *Father Henepin Discovering the Falls of St. Anthony* (1905) and *Mission Ridge* (1907), as

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well as two later history murals in the anteroom.[107] In the reception room (Fig. VI:9) and its anteroom these murals functioned as history paintings displayed on the wall, as in the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, rather than as dramatic elements working with the architecture. The *Western Architect* stated that Gilbert was recalling Venice in creating this room and that the paintings "will be set off to excellent advantage, becoming pictures framed in gold, and less mural in character than the paintings elsewhere in the building."[108]

In the more formal public areas of the building, Gilbert and the muralists were able to have their way with allegorical figures or a blend of allegory with figures from history. This distribution of ideal or allegorical painting to dramatic architectural spaces and real or history painting to more conventional rooms was in accord with prescriptions held by classicists such as Blashfield and Cox. Cox was even stricter in his classicism than Blashfield, who often combined ideal and historical figures and classical drapery and contemporary dress in the same work. Cox wrote to Gilbert regarding his mural *The Contemplative Spirit of the East* for the east stair hall of the capitol: "I shall consider your suggestions, of course in the details, though I hope you will not expect oriental costumes. I have rather an objection to 'local color' and prefer abstract draperies as much as possible."[109] In 1912 Blashfield set out standards for accommodating history in murals in his book *Mural Painting in America.* He allowed that it was vital for artists to "learn to treat decoratively the marking events of our history, past or contemporaneous," and that narrative painting "should find place in particularly suited portions of our buildings." However, he underscored the importance

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of "ideal art" stating that it "is the crowning glory of decoration and should find its place at the very core and centre of a public building"[110]

Writing in 1906 Edward Hale Brush maintained that historical themes interpreted by murals were among "the most effective ways to stimulate patriotism." He wrote of the increasing number of murals portraying historical subjects realistically. He also allowed that history could be told allegorically "in poetic fashion and for artistic effect."[111] The most important function of "artistic effect" was supporting the architecture and surrounding colors and decorations. At Saint Paul, Simmons's murals addressed a historical theme of local importance in pure allegory suitable for the dramatic space of the rotunda. His skill at creating powerful compositions that complement the architectural structure and decorative elements and that harmonize with nearby colors is clearly manifested here. Simmons rightly considered this the major commission of his career and his best work.[112]

The Minnesota State Capitol stood as a monument of achievement for many involved in the project, including most notably Cass Gilbert and the muralists, but even for Channing Seabury's daughter, Edith Seabury Nye, who viewed the capitol and its creators from the perspective of a young girl growing up through fourteen years of the construction process. She recalled Gilbert's qualities of honesty and diplomacy—sufficient to persuade a conservative, culturally unsophisticated legislature to spend "thousands of dollars on mural decorations." To her he represented "a true figure of an artist." He was passionately committed to his art, but "never too busy to draw pictures for us as children." Of his feeling for the capitol Nye recalled, "Mr. Gilbert always said, 'I shall never do anything better.'" The muralists in general she discovered to be

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men of character who combined "greatness and simplicity" in equal measure, with the exception of La Farge, whom she judged "less unspoiled" and "a bit of a poser," although "undeniably a great artist." Of all the artists, Simmons charmed her especially. She found him the "most picturesque" and even "the most sparkling and original" character of her experience. She judged him "probably the most extraordinarily rapid draughtsman this country has produced."[114]

In spite of all the difficulties Gilbert experienced in his attempt to bring the best art and talent to Saint Paul, including the frustrations and delays caused by Simmons and La Farge, he looked back wistfully upon the Minnesota State Capitol as an unparalleled time of opportunity and accomplishment shared by him and the artists to create a unified work according to American Renaissance ideals. He wrote to Blashfield in 1912:

> Will we ever again have just such a group of artists and such a client as in the old Minnesota Capitol enterprise—with you and La Farge, Millet, Simmons, Pyle, Walker, Cox, French, and Garnsey, what a group![115]

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[1] Neil B. Thompson, *Minnesota's State Capitol: The Art and Politics of a Public Building* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1974), 5.

[2] Edith Seabury Nye is quoted on the last pages of this chapter.

[3] Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy: The State Capitols of the USA*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 217.

[4] Thompson, *Minnesota's State Capitol*, 10-15; Hitchcock and Seale, *Temples of Democracy*, 216-217.

[5] "Minnesota's New Capitol—a Monumental Structure in Keeping with the Dignity of the North Star State," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, 22 March 1896.

[6] Prospectus for the Mural Painters, Cass Gilbert Papers, Minnesota State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society (hereafter, Gilbert Papers, MSA).

[7] Charles R. Lamb (Corresponding Secretary, Mural Painters) to Cass Gilbert, 5 February 1896, ibid.

[8] Cass Gilbert to Channing Seabury, 18 February 1896, ibid.

[9] Lamb to Seabury, 14 March 1896 (copy), ibid.

[10] "The New State Capitol: Its Corner Stone Laid with Impressive Ceremonies," *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, 28 July 1898, p. 1.

[11] Cass Gilbert, "Report: Minnesota State Capitol," March 1902, 1-2. (A handwritten note indicates that this is a copy filed with Gilbert's New York office and that there is another copy in the Saint Paul office and that the original report is filed with B. C. C. [Board of Capitol Commission]), Cass Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society (hereafter Gilbert Papers, NYHS)

[12] Ibid., 3.

[13] Ibid., 6-8

[14] Ibid., 9-10.

[15] Ibid., 11-14. (Page 14 has a handwritten note dated 16 July 1902 and initialed by Gilbert stating his concern for economy of material especially with respect to stone and marble.)

[16] Gilbert to Seabury, 26 September 1902, 2. Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[17] Gilbert to Board of State Capitol Commissioners (Report), 31 December 1902, ibid.

[18] Thompson, *Minnesota's State Capitol*, 18.

[19] For a recent survey of Simmons's career with Cass Gilbert see Sally Webster, "The Civilization of the West," and Bailey Van Hook, "High Culture by the Square Foot" in Barbara S. Christen and Steven Flanders, eds., *Cass Gilbert, Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001).

[20] Gilbert, typed report on meeting at his New York office with John La Farge, Edwin Blashfield, Edward Simmons, and Elmer Garnsey on 26 December 1902, Gilbert Papers, NYHS

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Gilbert to John Rockart (of Gilbert's New York Office), 6 January 1903, ibid.

[23] Ibid., 13 January 1903.

[24] Thomas Holyoke to Gilbert, 2 February 1903, ibid.

[25] John Rockart to Gilbert (for Mr. T. H. Anderson), ibid.

[26] Edwin Blashfield to Gilbert, 10 January 1903, ibid.

[27] Ibid., 1 May 1903.

[28] Gilbert to Board of State Capitol Commissioners, 5 May 1903, p. 2, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[29] Ibid. p. 3.

[30] A memo from Gilbert's office making corrections to Gauthier's manuscript copy of *The Minnesota State Capitol: Official Guide and History* states of the Board of Design:

> Mr. Gilbert had charge of the decoration as well as all other matters of design, and was the final arbiter as among the artists, but at his suggestion, in order that a unity of effort should be secured, Mr. French, Mr. La Farge, Mr. Garnsey, Mr. Blashfield, Mr. Simmons and himself constituted a "Board of Design," to whom questions of dispute might be referred. This "Board" held no formal meetings, and was only twice called into council; each time to pass on preliminary sketches submitted by the artists. It however served as an assurance to the artists that their work would not be marred by non-professional interference and served to unite them in effort toward a harmonious result.

Gauthier Papers, MSA; see also Gauthier, *The Minnesota State Capitol*, 16-17.

[31] Edward Simmons to Gilbert, 5 May 1903, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[32] Ibid.

[33] For more information on the resolutions made but not passed, see John Rockart, "Minnesota State Capitol Report, Meeting of State Capitol Commissioners," 7 May 1903, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[34] "Painting for New Capitol," [article is a reprint of a letter from General James H. Baker to Seabury], *Saint Paul Pioneer Press*, 24 June 1903, p.3.

[35] Ibid.

[36] "A Valuable Suggestion," ibid., p. 6.

[37] Gilbert to Seabury, 27 August 1903, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[38] Volk (1856-1935) was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and raised in Chicago. He studied in Rome at Saint Luke's Academy and in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. He moved to New York in 1879 and taught at the Cooper Union until 1884. He then went to Minneapolis where he became a founder of the Minneapolis School of Art in 1886 and served as director of the school until 1893 when he returned to New York. So although he was not a native, he had certainly been a leader in the local arts

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community. From Doreen Bolger Burke, *American Paintings in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 3 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1980), 287.

[39] Gilbert, "Minnesota Capitol Report," 12 August 1903, Gilbert Papers, NYHS; Gilbert to Seabury, 27 August 1903, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[40] Gilbert, "Memorandum: New Minnesota Capitol," 23 July 1903, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[41] Gilbert to Seabury, 27 August 1903, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[42] Gilbert to Seabury, 25 September 1903, ibid.

[43] "Articles of Agreement" between Board of State Capitol Commissioners and Edward Simmons, 2 October 1903 [copy], Papers of Board of State Capitol Commissioners, MSA.

[44] Simmons to Gilbert, 28 September 1903, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[45] Ibid., 9 October 1903.

[46] Ibid., 14 December 1903.

[47] Gilbert to Board of State Capitol Commissioners, 2 January 1904, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[48] Notes on subjects of Simmons's four spandrel panels, 4 January 1904, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[49] "Description of Mr. Simmons's pictures for the Minnesota Capitol" (typed notes), 4 January 1904, ibid.

[50] Simmons to Gilbert, 15 January 1904, ibid.

[51] Ibid., Gilbert's initialed notes at top of letter.

[52] Samuel Gilbert to Gilbert, handwritten notes of attempt to track Simmons and discover his sailing plans, ibid.

[53] Simmons to Gilbert, 16 January 1904, ibid.

[54] Seabury to Gilbert, 7 January 1904, ibid.

[55] Blashfield to Gilbert, 17 January 190[4], ibid. Blashfield dated this letter 1903, but he must have made the common mistake of continuing to write the past year in the new year, because the contents of the letter seem to refer to the events of January 1904.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Ibid.

[58] "Capitol Work is for Artists," *Pioneer Press*, 27 March 1904, p. 2.

[59] John Rockart, "Minnesota State Capitol" (Report on the board's trip to New York and the meeting held there), 2 April 1904, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

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[60] Seabury to Gilbert, 2 June 1904, ibid.

[61] Rockart, "Minnesota State Capitol" (Report on visits to Herter Brothers, Oxley & Enos Company, Sterling Bronze Company, and La Farge's studios on 10th Street and at Broadway and 40th Street.), ibid.

[62] Gilbert to Simmons (c/o Munro & Co., 7 rue Scribe, Paris) 7 June 1904, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[63] Ibid.

[64] Simmons (6 rue Bara, Paris), to Gilbert, 10 June 1904, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[65] Ibid.

[66] *Ibid., 1 July 1904.*

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] Correspondence in May indicates that Gilbert's daughter Elizabeth was dangerously ill. Seabury to Gilbert, 4 and 9 May 1904, ibid.

[70] Gilbert to Simmons, 23 July 1904, Gilbert Papers, MSA

[71] Ibid.

[72] Simmons to Gilbert, 2 August 1904, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Simmons to Gilbert (telegram) 29 July 1904, ibid.

[75] Gilbert to Simmons (telegram) 29 July 1904, ibid.

[76] Augustus Thomas to Bob [Robert Reid], undated, ibid.

[77] Walter Hale to Bob [Robert Reid], 31 July 1904, ibid.

[78] Blashfield to Gilbert, [7?- day illegible] August 1904 (received 10 August 1904), ibid.

[79] Gilbert to Seabury, 13 September 1904, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[80] Thomas to Gilbert, 29 August 1904, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[81] Simmons to Gilbert (typed copy) 13 October 1904, ibid.

[82] Ibid.; Gilbert to Board of State Capitol Commissioners, 1 November 1904, Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[83] Seabury to Gilbert, 26 November 1904, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

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[84] Gilbert to Seabury 19 April 1905, Gilbert Papers, MSA. There are two letters from Gilbert to Seabury on this date. I have combined information from both.

[85] Simmons offered to install the botched first panel while he was making a replacement; but it was clear he didn't want to, and it appears the board did not require him to do so.

[86] Gilbert to Board of State Capitol Commissioners, 26 April 1905, ibid.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Gilbert to Simmons, c/o Robert Read [Reid] 142 E. 33rd Street, NYC, 26 April 1905, ibid.

[89] Simmons and his first wife, Vesta Schallenberger, were divorced in 1902. In September 1903 he married Alice Ralston Morton, with whom he had his third son, Peter, born 11 November 1905. From Albert Lorenzo Simmons, *History of the Simmons Family* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Lincoln Herald Press, 1931), 141.

[90] Seabury to Simmons, 6 September 1905, Board of State Capitol Commission Papers, MSA.

[91] "Picture Mounted: Series of Four in Capitol Dome Is Now Complete," *Minneapolis Journal*, 19 April 1906, p. 14.

[92] *Pioneer Press*, 10 November 1905, p. 2.

[93] *Minneapolis Journal*, 10 November 1905, p. 8.

[94] The last of Simmons's panels, the one that had to be repainted, was apparently not installed until April as reported in the *Minneapolis Journal* of 19 April 1906. Perhaps that is the reason Whitworth seems to have taken her description of the murals directly from the small pamphlet in the Gilbert Papers, which was obviously printed before the murals of several artists were in place.

[95] Grace Whitworth, "The Beautiful Interior of the Minnesota State Capitol," *Craftsman* 9 (March 1906): 815-816.

[96] Julie C. Gauthier, *The Minnesota Capitol, Official Guide and History*, 21.

[97] Gauthier gave an illustrated lecture on American muralists including Simmons. The lecture was titled, "American Decorators," and her typescript for it is dated 22 October 1903. The lecture and biographical notes on Gauthier, including notes taken from the entry in *Who's Who among Minnesota Women* (1924), p. 116, are in the Gauthier Papers, MSA.

[98] Gauthier, *The Minnesota Capitol*, 20-21.

[99] Charles M. Shean, "The Decoration of Public Buildings," *Municipal Affairs* 5 (1901), 718.

[100] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, xiii, xv.

[101] Gilbert, "Report: Minnesota State Capitol," March 1902, 2-4, Gilbert Papers, NYHS.

[102] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, xv.

[103] Gauthier, *The Minnesota Capitol*, 10, 16.

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[104] "'Old First' Forgotten in Capitol Frescoes," *Minneapolis Journal*, 16 January 1905, p. 4.

[105] "Would Be Glad of Recognition," ibid., 17 January 1905, p. 6.

[106] "Honoring the Pioneers" (letter to the editor from Julia Sherman Upton), *Minneapolis Journal*, 25 November 1906, sec. 2, p. 4.

[107] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 331.

[108] Murals by Blashfield and Stanley Arthurs depicting two additional Civil War battles were added to the anteroom in 1912.

[109] "The New Minnesota State Capitol at St. Paul," *Western Architect*, 4 (October 1905): 23.

[110] Cox to Gilbert, [8?] August 1904 (date partly illegible, received 11 August 1904) Gilbert Papers, MSA.

[111] Blashfield, *Mural Painting in America* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 199-200.

[112] Edward Hale Brush, "American History and Mural Painting, *American Monthly Review of Reviews*, 34 (December 1906): 693.

[113] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 330-331; Gauthier, *The Minnesota Capitol*, 21

[114] Edith Seabury Nye, "The Men Who Built the Capitol," typescript of a talk delivered before the New Century Club of Saint Paul, 22 January 1936, MSA.

[115] Gilbert to Blashfield, 9 July 1912, Blashfield Papers, NYHS.

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Chapter VII
Capitols and Capitals

"There were capitols and capitals to decorate after St. Paul, but none of them such a large order."—Simmons[1]

At Saint Paul, Simmons had produced a quintessential American Renaissance mural series as part of a program that engaged the best decorative painters of the day and embraced the highest ideals of the Beaux-arts tradition. Simmons's panels in the rotunda of the capitol were allegorical but referred to local history. They were an enormous challenge well met. Prominently located in the most architecturally dramatic part of the building, they complemented the architectural forms and contributed to the overall impression of color harmony. Praised for being a modern rendition of allegory, these panels exemplified what was hailed as a new monumental art for the nation. As Simmons himself stated, following Saint Paul he decorated capitols and capitals—a capitol at Pierre, South Dakota; and courthouses at Des Moines, Iowa; and Mercer, Pennsylvania. But none of these presented the demands or resulted in accomplishments comparable to those of the murals at Saint Paul. Nor did the other sites enjoy the passionate, enlightened leadership of Cass Gilbert and the generous budget he worked to secure for one of the most ambitious mural programs of the era.

After Saint Paul, Simmons had a couple of smaller private commissions for murals, which are no longer extant, including four panels painted for the Players, New York, in 1906.[2] He had to wait several years for the series of public commissions that followed in the wake of the success of the Minnesota State Capitol. The South Dakota State Capitol was the first of these and remains the best

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documented to date. Frequent correspondence between Doane Robinson, South Dakota State Library Secretary, and Edwin Blashfield adds to the information in the archival material cited in the previous chapter on the Minnesota State Capitol to reveal more about American Renaissance aims. Like Channing Seabury's correspondence, Robinson's bears witness to the concern and effort on the part of state officials to represent public opinion and gain the best building possible for the money allotted. At the same time, the correspondence reflects the often complementary aspirations of artists for the development of mural painting in the United States and the special optimism for its growth in the West. Consequently, the South Dakota State Capitol will receive the most attention in this chapter.

South Dakota State Capitol, Pierre

South Dakota had achieved statehood in 1889. There were contests among several cities for designation as state capital. Although Pierre had won as the temporary location in the 1889 and 1890 elections, it was not finally established as the permanent capital until the election of 1904. In light of such rivalry, local citizens and officials were eager to "nail down" their new status by replacing the old wooden capitol of 1890 with a more monumental and permanent building, "befitting the wealth and character of the State."[3]

While the appropriation bill for a new capitol was pending in the legislature, Doane Robinson received a description of the Montana State Capitol in a recent issue of the *Contributions of the Historical Society of Montana* (Volume IV, 1903). He brought it to the attention of Governor Samuel H. Elrod, who contacted the governor

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of Montana for more information. Elrod invited one of the architects of the Montana capitol, C. E. Bell (formerly with Bell and Kent in Helena and at that time with the Minneapolis firm of Bell and Detweiler), to visit Pierre and present the Montana plans to a joint session of the 1905 legislature. The newly organized State Capitol Commission, which included Governor Elrod, then visited Helena to view the Montana capitol first hand. Commission members came away convinced that Montana had "the best capitol building for the money to be found in the United States," and awarded the contract for the new capitol to Bell and Detweiler in May 1905. At that time the cost of constructing the capitol was set at approximately $500,000.[4]

When he turned his attention to researching building interiors and especially to murals and their costs, Doane Robinson apparently sought the advice of Alexander Wilson Drake, art director of *Century Magazine*, who forwarded Robinson's letter of 3 April 1908 to Edwin Blashfield to answer. Blashfield replied, giving prices for his murals at the Minnesota State Capitol, the New York Appellate Court, and the College of the City of New York, stipulating that the cost of each painting was calculated according to both its size and the number of figures depicted.[5] Robinson and Blashfield continued their correspondence throughout 1908 and much of 1909. Robinson explained that the South Dakota State Capitol was modeled after the Montana capitol and would likely have a similar mural program. The Montana State Capitol's murals comprised one large mural measuring fifteen by eighteen feet, seven measuring approximately nine by twelve and one-half feet, and six measuring seven by eight and three-quarters feet. He stated that the Montana capitol program included

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four historical paintings, three "ideal compositions—*Mining Scene*, *Last of the Buffalo*, *Chase of the Buffalo*," plus a number of portraits, and offered his opinion that South Dakotans would want "several historical paintings" for their capitol. He added that his own preference for the largest painting would be "a very dramatic scene showing the first act of religious worship in Dakota, when Jedd Smith, the noted frontiersman, made a prayer upon the deck of the Yellowstone amid General Ashley's dead and dying men."[6] He also informed Blashfield that the capitol was to be completed, according to contract, by 1 July 1910, but that funding for the murals would not be available until after the legislature met in March of 1909, leaving approximately a year for the mural work. He asked Blashfield to estimate the minimum appropriation needed to engage the best artists.[7]

Blashfield responded by proposing his mural for the Appellate Court as a good basis for figuring the cost of murals. He explained that this mural (part of the triptych that also included a panel each by Simmons and Walker) measured ten by ten feet, contained ten figures, and had been done for the price of five thousand dollars. He suggested that given the quantity of murals planned, a number of artists could be commissioned to work on different panels, but he also advised "an intellectual scheme consistently carried out, and making all the panels interrelative, and parts of a decorative whole," a plan that could be worked out by the artists in collaboration, taking into account suggestions from Robinson and other officials. Blashfield added that, while he understood the desire to represent "a kind of evolution of the history of Dakota," he wanted to offer his opinion that some of the panels "should be decorative in character instead of purely historical" and explained further that his own manner

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"falls in between the purely decorative and historical, and includes something of both." He gave as an example of this hybrid style his mural for the Minnesota State Capitol, *The Discoverers and Civilizers Led to the Source of the Mississippi* (1904), and offered his belief that by combining such elements of pure decoration as the flying spirits and the Indian Manitou with the figures of pioneers, "the painter is able on one canvas to suggest not merely a single event [as in a strictly representational historical painting] but the general trend of the civilization of the state." Blashfield took his mission as a spokesman for mural painting very much to heart. He acknowledged that his correspondence was lengthy, but excused himself, writing: "I am deeply interested in the progress of mural painting in the United States and have very strong convictions as to what is best for its successful evolution."[8] In another letter he said much the same and added that he particularly looked to the western states, "as affording the freshest field for endeavor."[9]

Robinson explained to Blashfield that the legislature was comprised mainly of "farmers and businessmen who have little notion of real art, of what is a reasonable compensation to artists." He felt, however, that if they were approached with a solid estimate drawn from experts, they would approve the minimum amount necessary to secure "first class men." He softened on his demand for history painting, stating, "I think there are one or two historical events which we will like to have represented with a good deal of ancestry, but generally speaking, the purely artistic and allegorical will answer." Requesting a loan of photographs of mural work at other sites, Robinson stated that it would be wise to make this material available to the legislature: "We will have to combat a strong sentiment to put up with something

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cheap, but there are a goodly number of men in the state who will stand firmly for real art."[10]

In fact, a good number of women took a strong and influential stand for the best art for the capitol. Women's clubs all over the state were keenly interested in the art for the capitol. When these clubs convened in Pierre on 27 August 1908, they unanimously passed the following resolution:

> Resolved, That the Federation of Women's Clubs of South Dakota, earnestly favors provision by the legislature, and capitol commission for interior finish and decoration of the new state capitol, befitting the wealth, culture, and dignity of a great commonwealth. That the provision for interior decoration should be not less than five per cent of the entire cost of the structure and that the mural decorations should be made only by American artists of the highest skill and repute; that to this end, if it be deemed expedient, we should favor a small amount of decoration of the highest order rather than to accept anything less than the best.[11]

This resolution that less of the best art was better than more of inferior art became a theme that was taken up by "art enthusiasts" and resounded "from every corner of the state."[12]

While Robinson was hoping he could secure the best with a budget of $25,000, Blashfield informed him that $73,000 was a more realistic figure for the eighteen murals as outlined in previous correspondence. Robinson and Blashfield wrote back and forth a number of times discussing how to get the most for the lowest price. Blashfield suggested that the "amount of figure work" could be reduced, resulting in a scheme of "pure pattern" for some panels. He also responded enthusiastically to Robinson's idea of a progressive plan, starting with a few murals by the best artists and adding more when the money became available: "It would enable you . . . to take up gradually a carefully thought-out scheme, and to build from

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the foundation up; that is to say, to base your whole system of decoration on the most important works, [striking] the keynote of color and of the evolution of the general significance as to idea."[13]

At this time Robinson also sought the advice of Channing Seabury, who had so ably represented public interests with regard to the murals at the Minnesota State Capitol. Echoing the interchange between Robinson and Blashfield, Channing Seabury called the decoration of the Minnesota building "a matter of evolution." He wrote that, "as the exterior progressed and was much admired," interest in a fitting interior grew. He related that the exhibition they held in Saint Paul showing outstanding interiors of other public buildings inspired the legislature to make a new appropriation and the charge to: "Make the interior as beautiful as you have made the exterior."[14]

Seabury enclosed for Robinson a list of the Saint Paul murals and the cost for each, noting that several of the muralists, among them Douglas Volk and Frank Millet, had been "insufficiently paid" for their work. The total figure, which included $126,500 for Garnsey's work, was $260,500. He also offered to send a blank copy of the contract with the muralists for reference.[15]

Robinson wrote to Blashfield in May of 1909 that the legislature had appropriated forty thousand dollars for the mural program, but the architect had managed to persuade the Capitol Commission to have a competition for the decorations. Afraid that a competition would result in the choice of the lowest bid rather than the best talents, he wrote in some despair: "The friends of good art have exhausted their resources in an effort to have the Commission employ artists of first

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reputation to do the work but without avail." He beseeched Blashfield, "Have you friends among the decorators who can handle such a proposition with assurances that at least some of the best artists will be employed for some of the more prominent pictures?"[16]

Blashfield suggested that Robinson get in touch with Elmer Garnsey, who was "as well known as any decorator in the country."[17] Garnsey wrote a sobering reply to Robinson's letter of 17 May. He stated that if the appropriation were only fifty thousand dollars, they would not be able to engage the best painters and would have to settle "for work of a much lower standard." He proposed that the best way to proceed would be to hire a decorator of "recognized ability," for the general color scheme of the interior and to advise on the placement of the major figure panels. Local firms could then carry out the scheme under the supervision of the chief decorator. Garnsey further recommended that once the cost of this work was known, the remainder of the appropriation could be devoted to mural paintings for the most prominent spaces executed by "such men as Blashfield, Cox, Simmons, and Millet, with the assurance that the State would possess works of permanent value, however few in number." Garnsey ended by strongly advising against public bidding for the decorations, warning that such a competition would likely result in "that most worthless of possessions, 'Commercial art.'"[18]

Just when it seemed doubtful to Robinson that there would be "any good art at all,"[19] hope was rekindled by the winning scheme of W. G. Andrews of the Andrews Decorative Company of Clinton, Iowa. Although comparatively modest, his plan included proposals for five murals from Simmons, one from Blashfield, and three

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from Charles Holloway (1859-1941).[20] The Capitol Commission awarded to Andrews the forty- thousand-dollar contract for "interior decorating, mural painting and art glass."[21]

Robinson expressed his relief to Blashfield, writing that he was "delighted" that Blashfield and Simmons would be "represented in the decorations of the new Capitol." He felt that Simmons and Blashfield could carry the project and inspire the best from others:

> With yourself and Mr. Simmons represented there we will feel that the other artists employed will make an especial effort to live up to their surroundings and that we shall have really creditable art thruout the building. At least yourself and Mr. Simmons will be some leaven in the lump.[22]

Within weeks of the award of the commission for the interior, Simmons wrote to Robinson regarding research for his painting: "As it seems that I may be at work soon for the Capitol in Pierre, can you give me some help—through your special knowledge of the subject of how far we can know anything of when, how, and with whom—Lewis and Clark found the place which is now Pierre?"[23] Robinson answered immediately, expressing his "great gratification" that Simmons and Blashfield were to paint for the capitol. For accounts of the Lewis and Clark visit to the Pierre area, he directed Simmons to their journal entries for 25 through 28 September 1804, which were published and widely available. He made reference to "the interview of the 25" at "the mouth of the Teton," and added that the council in following days was held "a mile or more further up the stream" and described surrounding scenery:

> The banks of the Teton are wooded and bordered by hills three hundred feet high, grass covered but not timbered. The range of hills run[s] parallel to the

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> Missouri and half a mile distant from it. In the river in front of the council ground is a wooded island.[24]

He added that Black Buffalo was the chief of the Teton Sioux at the time of Lewis and Clark and referred Simmons to "Drake's American Indians" [Samuel Gardner Drake, *The Aboriginal Races of North America*] for more information on him. Cordially, he invited Simmons to contact him for any other help he might need.[25]

The suggested Lewis and Clark journal entries relate some uneasy encounters with local natives described unromantically as "generally ill-looking and not well made; their legs and arms small generally; high cheekbones, prominent eyes."[26] Simmons must have chosen to depict a simpler, more peaceful and idealized scene than those described in the journals. For example, there was a ceremonial dinner at which dog (a delicacy), pemmican (dried Buffalo meat), and potatoes were served and a peace pipe passed around, but the atmosphere seemed anything but relaxed with a looming threat to both the Teton Sioux and the expedition party from nearby hostile Maha [Omaha] Indians. The text for the dates pertaining to the Pierre area provides neither a truly heroic moment nor a scene suitable for depiction in a mural with few figures.[27]

The modest budget for the mural program of the South Dakota State Capitol (Fig. VII:1), in which Simmons had five murals or the largest share of the principal muralists, must have dictated the necessity for a simple composition. Simmons described his lunette (Fig. VII:2) showing a white man trading with an Indian as "a panel of the Lewis and Clark expedition which camped . . .about this place" and recounted his good fortune or intuition in his depiction of the Teton Sioux:

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> I made the river and the bluffs, with a voyageur in a coonskin cap sitting on an overturned canoe and bargaining with an Indian who is showing him a buffalo pelt . . . . [Robinson] was a great expert on Indian lore and had ferreted out much obscure knowledge, much to the annoyance of some of the painters, who were constantly having to change their figures to agree with his statements. I made an Indian with two braids of hair, but later added another, as he had his back turned and it suited my composition. This librarian wrote me an enthusiastic letter saying that he had supposed himself the only man in existence who knew that the tribe of Sioux Indians that lived in South Dakota were the only ones who wore their hair in three braids.[28]

Simmons calls his painting of the Teton Sioux an incident of what his friends would say is the way "Simmy always falls on his feet." It is also a good example of a Simmons story. He may actually have gleaned his knowledge about the three braids from information Doane Robinson sent him or to which he referred him. Also, Simmons must have been familiar with Frank Millet's painting for the Minnesota State Capitol, *The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux* (1904), in which many Sioux are shown with three braids, including a prominent foreground figure with his back to the viewer. Millet was known for his meticulous study of and attention to authentic costume and detail. The Indian figure depicted by Simmons is shown in profile as is the figure of the pioneer. The third braid down the back of the Indian is visible and indeed a pleasing addition to the figure and the composition. However, the pioneer is bare headed—not wearing a coonskin cap as stated by Simmons. Both figures are handsome and idealized, sitting iconically on the bluffs with the river in the background. Two allegorical figures in paler tones float above and beyond them in the sky. This scene is far removed from the gritty accounts of Lewis and Clark. Reviews and guidebooks of the time refer to the mural as *The Beginning of*

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Commerce or *The Advent of Commerce*, a symbolic representation of the first encounter of white traders with area natives.

Perhaps because of its blander interpretation, Simmons's mural, placed prominently at the head of the grand staircase, has stood the test of time better than Blashfield's rendition of white settlers' trampling natives in the name of progress in his mural for the Governor's Reception Room, *The Progress of South Dakota*. In the latter part of the twentieth century this mural was first renamed *Only by Our Mistakes, We Learn*, in an attempt to make it more acceptable, but eventually, in the 1990s, it was walled over.[29] Simmons's murals and the others throughout the building were cleaned and conserved during the overall restoration of the building, which began in 1975 and was completed in 1989.

Simmons's rondels for the rotunda (Figs. VII:3a and b) were even simpler than his lunette and relatively small. He designed four primarily single-figure allegorical representations of the state's strengths—family, mining, agriculture, and stock raising. The *Western Architect* described them as "heroic size figures on a solid Roman gold background." Agriculture (Fig. VII:4) is symbolized by an updated Ceres—she has a fresh, contemporary face and is wearing a simple white robe and holds a stalk of corn. Mining (Fig. VII:5) is represented by a modern Minerva, who is unconvincingly posed as though operating a rock steam drill with her slim, lissome arms. She is dressed in a green gown more suited for dancing. The livestock industry (Fig. VII:6) is portrayed by a rendition of Europa and her suitor Zeus, who has taken the form of a bull. The Europa figure is powerful and graceful. Together with the bull she makes a pleasing and more dynamic composition, as she literally takes her

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bull by the horns.[30] Her richly colored drapery billows above her dramatically, like that of Simmons's Muses at the Library of Congress. But the best loved of this series was *Family* (Fig. VII:7), (sometimes called *Motherhood*). The unusual pose of the main figure, whose back is turned revealing voluptuous hips and buttocks through her clinging gown, and her youthful grace, as well as the playfulness of the little cupidlike child, recall similar features of Simmons's acclaimed figures of the months and the seasons for the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Doane Robinson reported that Simmons thought this panel was an example of his finest work.[31] A guidebook called it Simmons's "greatest production."[32] The *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* stated that this mural, which it called *Maternity,* and the lunette mural *The Advent of Commerce* for the main staircase were "compositions worthy of any gallery."[33] The *Western Architect* also praised the series of four rotunda murals, noting "the brilliant color of their draperies blending with the general decorative scheme."[34]

The capitol building was completed a few days ahead of the deadline of 1 July and dedicated on 30 June 1910. Reviewers especially commended the interior for restraint and good taste in the overall scheme. The *Pioneer Press* applauded the avoidance of "the garish and flamboyant that sometimes disfigures public buildings."[35] The *Minneapolis Journal* recognized the integrity and honor of the commission and all those involved in the construction of the building: "With but $600,000 . . . the commission has secured a structure which will compare with any in the country in external appearance and in its interior decorations."[36] The article included praise from Blashfield:

> In truth I am amazed at what you people have accomplished with the appropriation at [your] command. While your building does not contain the

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> costly marbles and other materials which are used in the more expensive capitols of eastern states which cost millions, your building, both in its external appearance and especially in the interior finishings, will compare favorably with any of the capitols of the country, and, in fact, is ahead of many of them in the harmonious and artistic finishing which you have accrued.[37]

The *Western Architect* devoted the April 1911 issue to the South Dakota State Capitol, touting the triumph of the interior and Andrews's superior design work: "The South Dakota Capitol Building stands for all that is best in architectural design and construction, but it is in the decorative features of the interior that the greatest results have been accomplished." The writer noted especially that Andrews had chosen leading muralists with much experience and credited him and his team with creating "decorative features so harmonious . . . that the building will live as a monument to Art, a public building, admittedly one of the finest in the West."[38]

Mercer County Courthouse, Mercer, Pennsylvania

Simmons likely owed his next commission for the Mercer County Courthouse (Fig. VII:8) to his association with Andrews at Pierre. In 1911, the year after his work for the South Dakota Capitol was completed, Simmons painted four allegorical figures for the dome of the third Mercer County Courthouse (Fig. VII:9). The W. G. Andrews Decorating Company was the contractor for mural painting under the architect for the building, Charles F. Owsley of Owsley, Boucherle and Owsley, Youngstown, Ohio. The budget for the Mercer building to replace the second courthouse, recently destroyed by fire, was even more modest than that for the South Dakota State Capitol. Commissioners had originally hoped to construct a new building for $200,000, and architects were invited to submit plans voluntarily,

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without compensation. Owsley eventually won with an estimate of $325,000 for a building measuring 180 by 92 feet in September 1908. For some perspective, it helps to recall that the South Dakota State Capitol had cost nearly $800,000[39] for a building of approximately 300 feet in length by 135 feet at the central portion, the widest point.[40] For the interior decorations of that building Andrews had a budget of $40,000.[41] In Saint Paul, Garnsey had enjoyed the comparatively extravagant allotment of $260,500 to cover the large murals by Simmons and other noted muralists and his own smaller murals and general interior decorations. The capitol there measured 434 feet by 229 feet and had a total appropriation of $4,500,000 for the building and site.[42] For the Mercer County Courthouse Andrews had only $15,000 to decorate the interior.[43] He engaged three muralists to execute paintings for the rotunda dome and two courtrooms. In addition to Simmons, he chose Vincent Aderente (1880-1941) and Alonzo E. Foringer (1877-1948), two younger muralists who had received their training as loyal assistants to Blashfield and were likely recommended by him. Aderente was also working with Andrews on the Mahoning County Courthouse in Youngstown, Ohio. For his mural in Mercer, Aderente was paid $2,500 to paint *Civil Law* for one of the two courtrooms. Foringer was paid the same for a mural depicting *Criminal Law* in the other. Simmons was paid $5,000 for his four figures symbolizing "the power and justice of the law":[44] *Guilt* (Fig. VII:10), *Innocence* (Fig. VII:11), *Justice* (Fig. VII:12), and *The Power of the Law* (Fig. VII:13).[45] They were uncommon for their time and for Simmons at this point in his career in that they are strictly allegorical. Like Simmons's earliest mural figures at

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the Chicago fair, these are more than life size, seated, and have a very traditional demeanor.

The figure of Guilt is most remarkable for its unusually ominous attributes—the shrouded figure is attended by a hissing leopard and a coiled serpent about to strike. Although it looks somewhat androgynous, the figure was described as a female by Simmons. The *Youngstown Vindicator* featured Simmons's figures in an article that was reprinted, at least in part, in the *Advance Argus*, of Greeenville, Pennsylvania, giving Simmons's own descriptions:

> **Power**. Holds her shield in her left hand, while with the right she points out the power of learning, with her sword, in a great book. She is seated upon books, as sustained by knowledge. By her side Youth attends with her helmet of wisdom. The color scheme is in blue, grey and flesh.
>
> **Justice**. Holds the crystal that symbolizes truth and is attended by Youth, upholding the books of the law. She wears the purple of majesty and her attendant is clothed in scarlet.
>
> **Innocence**. In white and mauve is occupied with flowers and young animals, all in simplicity. She holds a mass of roses in her lap and is seated on green grass. The doves of innocence attend her.
>
> **Guilt**. Clothed in yellow looms out from her hood on a rock pinnacle far from human companionship. She is flanked by ferocity and guile, represented by a leopard and serpent. Her foot rests upon the skull of desolution.[46]

The article praised Simmons for his "color effects" and ability to embody "conceptions that will stand the test of time." The writer also reported that architect Charles F. Owsley found the "conception of guilt . . .very powerful," and the figure of Innocence "most pleasing."[47]

The model for *Innocence* appears to have been the same woman as in *Mining*, in the rondel in Pierre. *Power* is also represented by a female figure, but one of a sturdier build, and *Justice* shows a majestic young woman of benevolent aspect.

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Justice and Power are clothed in somber tones, and both are attended by young boys who look like those modeled after Simmons's sons in a number of his earlier murals including those at the Library of Congress and the Oyer and Terminer courtroom. The boy in front of Justice wearing a scarlet-colored robe adds the brightest note of color. The murals for this courthouse by all three painters were allegorical. But Foringer combined allegory with figures of contemporary citizens representing the public, in the manner of his mentor Blashfield. Simmons painted pure allegory—traditionally considered the most appropriate type of figurative decoration for the type of dome space he was treating.

There is scant early documentation of the present Mercer County Courthouse and its two predecessors. County commissioners' minutes from 1811 to 1907 were lost in the fire that destroyed the second courthouse in December 1907. There are also gaps in the holdings of early newspapers, and some that cover the opening ceremonies give little or no criticism of the murals. In addition, and most pertinent to the third courthouse, for which Simmons painted his murals, the commissioners' minutes covering the years 1908 to 1916 are also unlocated.[48] In 1928 the courthouse was still considered "magnificent" and "new"—an object of well-deserved pride much enriched by the work of noted artists:

> [T]he exterior attractiveness of the building is surpassed by the charm of the design and richness of the finish of the interior, with its marble covered corridors and the three story galleried dome in the center. The finish of the interior is highly ornamental with broad marble stairways leading to the upper floors. The coved ceiling of the dome is decorated with striking paintings representing the symbolic figures of "Justice," the "Power of the Law," "Innocence" and "Guilt." [49]

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The writer of the above quotation noted the distinguished careers of Simmons, Aderente, and Foringer, a native of Pennsylvania, and creator of the World War I poster "The Greatest Mother in the World" for the Red Cross. For a very small budget, Mercer County had acquired the work of Simmons, one of the leading decorative painters of the day, and two competent second-generation American Renaissance muralists who had worked along side of and were carrying on the standards established by Simmons, Blashfield, and their colleagues.

Polk County Courthouse, Des Moines, Iowa

Simmons's next commission was for the Polk County Courthouse (Fig. VII:14) in Des Moines, Iowa. It too possibly arose through his association with Andrews. Although apparently not officially connected with the project, Andrews, based in Clinton, Iowa, was the leading decorator in the Midwest at this time, and may have had at least some informal input.[50] Andrews was not among the nine bidders for the interior of the courthouse listed in the proceedings of the Board of Supervisors of Polk County.[51] Upon reviewing the bids, the supervisors selected three finalists—Otto Kell, Daniel Linnane,[52] and T. I. Stoner, all from Des Moines.[53] In June of 1912, D. J. Linnane was chosen the winner of the $25,000 contract for the interior decoration of the new courthouse designed by the Des Moines firm of Proudfoot and Bird.[54] Some supervisors were concerned that the public would not favor spending the estimated amount of $10,000 for the murals included in the contract amount. However, the formal resolution to rescind the contract and omit the murals was defeated on 1 July 1912, and the contract with Linnane for $25,000 was reapproved on the same date.[55] The murals were to fill four elongated lunettes on the

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top floor of courthouse. Each lunette measured six by thirty feet. Local artist and director of the Cumming School of Art, Charles A. Cumming (1858-1932), was not only one of the muralists but was reportedly also involved in the "general planning of the whole courthouse decoration" and particularly in the choice of subjects for the murals. According to contemporary newswriter Rose Henderson, it was Cumming's idea to approach Edgar R. Harlan, the curator of the state historical department, to make a list of appropriate historical subjects for murals. She wrote that Cumming then selected four subjects from Harlan's list for the mural and was instrumental in engaging the three other muralists, Simmons, Douglas Volk (1856-1935), and Bert G. Phillips (1868-1956).[56] The case for Cumming's involvement in the choice of muralists makes sense. Cumming and Simmons may well have been acquainted since student days in France. Cumming was enrolled at the Académie Julian, where in 1885 he studied with the same masters as Simmons—Boulanger and Lefebvre. He also painted peasants in Brittany in the 1880s.[57] Like Cumming, the other two muralists were Midwesterners, but all were Paris trained. Phillips, too, was a Julian student, and Volk had studied with Jean-Léon Gérôme.[58] With regard to the subjects chosen for the Polk County Courthouse, Phillips painted the earliest scene in the chronology of the series, *The Indian before the Coming of the White Man*; Volk depicted *The Coming of the White Man to Polk County*; Cumming took the third scene in the series, *Departure of the Indians from Fort Des Moines*; and Simmons the last, *Presentation of the Flag to Troops Departing for the Civil War* (Fig. VII:15).

Simmons later expressed a lack of enthusiasm for his assignment: "They *would* have for a subject, the Presentation of the Flag to the First Regiment that went

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to the Civil War."[59] Simmons may have been remembering his trials in portraying a Civil War subject for the Massachusetts State House, or he may have been alluding to a preference for allegorical subjects. A history of Polk County written by the state librarian and published just a year before Simmons painted this mural attested to the local importance of Simmons's subject in recalling the spirit abounding at the time Iowa's first regiment gathered to go off to war in 1861:

> The story begins with the spring and summer of 1861 when the drum and fife called men, and youths—scarcely more than boys—from the farm and village workshop, from the stores and office and factory, to risk their lives in vindication of the flag dishonored at Sumter, and in defense of the Union which state after state had threatened with destruction. The bugle-call which echoed through the valley of Des Moines, from Camp to Madison, found ready response in many hearts.[60]

Edgar Harlan who had drawn up the list of possible subjects for the courthouse murals also expressed elsewhere his recognition of the brave response to the war by local citizens and the passions stirred by news of Fort Sumter:

> Civil War stirred the heat and brought out the mettle of the strongest citizens of Des Moines. The shock of Fort Sumter sent but a momentary shudder through the souls of greatest strength and courage. Hardly had the news been received when doubting ceased, debate ended and enlistments opened. . . . it is doubtful whether any Iowa community put in uniform and on the march in shorter time its first soldiers, than did Des Moines.[61]

In addition to complaining about the subject of his panel, Simmons also grumbled about the size and shape of the lunette—"a long and narrow half-moon panel, twenty-five or thirty feet in length and only about five feet [high] at the center." He added, "I couldn't get in a human figure and a flag in a proper way, so I made an awkward girl holding it and letting it sag to the ground."[62] This description

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is misleading—the young woman does not seem awkward, and although the flag is dipped slightly, it is not sagging or touching the ground.

Simmons's painting was the first of the four to be installed. The Des Moines *Capital* reported on 25 November 1912 that the painting was being put up by Linnane and that Simmons was there to oversee the installation "of his costly painting."[63] About a month later local painter Russell Cowles (1887-1979), who assisted Volk at the Polk County Courthouse and also painted two panels for the Register and Tribune Building in Des Moines,[64] gave a very favorable review of Simmons's work at the courthouse and in general. Cowles noted Simmons's distinguished career and stated, "All of his public work is marked with a refinement and simplicity of conception and vigor of execution, together with a certain charm of treatment which appeals to nearly everyone." He felt that at the courthouse Simmons addressed with aplomb the dual function of mural painting—telling a story clearly and providing fitting decoration for the building for which it was designed:

> Mr. Simmons, adopting the manner of treatment prescribed by the nature of his subject, has illustrated this incident of history with such directness and simplicity that it cannot fail to be comprehended by everybody, which unfortunately is not always the case with allegorical and symbolic paintings. At the same time it fits into the architecture of the building, preserving the structural feeling of the solid wall in spite of its realistic appearance. The colors of the painting, harmonious in themselves, blend with the general tone of the walls so admirably that the picture seems to belong to the room and not to be an intrusive addition.[65]

Cowles further complimented Simmons's facility in creating a composition suited to the "rather unusual shape" of the lunette, which is more elongated and squatter than most. This shape comfortably accommodates or even requires more figures than the typical lunette, which is closer to the shape of a half sphere. Simmons used more

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than sixty figures to fill his panel. Cowles found the poses of the figures "very expressive and yet simple and dignified," and without "affectation" or "self consciousness," and admired the way that the eye of the viewer is drawn back to the central figure of the young woman in white. Noting the technical challenges of creating a mural that could be appreciated close up by viewers on the fourth floor and seen effectively from a distance by those looking up two long flights of stairs from the second floor, Cowles wrote that Simmons met all such demands "with the confidence of a man of wide experience who knows his business well."[66]

Of the four large lunettes at the courthouse, only Simmons's represents a single historical event, one that took place at Eighth and Walnut Streets in 1861 as the troops leaving for the Civil War were presented with a flag. The others illustrate phases of Indian or pioneer history, each with a sequence of vignette-like groupings of figures. Simmons also painted the most vibrantly colored mural. In her essay "Mural Painting in Iowa," Gladys Hamlin wrote that Simmons's color tones worked well with those of the surrounding walls and the other murals and that his style, in this case narrative and realistic, seemed to suit the building's interior:

> Simmons's work, though realistic in appearance, well fits the modernized classical architecture and at the same time lends it ornament, harmonizing with the light tan and green tones of the walls and with the naturalistic color scheme of the other paintings. It forms, with the other three lunettes of the group, a pleasing decoration appropriate to a courthouse in commemorating the history of the county.[67]

Around the period when he had completed his murals for the Polk County Courthouse (1912), Simmons reflected on the direction of his recent work. In his autobiography he recalled: "About this time (I was sixty years old) I thought it wise

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to stop and take cognizance of myself. My work was too literal, too full of details, and I wondered what the causes could be." His ruminating led him to assume that his "natural timidity" and accompanying "love of heroic deeds" were some factors and that these along with an overly protective, provincial, and prudish "early New England environment and education" might have been responsible for an overreaction on his part. He wrote: "My early ignorance had driven me in the opposite direction later in life." He believed that in regard to painting "truth dwells in deep places," and that in his wish to be truthful, he "went too far and filled [his] work with a mass of unimportant details."[68]

The 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco

Simmons recalled that in 1913, at the time of the commission for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco, he decided to take a holiday in Barbados to "free his mind of old ties and get a new point of view," before beginning his work. He found the inspiration he was looking for much as he had when he first went to Brittany and was enchanted by the fishermen, who to him displayed form and action "beautifully Greek."[69] In Barbados he also saw "the perfect figure with purely Greek movement" in the "black women walking past his window." He so soon "recovered health and spirits" and was burning with such eagerness to start on a new project that he stowed away on a steamer in order to be able to return home months before his return ticket could have secured him a berth.[70]

Simmons felt revitalized and derived great pleasure from painting the murals for the Panama-Pacific Exposition:

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> It was the delight of my life to be able to carry out in the San Francisco work an idea that I had been mulling over for years—namely, that of doing a large panel with only three pots of color—red, yellow, and blue—and three brushes. Somehow, I felt that this would simplify my work, and I think I was right. The canvases, forty-six feet long, were to be placed high in the open air, and needed a certain boldness of treatment which I meant to acquire, so I made a flesh-color sky, white drapery, pink roses, black hair, etc., all with three colors, crisscross, using red, white, and blue stripes about as wide as my finger, for the entire composition. I was in doubt as to whether I could express form in this way, but found that I could, and there is not a single outline in the two panels.[71]

In his autobiography Simmons had reported on his early fascination with Velázquez's palette revealing that he used "red, yellow, black, and white."[72] Simmons's experiment with three pots of color seems to have fulfilled a longtime desire to work with only a few colors. He used a post-impressionist-like technique, placing bars of colors next to one another. Perhaps this venture was also a development of an interest in playing around with bars of color. This is evident in the striped clothing and parasol as well as in the required flag in his previous mural for Polk County. In any case, Simmons's focus on color experiment in his murals at San Francisco was entirely appropriate considering that color was the particular pride of this exposition. The *Scientific American* proclaimed that it was "not a 'White City' but a City of Color and Beauty" and alluded to the precedent of the polychrome architecture and sculpture of ancient Greece. Jules Guerin (1866-1946),[73] in charge of color and decorations for the exposition, studied the colors of California to establish the palette for the exposition buildings, comprising a "canvas" of six-hundred and thirty-five acres.[74] He pictured in his mind's eye "a gigantic Persian rug of soft melting tones, with brilliant splashes here and there, spread for a mile or more."[75] The keynote color for buildings was an imitation of travertine marble or a

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"pale pinkish-gray buff" color, considered a particularly suitable foil for sculpture and murals. Guerin also specified the other colors that could be employed for ornamentation of specific areas to create an overall tapestry of harmony at the fair.[76] The mural paintings incorporated "these same leading colors."[77] Guerin had the responsibility of hiring the muralists and overseeing their work. He chose mainly "eastern men" with much experience whom he trusted to do the work with timeliness and excellence.[78] Simmons's good friends Robert Reid and Childe Hassam[79] were among them. Simmons painted two long rectangular panels measuring twelve feet high by forty-seven feet long for the eastern arch of McKim, Mead and White's Court of the Universe (see Fig.VII:16). He wrote that his canvases were painted in his studio with the help of an assistant, Ira Remsen (1876-1928), and that he himself was in San Francisco to see the work installed.[80] For the south wall of the arch he painted the *Lure of the Atlantic* and for the north wall *Visions of Exploration* (Figs. VII:17a and b), illustrating the theme, "Romance and Adventure of the Atlantic."[81] These panels complemented the two panels by Frank Vincent DuMond (1865-1951)[82] for the western arch, showing the march of civilization west from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific.

Stella G. S. Perry described Simmons's murals for two pictorial souvenir books of the exposition. She wrote that Simmons's murals honored the impulses and ideals that "brought men across the sea," from the earliest explorers to current immigrants. She saw vitality and grace in his work—"that fresh juvenility of touch, that exquisite lucid tenderness of color and gentle lightness of motion that give his work its delightful poetic quality." But she also paid attention to deeper truth and

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imagery, which she found always present in Simmons's art, as she described his panels. In *Lure of the Atlantic*, a figure representing the Call of the New World leads the adventurers who sailed the Atlantic, beginning with figures from ancient times; then southern and northern European explorers from the Renaissance; a missionary priest; "the artist, looking backward to tradition while moving forward;" followed by "the modern immigrant, fired with the same fine courage" that motivated the earlier adventurers. A veiled figure symbolizing the unknown future brings up the rear, "still hearkening to the onward call."[83] A line of vessels depicting those used from earliest explorations to modern times fills in the background and alludes to the promising future offered by the Panama Canal. *Visions of Exploration* illustrates "the ideals and dreams that led men onward to brave the deep, dreams that still lead them to dare fortune." In advance of the procession are two figures—Hope and Illusionary Hope, the latter leaving a trail of pretty bubbles. Adventure follows, leaning over to catch the bubbles. A more stately group takes center stage personifying more solid ideals—Commerce, Imagination, Fine Arts, and Religion—that beckon adventurers and early settlers. At the right is a figural group representing the principal values that still motivate the modern immigrant—Wealth and Family. Perry noted the Taj Mahal and "a modern city" in the background and stated that they stood for the "ideal and the practical."[84] These architectural motifs also signified the nations of the East and West, the themes for the two arches of Court of the Universe embodied in the sculptural groups atop each arch. They could as well refer to ancient and modern cultures and the so-called westward progression of civilization.

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Another writer on the fair, Eugen Neuhaus, University of California professor and chairman of the Western Advisory Committee for the exposition, remarked that Simmons used "a very unusual technique of broken columns, without losing a certain desirable simplicity of surface." Neuhaus particularly liked the "graceful drawing" of the allegorical figures in the *Visions of Exploration*.[85] But although he admired the "delicacy" and "refined coloring" of Simmons's compositions and found them "delightful" when considered on their own, he judged that they were "not in accord with the architecture" and did not hold up well "in the overawing surroundings of the great arch."[86]

When Simmons tried to inject vitality through novel brushwork in the murals for the San Francisco exposition, he apparently fell short of his earlier achievements in powerful effect and strong relation to the surrounding architecture. It should be noted that although he may have felt himself rejuvenated and reinspired by his visit to Barbados, the revitalization of American Renaissance mural painting, at this point in its twilight years, was probably an impossible task.

Exposition President Charles Moore dimmed the lights at "the end of a perfect day" at the closing ceremonies of the Panama-Pacific Exposition in the Court of the Universe on the evening of 4 December 1915, with the farewell words, "Friends, the exposition is finished, the lights are going out." At the same time it could be said that the lights were going out on Simmons's mural painting career. Indeed they were fading for the whole era of the American Renaissance. After this exposition, for Simmons, there were no more large public commissions, the mainstay of his career. Allegorical mural painting—the mode preferred by Simmons, Blashfield, Cox, and

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others who were most committed to the classic American Renaissance ideal of the unity of architecture, painting, and sculpture—had been losing ground with the public since the turn of the century. Just a few years earlier in 1912, Cass Gilbert had apparently already sensed a demise when he asked Blashfield, "Is our American Renaissance passing? All too short lived? Or are we going on to yet greater things? Let us hope and work on."[87] In 1917, the year generally accepted as the closing one of the era, mural painter Will Low seemed appropriately aware of the end. In a letter to Cox, he wrote that he felt his own work for the State Education Building in Albany was "hopelessly out of touch with art as she is spoke at the present time" and that they, the mural painters who only yesterday were "the insurgents," had become "the *vielle garde*."[88]

European modernism was the new wave, the nation was becoming involved in the World War, and the Gilded Age and its aesthetics were passé. By the 1930s the work of Simmons and others had begun the slide into nearly a half-century of oblivion or ridicule. In 1902, Pauline King's history, *American Mural Painting*, had regarded such work as the highest form of painting signaling the birth of a national art; in 1939, James Watrous's dissertation, "Mural Painting in the United States: A History of Its Style and Technique," treated the allegorical murals of the American Renaissance as sterile relics of misplaced idealism, vapid and "ridiculous," with no relation to the American scene.[89] To Watrous these murals were the product of the "foreign infatuation" of a "painterly and architectural clique." He pointed out the predominant technique of executing murals on canvas to be subsequently attached to the wall, in imitation of fresco, as yet another "false note."[90] He was particularly

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scathing in his assessment of Simmons's work. Calling the entire mural program of the Panama-Pacific Exposition a "miserable spectacle," he criticized Simmons's central group of *Visions of Exploration*, "Commerce, Inspiration, Truth and Religion," (Fig. VII:18) as a "totally uninspired representation of four American women who seemed to be going mechanically through the paces of a civic pageant."[91] His notice of Simmons's *Civilization of the Northwest* for the Minnesota State Capitol was even harsher. He found the subject matter of "American Genius"—banishing evils and "bringing civilization and culture to the Northwest,"—entirely "absurd."[92]

Gladys Hamlin, writing her "History of Mural Painting" in the same year Watrous completed his dissertation, described Simmons's murals for the Panama-Pacific Exposition as "poetic in feeling and treatment"[93] and gave a more temperate overview of Simmons's career. She noted that he was able "to impart to symbolical themes a contemporary tone." Praising the Minnesota State Capitol murals as an example of the artist's highest achievement, she wrote: "Though his inspiration is uneven, he at times reaches greater heights than any of his contemporaries, as his work at St. Paul demonstrates; for this last, in contrast to his earlier symbolical painting, shows much originality and imagination."[94]

Hamlin's assessment is close to that of Simmons's contemporaries and seems reasonable again today. Simmons was among the most sought after and productive muralists of the period. His abilities were highly esteemed by artist colleagues, and he was more versatile in technique and style than most muralists. Although he apparently preferred allegorical themes, he executed purely historical murals for three

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sites. The two historical panels for the Massachusetts State House were unusual and original in the inclusion of landscape and his novel vantage point.

Most of Simmons's murals survived the worst decades of disfavor and neglect in the mid-twentieth century. Two of his mural programs—those for the Criminal Courts Building and for the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel—have even outlived their original sites and are reinstalled in replacement buildings. When a new regard for this art arose in the last quarter of the twentieth century, many of Simmons's murals were restored as were their surrounding decorative settings. Simmons's work has endured in numerous "capitols and capitals" to exemplify the spirit and substance of the Gilded Age.

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[1] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 331.

[2] Simmons painted four panels of summer scenes for the piazza behind the club's dining room in 1906. By 1932, they were already badly damaged by weather and apparently eventually totally lost. I could find no photographs or revealing descriptions of them other than that they were "summer scenes." (*Players Bulletin* (January 1932): 20; Walter Oettel, *Walter's Sketch Book of The Players* (New York: Players, 1943), 49. In 1915 and 1916 Simmons worked on decorations for the ceilings of two garden pavilions on the eastern terraces of the John D. Rockefeller estate, Kykuit, Pocantico Hills, New York. The contract between John D. Rockefeller and Simmons gave Simmons the right to retain and reproduce his sketches and cartoons for the murals, and allowed that the murals could be photographed and exhibited by the artist with the name of the owner. They could also be published in the catalogue of the Architectural League of New York, but not elsewhere without prior agreement of the owner. Correspondence in the Rockefeller Archive Center reveals that these murals too suffered weather damage. Within a decade they were apparently badly repainted by someone other than Simmons and subsequently removed. Contract between John D. Rockefeller and Edward Simmons, 27 April 1915, William Welles Bosworth [architect] to John D. Rockefeller, 2 December 1915, Rockefeller to Bosworth, 3 December 1915, Simmons to Rockefeller, 15 July 1916, Rockefeller to Simmons, 22 July 1916, Bosworth to Rockefeller, 15 September 1916, Bosworth to Rockefeller, 11 October 1926, Cynthia Bronson Altman [Kykuit curator]to Susan Lehman, 23 March 1995, Sumner Crane to Altman, 6 July 1995 [Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman have searched the annual exhibition catalogues of the Architectural League and found no reproductions relating to these murals.], Rockefeller Archive Center, Tarrytown, New York.

[3] Doane Robinson, "South Dakota's New State House," *Dacotah Magazine*, July 1908: 97; "Capital and Capitol History of South Dakota,"*South Dakota Historical Collections*, V (1910), 181-3; "The South Dakota Capitol Building, Pierre, South Dakota, C. E. Bell, Architect," *Western Architect* 17 (April 1911) 42; Harold H. Schuler, *The South Dakota Capitol in Pierre* (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1985), 2-4, 11.

[4] "Capital and Capitol History of South Dakota,"107-199; Schuler, *The South Dakota Capitol in Pierre*, 20-21.

[5] Edwin Blashfield to Doane Robinson, 15 April 1908, Doane Robinson Papers, South Dakota State Archives (hereafter Robinson Papers, SDSA).

[6] Robinson to Blashfield, 30 April 1908, ibid. This subject of prayer following a fierce battle between traders and Indians on 2 June 1823 was interpreted by Charles Holloway for the largest mural—a panel of twelve by twenty feet placed above the speaker's desk in the House chamber. "Capital and Capitol History of South Dakota," 242-243.

[7] Robinson to Blashfield, ibid.

[8] Blashfield to Robinson, 7 May 1908, ibid.

[9] Ibid., 22 June 1908.

[10] Robinson to Blashfield, 14 May 1908, ibid.

[11] "Capital and Capitol History of South Dakota," 240.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Blashfield to Robinson, 25 May and 22 June 1908, Robinson Papers, SDSA.

[14] Channing Seabury to Robinson, 10 July 1908, ibid.

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[15] Ibid., 30 June 1908.

[16] Robinson to Blashfield, 6 May 1909, ibid.

[17] Blashfield to Robinson, 13 May 1909, ibid. Blashfield noted that Garnsey had been in charge of interior decoration for some of the most celebrated public buildings in the nation, including the Library of Congress and the state capitols of Rhode Island, Minnesota, and Iowa.

[18] Elmer Garnsey to Robinson, 20 May 1909, ibid.

[19] Robinson to Blashfield, 4 June 1909, ibid.

[20] Painter and decorative artist Charles Holloway was born in Philadelphia in 1859. He studied at Washington University and the Saint Louis School of Art. At the Paris Exposition of 1900 he was awarded a gold medal for glass sketches and cartoons, which were purchased by the French government. He was a member of the association called the Mural Painters. His decorative work included murals for the Auditorium Building and Steinway Hall in Chicago; Wabash Station, Pittsburgh; the Studebaker Admistration Building in South Bend, Indiana; the Allen County Courthouse in Fort Wayne, Indiana; the Milwaukee Post Office; the State Capitol of South Dakota; and the Court of Palms at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco; as well as stained glass windows in Illinois at the Keeley Institute in Dwight and at Northwestern University. (*An Exhibition of Paintings under the Aupices of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, By the Mural Painters of the Expositon, in the Palace Hotel, San Francisco, March Sixth to March Twenty-First, Nineteen Hundred and Fourteen*, exh. cat., Archives of California Art, The Oakland Museum, Oakland, California.)

[21] Schuler, *The South Dakota Capitol*, 53.

[22] Robinson to Blashfield., 27 August 1909, Robinson Papers, SDSA.

[23] Simmons to Robinson, 8 September 1909, ibid.

[24] Robinson to Simmons, 11 September 1909, ibid.

[25] Ibid.

[26] John Bakeless, ed., *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* (New York: Mentor, Penguin Group, 1964), 72.

[27] Ibid., 70-76.

[28] Simmons, *Seven to Seventy*, 332.

[29] "Panel Looking at Future of Capitol Wall Mural," *Aberdeen* [South Dakota] *American News*, 7 October 1993. Apparently, in 1993, at the time of this article, the covering of the mural was still under discussion. It had been covered by the time I visited in 1999.

[30] According to Greek mythology, Europa, daughter of Phoenician king Agenor, was picking flowers by the shore, when she was noticed by Zeus, who was immediately besotted. Disguising himself as a handsome bull, he appeared and persuaded her to ride on his back. He then quickly carried her off across the ocean to Crete. She bore him several sons including Minos. This myth was depicted by numerous artists during the Italian Renaissance.

[31] Doane Robinson, *Encyclopedia of South Dakota*, as quoted in Schuler, *The South Dakota State Capitol*, 53.

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[32] *Capitol Guide and Directory* ([Pierre]: State of South Dakota, [1923?], 5

[33] "So. Dakotans Dedicate This, Their Capitol, This Week: An Unusual Crowd Expected at Pierre on Thursday," *Saint Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, 25 June 1910.

[34] "Decoration of South Dakota Capitol," *Western Architect* 17 (April 1911): 41.

[35] "So. Dakotans Dedicate This, Their Capitol, This Week."

[36] "Handsome New South Dakota Capitol is Dedicated at Pierre," *Minneapolis Journal*, 30 June 1910, 6.

[37] Ibid.

[38] "Decoration of South Dakota Capitol," 40.

[39] Schuler, *The South Dakota Capitol in Pierre*, 31.

[40] "Decoration of South Dakota Capitol," 42.

[41] Schuler, *The South Dakota Capitol in Pierre*, 53.

[42] Thomas O'Sullivan, *North Star Statehouse: An Armchair Guide to the Minnesota State Capitol* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Pogo Press, 1994), 1.

[43] Robert B. Fuhrman, *Hail Temple Built to Justice* (Mercer, Pennsylvania: Mercer County Historical Society, 1994), 25.

[44] "Art at Court House," *Advance Argus* [Greenville, Pennsylvania], 14 September 1911.

[45] The amounts paid for the murals are indicated by two certificates of payment to W. G. Andrews Decorating Company, one dated 27 July 1911, showing a contracted amount of $5,000 for Simmons and the other dated 13 October 1911 in the amount of $5,000 for two mural paintings that must be those of Aderente and Foringer. Photocopy in the "Simmons" file, archives of the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York.

[46] "Art at Court House."

[47] Ibid.

[48] Fuhrman, *Hail Temple Built to Justice*, 2-3.

[49] "Mercer County's Pride Well Placed in Splendid Court House," *Mercer Dispatch*, 17 August 1928.

[50] Richard Murray also believes that Andrews may have played a part in the choice of mural painters.

[51] P. S. Simmons Painting Co., Paterson, New Jersey; Otto Kell, Des Moines; Henry Ohoue, Kansas City; L. A. Thiel Co., Chicago; Buck Brothers, Des Moines; Phillipson Decorating Company, New York; Storm and Mehler, Des Moines; Daniel Linnane, Des Moines; T. I. Stoner, Des Moines.

[52] The "Proceedings of the Board of Supervisors" spell this name alternately Linane and Linnane.

[53] "Proceedings of Board of Supervisors" 15 June 1912, Archives, County of Polk, Des Moines, Iowa.

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[54] The French Renaissance Revival courthouse designed by architects George W. Bird and W. T. Proudfoot was built at a cost of $750,000 and dedicated on 31 October 1906.

[55] Proceedings of Board of Supervisors., 18 June and 1 July 1912.

[56] Rose Henderson, "Notable Painting by Chas. A. Cumming Completes Group in Court House," Des Moines *Register and Leader*, 29 March 1914, files of historian John Zeller, Des Moines.

[57] William H. Gerdts, *Art Across America* (Abbeville Press: New York, 1990) 3: 25-27.

[58] Ibid., 152-153; 12-14.

[59] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*. 332.

[60] Johnson Brigham, *Des Moines: The Pioneer of Municipal Progress and Reform of the Middle West Together With the History of Polk County, Iowa: The Largest, Most Populous and Most Prosperous County in the State of Iowa* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1911), 1: 708.

[61] Edgar R. Harlan, "Des Moines, Iowa," in *Art Work of Des Moines, Iowa* (Chicago: Gravure Illustration Company, 1915), 7.

[62] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 332.

[63] "First Painting of $10,000 Set Installed Today," Des Moines *Capital*, 25 November 1912, 10.

[64] Gladys E. Hamlin, "Mural Painting in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 37 (July 1939): 253.

[65] Cowles, "The Simmons Painting in the Polk County Court House," Des Moines *Register and Leader*, 5 January 1913, files of John Zeller.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Hamlin, "Mural Painting in Iowa," 254.

[68] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 332-335.

[69] Ibid., 143.

[70] Ibid., 337.

[71] Ibid. 338.

[72] Ibid.,152.

[73] Jules Guerin, born in Saint Louis, Missouri, studied at the Académie Julian in 1895 with J. P. Laurens and Jean-Joseph Benjamin-Constant. Guerin was noted as a painter, muralist, and renderer of architectural presentation drawings.

[74] "The Great International Panama-Pacific Exposition," *Scientific American* 112 (27 February 1915): 195.

[75] Elmer Grey, "The Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915," *Scribner's Magazine* 54 (July 1913): 48.

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[76] In addition to travertine other colors were: French-green for lattices and exterior woodwork; oxidized copper green (mottled light green) for domes; blue-green for ornamentation of the travertine and bases of flagpoles; pinkish-red-green for flagpoles; wall-reds in three tones ranging from terra-cotta to deep russet for interiors of principal courts; yellow-golden-orange for highlighting the travertine and creating shadow effects in moldings and statuary; deep cerulian blue and oriental blue for ceilings and other vaulted recesses; gray, a color very close to the travertine. From Lowell Hardy, "Sculpture and Color at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition," *Out West Magazine* 8 (December 1914): 326-328.

[77] Ibid., 329.

[78] Eugen Neuhaus, "Sculpture and Mural Decoration," *Art and Progress* 6 (August 1915): 371.

[79] Simmons and Hassam painted landscapes together in the California countryside in 1914. *California: One Hundred Forty Years of Art Produced in the State*, exh. cat., New York, Richard York Gallery, 1996, 36.

[80] Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, 339; Lowell Hardy in "Sculpture and Color at The Panama-Pacific International Exposition," p. 330, wrote that the muralists began their work in January of 1914 in studios made for them in the Palace of Machinery. In a letter to his son Will dated either 23 January or February 1914 [letter says January but postmark is 24 February 11 a. m., San Francisco, 1914], Simmons wrote that he was with Hassam and that he had "just landed a decorative commission," was "having the time of his life," and would take a studio there and "settle down." Simmons to Billy, [23 February 1914], collection of Sarah Simmons White, typed transcript courtesy of Sumner Crane.

[81] Stella G. S. Perry, *The Sculpture & Murals of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco: Walgreen Company, 1915), 87.

[82] Frank Vincent DuMond, a painter and illustrator originally from Rochester, New York, was yet another Julian student. He studied with Gustave Boulanger, Jules Joseph Lefebvre, and Benjamin-Constant in 1888.

[83]Perry, *The Sculpture and Mural Decorations of the Exposition* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915), 190; Perry, *The Sculpture & Murals of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, 87-88. Perry wrote of *Lure of the Atlantic* that the first figure to answer the "Call of the New World" was the man of Atlantis, "who, according to the old legend, explored the ocean in the search for Yucatan." Another writer on the exposition, Hamilton Wright, described the figures in Simmons's *Lure of the Atlantic* as "the half savage of the lost continent of the Atlantic, the Roman conqueror, the Spanish explorer typified by the figure . . .Columbus, . . .Sir Walter Raleigh, a priest typifying the early Franciscan missionaries . . ., the artist bringing the arts, and the workman immigrant of today." Hamilton Wright, "Mural Decorations at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition," in *Art in California*, Bruce Porter *et al.* (San Francisco: R. L. Bernier Publisher, 1916), 133-134.

[84] Perry, *The Sculpture & Murals of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition*, 87-88; for more recent consideration of Simmons's work at San Francisco see Portia Lee, "Victorious Spirit: Regional Influences in the Architecture, Landscaping, and Murals of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition" (Ph. D. diss., George Washington University, 1984).

[85] Neuhaus, *The Art of the Exposition* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915), 64.

[86] Ibid. 63-64.

[87] Moore as quoted in Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 232.

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[88] Cass Gilbert to Blashfield, 9 July 1912, Blashfield Papers, NYHS.

[89] Will H. Low to Kenyon Cox, 8 October 1917, Kenyon Cox Papers, Avery Library, Columbia University, as quoted in Richard Murray, "Painting and Sculpture," in *The American Renaissance*, exh. cat. (Brooklyn Museum, 1979) p. 189.

[90] James Scales Watrous, "Mural Painting in the United States: A History of Its Style and Technique" (Ph. D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1939), 81, 84.

[91] Ibid. 95.

[92] Ibid., 96.

[93] *Ibid.*, 79.

[94] Hamlin, "Mural Painting in Iowa," 252.

[95] Ibid., 254.

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Epilogue

As we have seen, mural painting absorbed most of Edward Simmons's time and efforts from the early 1890s onward through the Panama-Pacific Exposition. His interest in easel painting, however, had not ended with the highly successful production of figure paintings and marines that he turned out during his years in Concarneau and Saint Ives. Intermittently, he continued to paint portraits, figure paintings, and landscapes. While he did not participate as fully as other members of the Ten American Painters in the annual exhibits held by the group from 1898 to 1918, his work was included in fifteen out of twenty-one exhibitions. He often submitted older paintings, but on a couple of occasions he seems to have shown canvases that represented fresh inspiration and subject matter.

Following his return from France, where he had been at work from 1904 to 1906 on the Minnesota State Capitol murals, Simmons joined his friend Childe Hassam in the summer of 1906 at Old Lyme, Connecticut. The art colony there had become, thanks largely to Hassam's influence, a haven for American Impressionists. Like others of this group, including a number of his colleagues from the Ten such as Hassam, J. Alden Weir, and John H. Twachtman, Simmons began to focus on American scenery of a modest and intimate nature in his easel paintings, depicting familiar and sometimes nostalgic rural and suburban settings, especially of New England. Just as there had been a demand for representing local American history in mural painting, there was a parallel desire for local scenery in easel painting. Hamlin Garland was one writer who expressed this kind of nationalism when he declared in *Crumbling Idols* in 1894: "Art to be vital must be local in its subject." Simmons

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similarly stated in a eulogy for his friend Twachtman in the *North American Review* in April 1903: "No man expresses well in any art what he does not know to the bottom. It is as necessary for him who wished to paint landscape to live surrounded by what he loves as for him who would paint an elephant to go find the animal." Simmons was apparently energized by his visit to Old Lyme and the company of Hassam. The following year he exhibited a number of landscapes, one of these is *A July Afternoon, Lyme, Connecticut*, 1906 (Florence Griswold Museum).

In 1914 Simmons had another chance to paint landscapes with Hassam when they went to California to work on mural commissions at the Panama-Pacific Exposition. Together they roamed the hills near San Francisco, and in at least in one case even rendered the same scene in San Anselmo. Hassam painted *Hill of the Sun, San Anselmo*, and Simmons produced *Bosom of the Land* (private collection). The latter painting and Simmons's *Marin Hillside* (private collection), also of 1914, show energetic, expressive brushwork—elongated strokes and even bars of color—somewhat related to the adventurous brushwork of his Panama-Pacific murals. Simmons and other muralists participating in the exposition showed a selection of their easel works at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, and this exhibit subsequently traveled to the Portland Art Museum in Oregon. There were six works by Simmons, including figure paintings, a landscape entitled *The Lower Connecticut* (unlocated), and an early marine from Saint Ives.

Simmons went to Puerto Rico in the winter of 1918. Among his papers in the possession of his granddaughter Sarah White is an official letter from the island's chief of police, dated 15 February 1918. The chief's letter asks all police on the

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island to offer protection to Simmons, who "visits the Island of Porto Rico for the purpose of painting" and to extend to him "every courtesy and every possible assistance." In the exhibition of the Ten the following year at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, Simmons showed a painting entitled *Marine—Porto Rico* (unlocated). In the early 1920s, Simmons enjoyed a late-in-life flirtation by correspondence with fellow painter Lucia Fairchild Fuller (1872-1924), which had been sparked by the publication of his autobiography. He wrote to her on 5 July 1923 that he could no longer afford a studio like the one he had in Carnegie Hall, but that he shared a room on Madison Avenue where he helped pay the rent. In a letter of 6 June 1923 he wrote that he was feeling strong and "doing good work again." A fine example of a vigorous American Impressionist work of this period is his *Brook in Spring*, 1924 (Florence Griswold Museum).

Today the number of known Simmons easel paintings is relatively small. In the past year, two important easel works from the 1880s, *Girl of Concarneau* (private collection) and *Corner of the Market* (art market) have come to light. These works add to the current recognition of the strength of his oeuvre. Arguably he was a versatile and accomplished easel painter. Yet, he seems mainly to have produced these paintings at certain times, when either the charms of a new locale or the company of a painter friend like Hassam inspired him. Given his outgoing nature, his pursuit of the good life, and his enjoyment of the society of other artists, it is not surprising that he flourished in art colonies and produced most of his best easel paintings there and at a few other points in his life when the right company and conditions prevailed.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

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SARAH ALDEN (BRADFORD) RIPLEY
Grandmother of Edward Simmons
(From a pencil drawing by Edward Simmons)

Fig. I: 1. Edward Simmons, *Sarah Alden (Bradford) Ripley*, Grandmother of Edward Simmons (from a pencil drawing). From Edward Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy: Memories of a Painter and a Yankee* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), opp. p. 10.

Fig. I: 2. Jules Bastien-Lepage, *The Communicant*, 1875, oil on canvas, 21 x 15 in., Musée Tournai. Courtesy Visual Resources, Graduate School and University Center, City University of New York [hereafter, Visual Resources, GC, CUNY].

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Fig. I: 3. Bastien-Lepage. *Nothing Doing (Pas Mèche)*.1882. oil on canvas. 52 x 34 ¾ in., National Gallery of Scotland. *Illustrations* (Edinburg, 1965). Courtesy Visual Resources. GC. CUNY.

Fig. I: 4. Bastien-Lepage. *Joan of Arc*. 1879. oil on canvas. 100 x 110 in., Metropolitan Museum of Art. Courtesy Visual Resources. GC. CUNY.

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Fig. I: 5. Edward Simmons, *La Blanchisseuse (The Laundress)*, 1882, oil on canvas, unlocated, reproduced as *Homeward Bound* in Clarence Cook, *Art and Artists of Our Time*, vol. 3 (New York: Selmar Hess, 1888), p. 297. From Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman "In Memoriam: Simmons's *The Carpenter's Son* (1888-1996)," *American Art*, Summer 2000, p. 81.

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Fig. I: 6. Jules Bastien-Lepage. *Les Foins (The Haymakers)*, 1877, oil on canvas, 61 x 70 7/8 in., Musée d'Orsay. From Musée d'Orsay, *From Courbet to Cezanne: A New 19th Century*, exh. cat. (Paris: Éditions de la Réunion des musées nationaux, 1986), p.148. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. I: 7. Edward Simmons, *Communion Day*, 1883, oil on canvas, 17 x 11 in., John H. Surovek Gallery, Palm Beach. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. I: 8. Edward Simmons. *Awaiting His Return*. 1884, oil on canvas, 21 x 15 ½ in., SKI Galleries. From *Antiques*, January 1980. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. I: 9. Charles Sprague Pearce, *The Water Carrier*, 1883, oil on canvas, 56 x 44 in., New York, Jordan-Volpe Gallery, 1981. From *Antiques*, February 1981, p. 319. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. I: 10. Anna Bilinska-Bohdanowicz, *At the Seashore (Nad brzegium morza)*, 1886, oil on cardboard, 24 x 19 11/16 in. Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie. From Gabriel P. Weisberg and Jane R. Becker, editors, *Overcoming All Obstacles: The Women of the Académie Julian* (New York: The Dahesh Museum and New Brunswick, N. J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999), p. 48.

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Fig. I: 11. Edward Simmons. *Playing Jackstones*. 1883. oil on canvas. 30 x 42 in. From *American Art Review* 3 (July-August, 1976), p. 22.

Fig. I: 12. Marie Bashkirtseff. *The Meeting*. 1884. oil on canvas. 75 x 69 in., Musée d'Orsay. From Weisberg and Becker, editors, *Overcoming All Obstacles*, p. 98

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Fig. I: 13. Edward Simmons, *Le Printemps*, 1883, oil on canvas, 58 x 38 in., Mr. and Mrs. Haig Tashjian. From Ronald Pisano, *American Realist and Impressionist Paintings from the Collection of Mr and Mrs. Haig Tashjian* (New York: Sterling Regal, Inc., 1982, Pl. 12). Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. I: 14 a. Edward Simmons, illustration from Blanche Willis Howard, *Guenn: A Wave on the Breton Coast* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1884), p. 22.

Fig. I: 14 b. Edward Simmons, illustration from Blanche Willis Howard, *Guenn*, p. 23.

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Fig. I: 14 c. Edward Simmons, illustration from Blanche Willis Howard, *Guenn*, p. 32.

Fig. I: 15. Edward Simmons, frontispiece from Blanche Willis Howard, *Guenn*.

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Fig. I: 16. Simmons, *The Carpenter's Son*, 1888, oil on canvas, 66 x 50 ½ in., formerly First Unitarian Church, New Bedford, Massachusetts, vandalized in 1996, now mostly missing. From Carolyn Kinder Carr et al., *Revisiting the White City: American Art at the 1893 World's Fair*, (Washington, D. C.: National Museum of American Art and National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1993),p. 169, Pl. 65. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. I: 17. Simmons, *The Mother*, 1888-1891, oil on canvas, 79 x 55 in., private collection. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. I: 18. Simmons. *Night, St. Ives Bay*,1889. oil on canvas. 50 ¼ x 66 ½ in. private collection. Courtesy Visual Resources. GC. CUNY.

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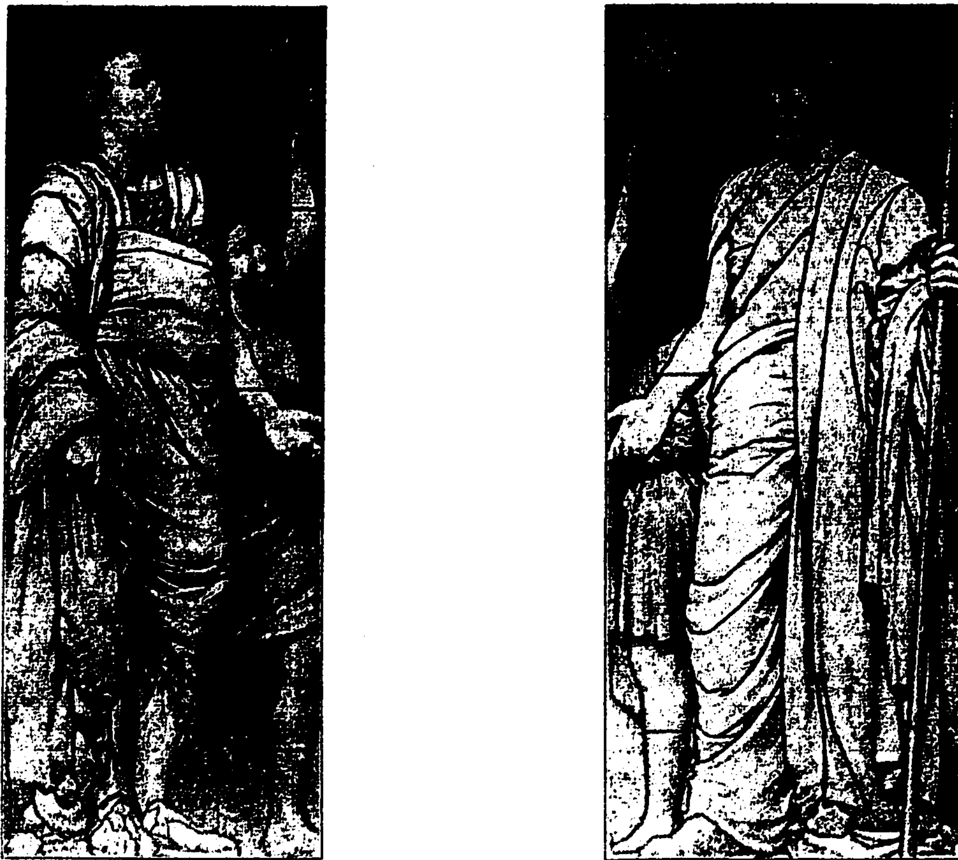

Fig. II: 1. Photo-reproduction of Simmons's drawing for the window panels for Memorial Hall, designed by Edward Simmons and executed in glass by the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company, New York. From *Seventh Report of the Class Secretary of the Class of 1874 of Harvard College* (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1899), opp. p.159.

Fig. II: 2. Line drawing of Simmons's design for the Class of 1874 window for Memorial Hall. From "Memorial Windows for Harvard." New York *Sun*, 16 April 1892, 7.

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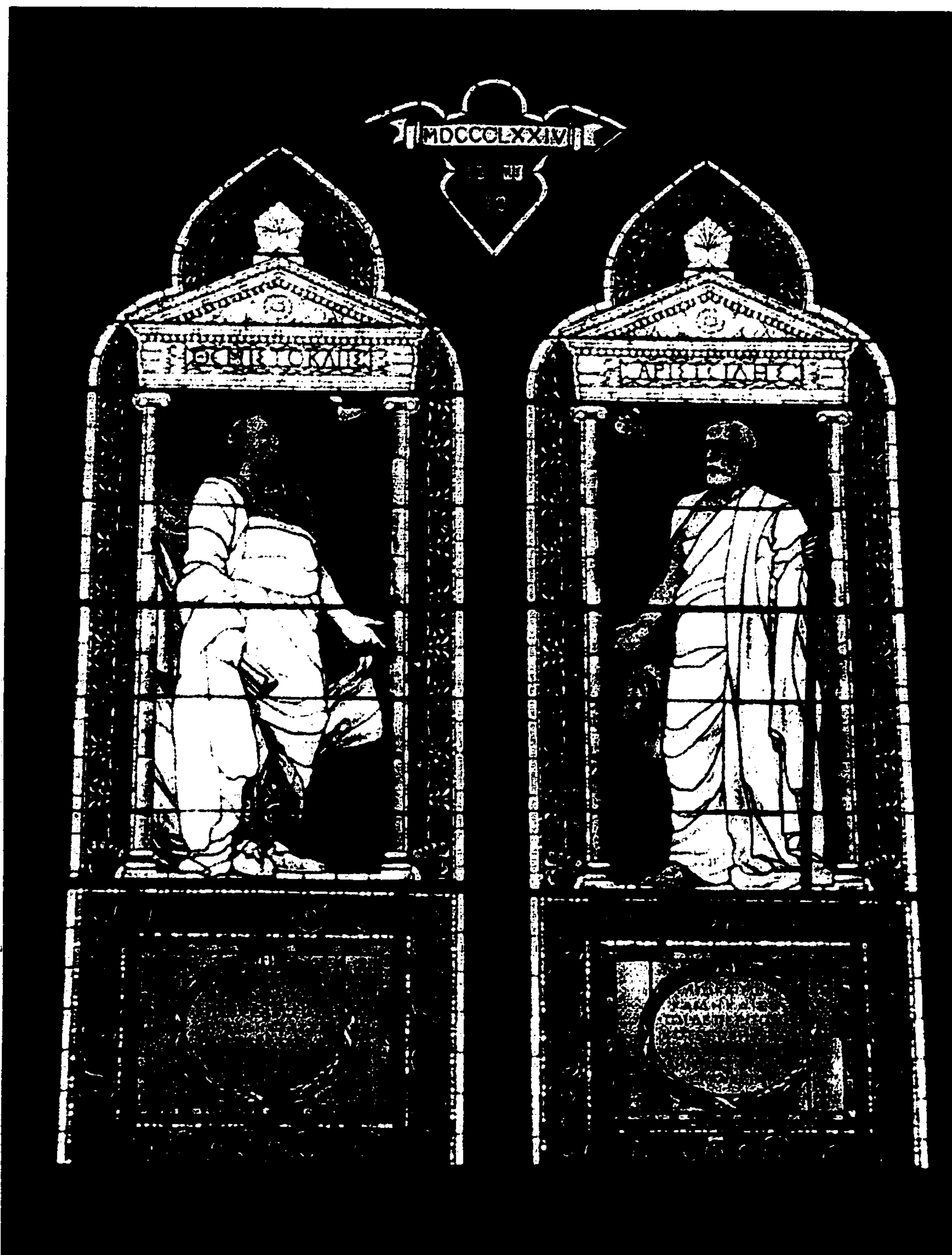

Fig. II: 3. Edward Simmons, *Reconciliation of Themistocles and Aristides*, 1892, plated opalescent glass, each panel 11 x 4 feet. Photograph by Sumner Crane. From Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman, "Edward Emerson Simmons' *The Light Bearer*," *Stained Glass* (Spring 1999), p. 31.

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Fig. II: 4. Edward Simmons, *The Light Bearer*, cartoon for a memorial window at Springfield, Mass. Architectural League of New York, *Catalogue of the Tenth Annual Exhibition of the Architectural League of New York.* (New York: December 1893), p. 33.

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Fig. II: 5. Edward Simmons, *The Light Bearer*, 1894, plated opalescent glass, 104 x 56 ½ inches, designed by Simmons and executed by the Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company for the Church of the Unity, Springfield, Mass., now in the collection of the Walter Vincent Smith Museum in Springfield. Photograph by Diane Roberts from Sumner Crane and Susan Lehman, "Edward Emerson Simmons' *The Light Bearer*," *Stained Glass* (Spring 1999), p. 25.

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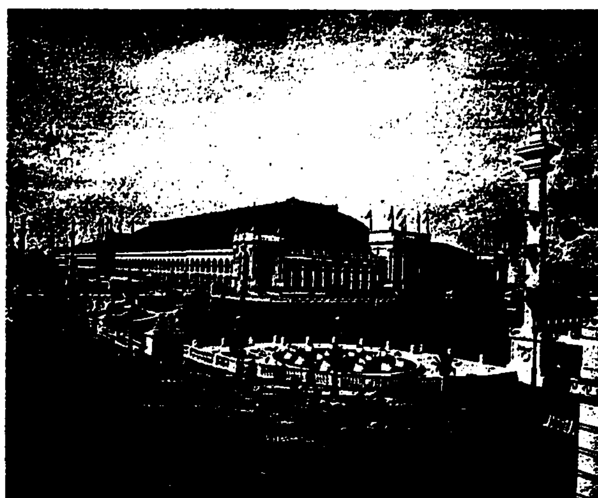

Fig. II: 6. Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building (1893), George B. Post, architect. From James William Buel. *The Magic City* (1894), facsimile edition (New York: Arno Press, 1974). Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

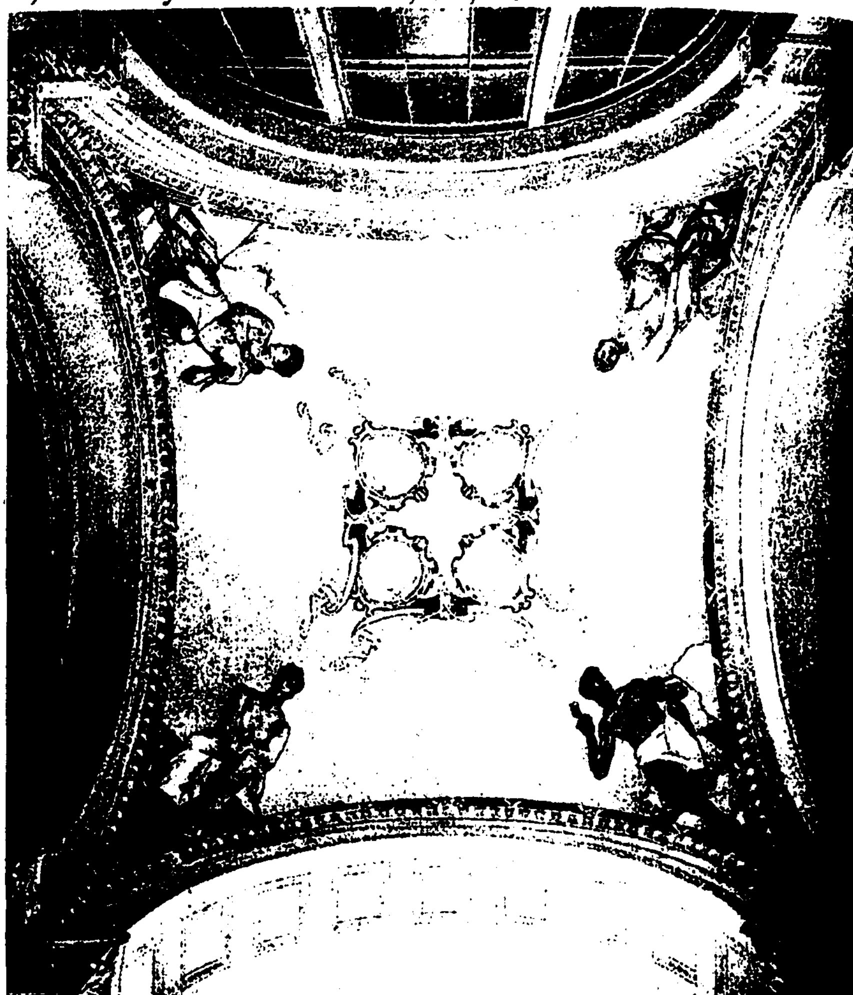

Fig. II: 7. Edward Simmons, *Resources*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building, World's Columbian Exposition. From Royal Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," *Century Magazine* 46 (July 1893), p. 332.

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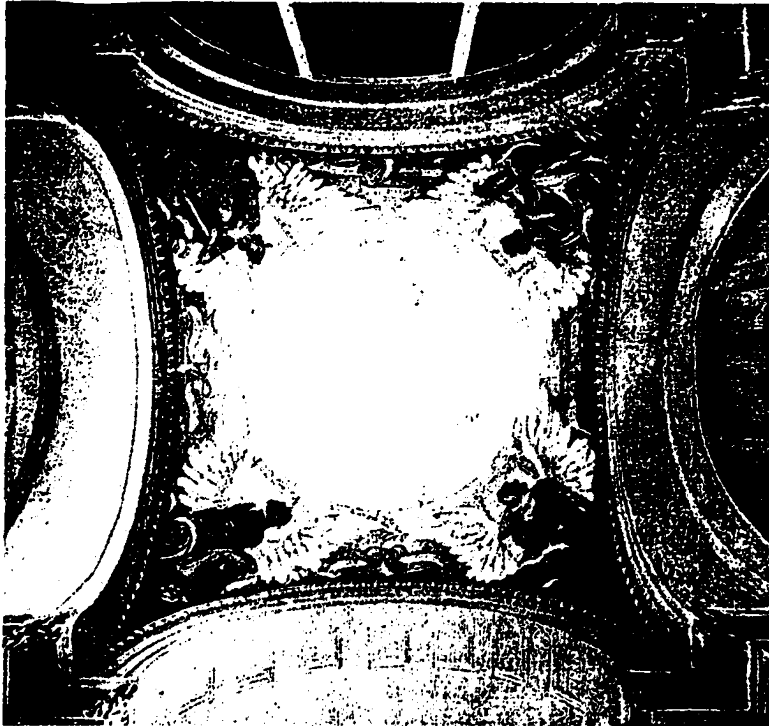

Fig. II: 8. Edwin H. Blashfield, *The Arts of Metalworking*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. From Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," p. 327.

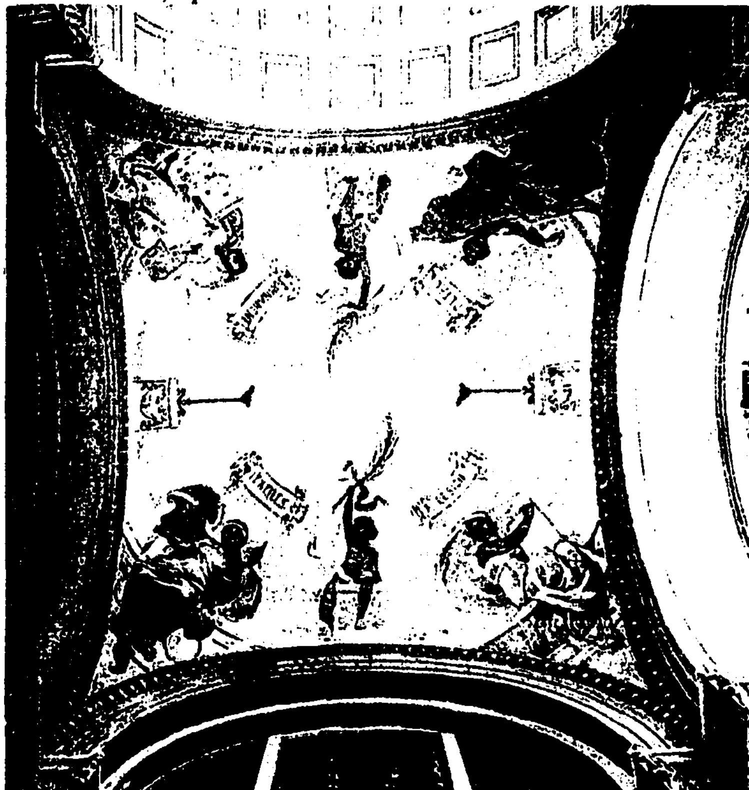

Fig. II: 9. Robert Reid, *Arts*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. From Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," p. 331.

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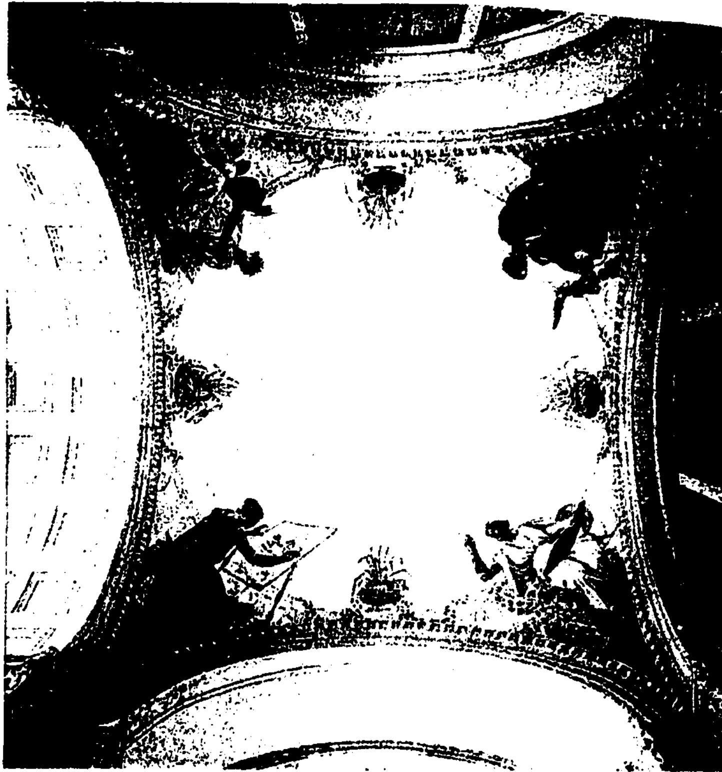

Fig. II: 10. Charles S. Reinhart, *Decorative Arts*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. Reproduced in Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," p. 330.

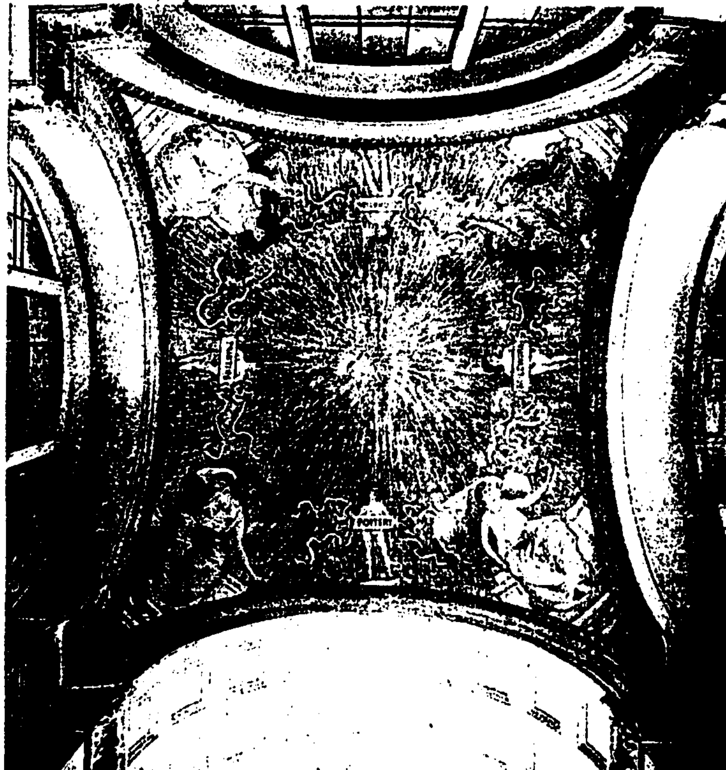

Fig. II: 11. J. Alden Weir, *Arts*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. From Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," p. 334.

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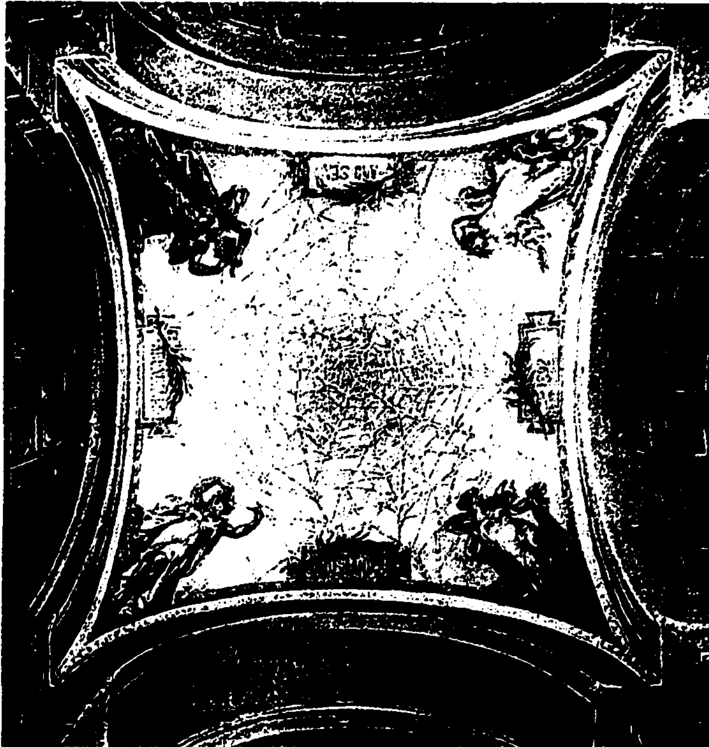

Fig. II: 12. Walter Shirlaw, *Abunance of Land and Sea*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. From Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," p. 331.

Fig. II: 13. Kenyon Cox, *Metal Work, Building, Textiles, Ceramics*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. From Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," p. 329.

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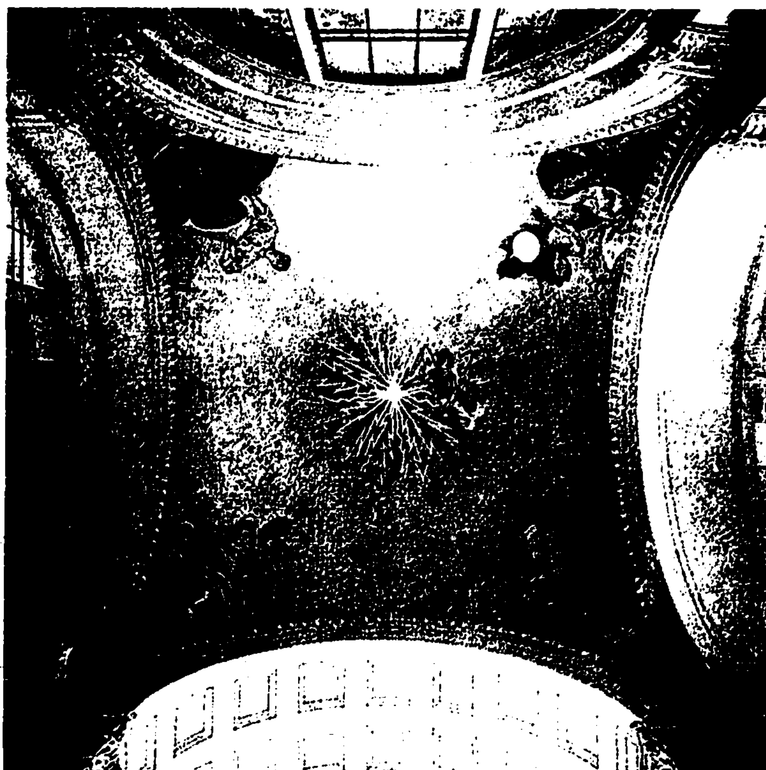

Fig. II: 14. J. Carroll Beckwith, *Electricity as Applied to Commerce*, 1892 (destroyed), mural for dome of the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building. From Cortissoz, "Color in the Court of Honor at the Fair," p. 328.

Fig. II: 15. Edward Simmons, *Forging*, drawing for mural for dome of the East Portal, Manufactures Building. From Francis D. Millet, "The Decoration of the Exposition," *Scribner's Magazine*, 12 (December 1892), p. 696.

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Fig. III:1. Metropolitan Club, ca. 1894, photograph, collection of the New-York Historical Society. From David Garrard Lowe, *Stanford White's New York* (New York: Watson-Guptill Publications, 1999), p. 161.

Fig. III: 2. Library Metropolitan Club, 1895, photograph. From Paul Porzelt, *The Metropolitan Club of New York* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), p. 82.

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Fig. III: 3. Simmons, figures representing *Ars Poesis*, detail of library ceiling, Metropolitan Club, (1894). Author's photograph, 2003.

Fig. III: 4. Simmons, Design for Oyer and Terminer Courtroom, 1894. From *New York Daily Tribune*, 21 April 1894, p. 7.

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Fig. III: 5a. Simmons, *Justice*, Criminal Courts Building, New York, copyright, 1895, Simmons. From a Copley Print, copyright, 1896, by Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting* (Boston: Noyes, Platt and Company, 1902), p. 147. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. III: 5b. Simmons, *The Fates*, 1895, Criminal Courts Building, New York, copyright, Simmons. From a Copley Print, copyright by Curtis and Cameron. From Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), opp. p. 218. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. III: 5c. Edward Simmons, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*, 1895, Criminal Courts Building, New York. From Russell Sturgis, *The Appreciation of Pictures* (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1905), opp. p. 293. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. III: 6a. Edward Simmons, *Justice*, author's photograph, 1999.

Fig. III: 6b. Back wall of courtroom showing Simmons's *The Fates* and *The Rights of Man* [*Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*], author's photograph, 1999.

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Fig. III: 7a. Simmons, *The Fates* (detail), author's photograph, 1999.

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Fig. III: 7b. Simmons, *The Rights of Man* (detail), author's photograph, 1999.

Fig. III: 8. John Singer Sargent, *Frieze of the Prophets*. Boston Public Library. Poster. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. III: 9. The Astor Gallery, 1903, From George Boldt, *The Waldorf-Astoria New York*, (New York, 1903) unpaged.

Fig. III:10. Salon de la Princesse, Hôtel de Soubise, Paris, 1737-40, decorations by Germain Boffrand, British Crown copyright. From *Gardner's Art Through the Ages* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich. Inc, sixth edition. 1975), p. 633.

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Fig. III:11. Edward Simmons, original drawings for *The Months and Seasons*, decorative paintings for the small ballroom of the Astoria Hotel. From *Harper's Weekly*, 16 October 1897, p. 1028.

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Fig. III:12. Edward Simmons, *January*, 1897, Astor Gallery, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. Copyright by Edward Simmons; from a Copley Print, copyright by Curtis and Cameron. From Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), opp. p. 258. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. III:13. Silver Gallery, Waldorf Astoria, ca. 1934. From Henry Bolles Lent. *The Waldorf Astoria* (New York: Hotel Waldorf-Astoria Corporation, Currier Press, 1934), p. 93.

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Figs. III:14a. Edward Simmons, *January*, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. author's photograph, 2000

Fig. III:14b. Edward Simmons. *April*, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel. author's photograph. 2000.

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Fig. III:14c. Fragment of Simmons's *Autumn*, Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, author's photograph, 2000.

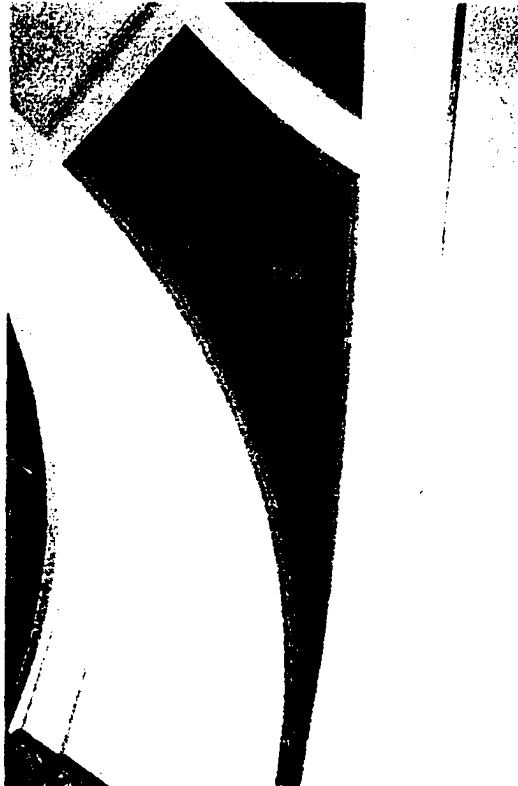

Fig.III:14c. Fragment of Simmons's *Spring*. Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, author's photograph, 2000

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Fig.III:15. Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hyde Park, New York. Photograph: Richard Cheek. From *Vanderbilt Mansion* (Little Compton, Rhode Island: Fort Church Publishers in cooperation with the Hyde Park Historical Association, 1988,) p. 41.

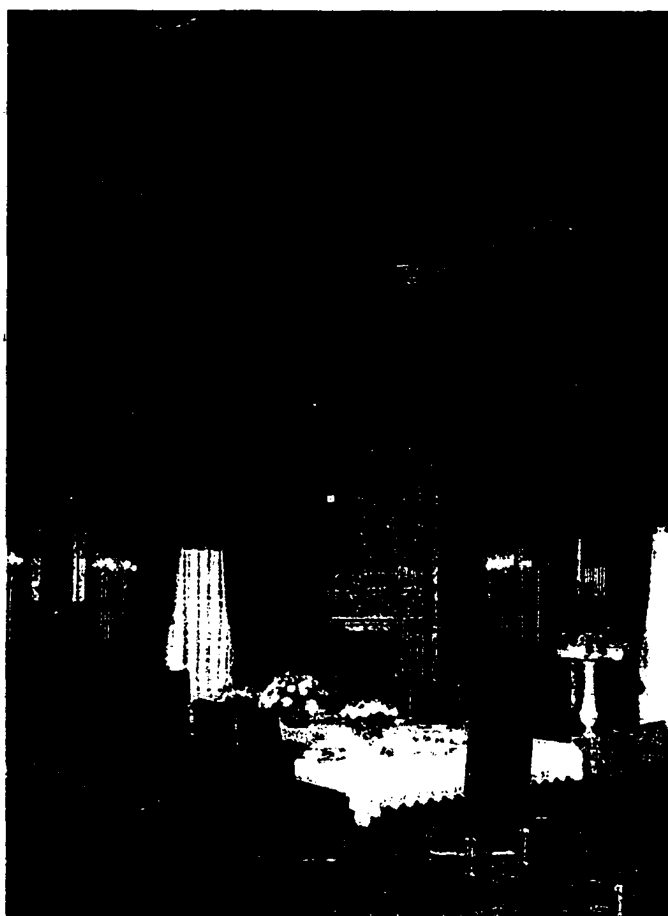

Fig. III:16. Dining room with ceiling panel by Edward Simmons, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, photograph: Richard Cheek. From *Vanderbilt Mansion*, cover.

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Fig. III:17. Edward Simmons, ceiling panel for dining room, 1899, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, author's photo, 1999.

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Fig. III:18. The Gold Room, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site. photograph: Richard Cheek. From *Vanderbilt Mansion*, p. 23.

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Fig.III: 19. Edward Simmons, "Figure in Ceiling, Residence of F. W. Vanderbilt" (cartoon for Aurora). From From Architectural League of New York, *Catalogue of the Fifteenth Annual Exhibition of the Architectural League of New York*, (New York: 1900), p.132.

Fig. III: 20a. Edward Simmons, ceiling for Gold Room, ca. 1898, Vanderbilt Mansion. author's photo, 1999.

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Fig. III:20b. Edward Simmons, detail of ceiling for Gold Room, Vanderbilt Mansion, author's photo, 1999.

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Fig. III:21. Appellate Division Courthouse, ca. 1900, From *Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Judicial Department.* (New York, 1994) cover.

Fig. III:22. Murals on the east wall of courtroom, Appellate Division Courthouse: left, Edward Simmons, *TheJustice of the Law*; center, Henry Oliver Walker, *The Wisdom of the Law*; right, Edwin H. Blashfield, *The Power of the Law*. From *Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of the State of New York, First Judicial Department*, p. 12.

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Fig. III:23. Edward Simmons, *The Justice of the Law*, copyright, 1899, Edward Simmons, from a Copley print, copyright, 1900, Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting*, p. 230. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC. CUNY.

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Fig. III:24. Edwin H. Blashfield, *The Power of the Law*, copyright, 1900, E. H. Blashfield, from a Copley print, copyright, 1900, Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting*, p. 231. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. III:25. Henry Oliver Walker, *The Wisdom of the Law*, copyright, 1899, H. O. Walker, from a Copley print, copyright, 1900, Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting*, p. 229. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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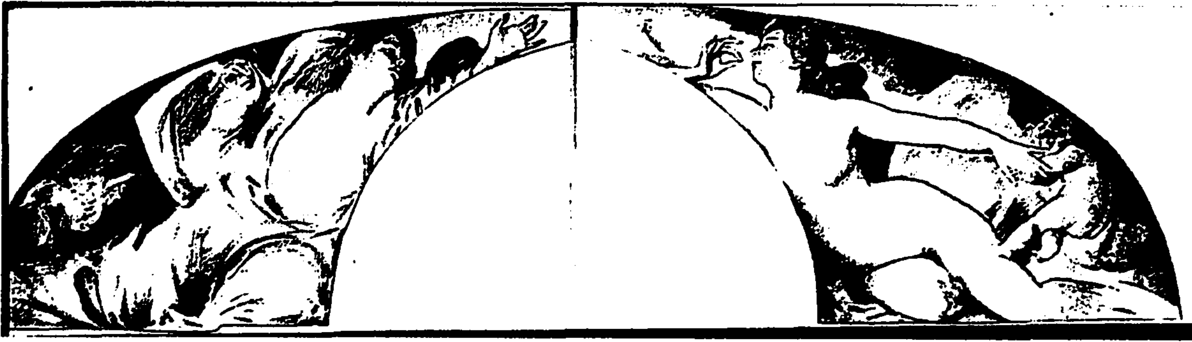

Fig. III:26. Edward Simmons, *Morning Quitting Night*, copyright, 1899, Edward Simmons, from a Copley print, copyright, 1899, Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting*, pp. 258-59. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. III: 27. Gambling room, Richard Canfield's Gambling House, showing Simmons's mural, *Morning Quitting Night*. From Nathan Silver, *Lost New York* (New York and Avenel, New Jersey: Wings Books, 1967), p. 61.

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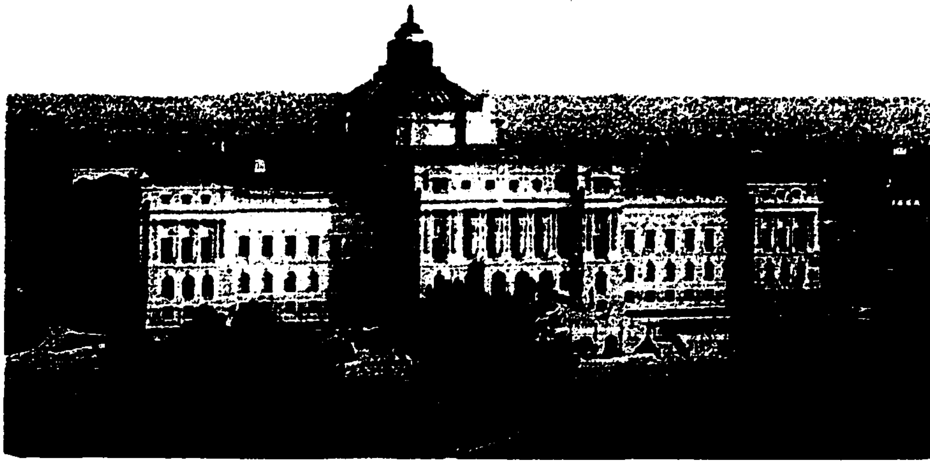

Fig. IV:1. Library of Congress, postcard (5438), copyright, 1898, Detroit Photographic Company.

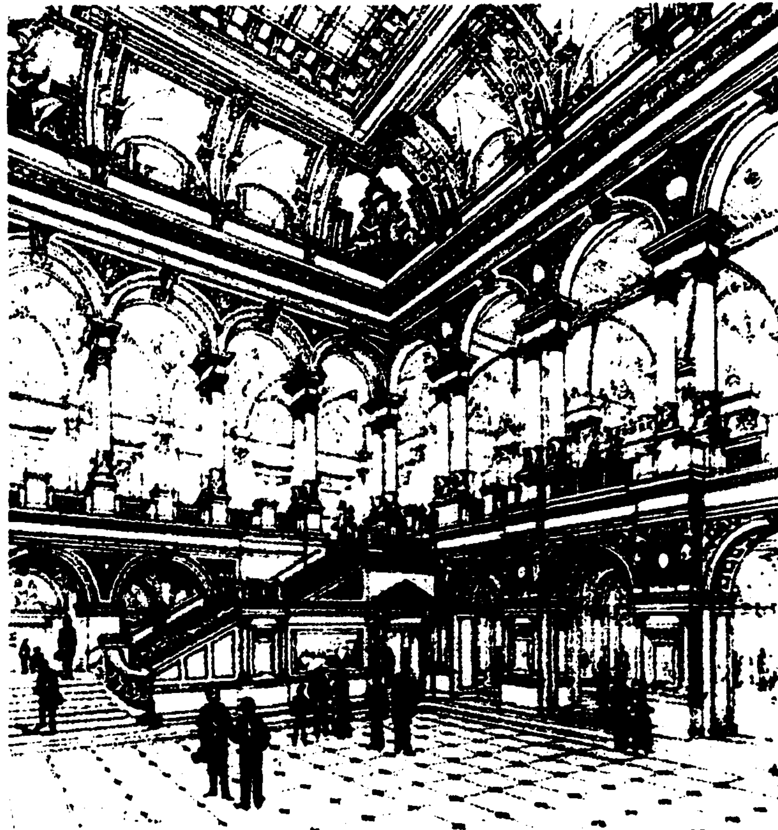

Fig. IV:2. Paul J. Peltz, Great Hall, Library of Congress, 1888. From John Y. Cole and Henry Hope Reed, eds., *The Library of Congress: The Art and Architecture of the Thomas Jefferson Building* (New York: W. W. Norton in Association with the Library of Congress, 1997), p. 198.

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Fig. IV:3. Charles Garnier, Paris Opéra, Grand Stair Hall (1861-75). Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

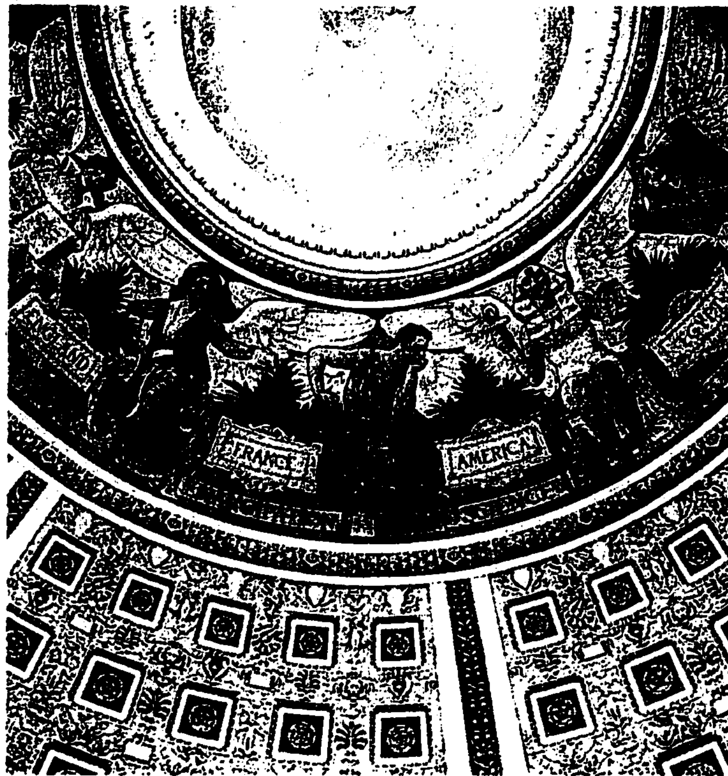

Fig. IV:4. Edwin Howland Blashfield, collar of dome, rotunda reading room, Library of Congress, ca. 1897, detail showing allegorical figures for England, France, America, and Judea. From Herbert Small, *The Library of Congress: Its Architecture and Decoration* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982), Pl. XV. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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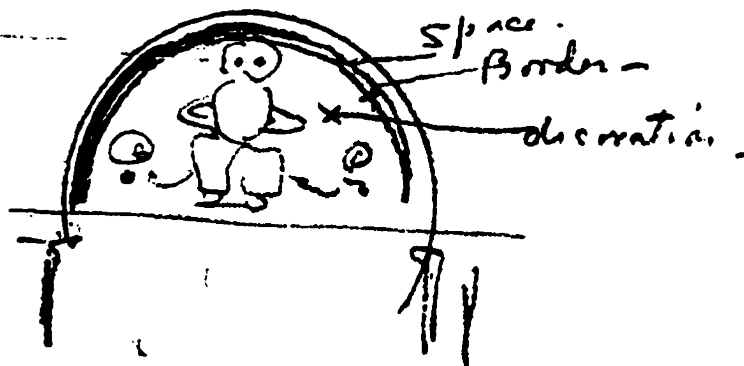
Apr. 2nd 1896.

Dear Stanny: Here is a sketch!
My borders are 3 in wide,
I have placed them one inch
from the edge of the space. A
section of the space would be like
this. (border. decoration.). That is they are in
a sink in of an inch or two.



Can I make the inch between
the border and the edge a diff.
color (plain) – or must it be
a continuation of the decoration
past & behind the border?
Simmy.

Fig. IV:5. Letter from Edward Simmons to Stanford White, 2 April 1896, White Collection on microfilm, S-V, Manuscript Division, New-York Historical Society.

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Fig. IV:6. Blashfield, *Terpsichore*, study for central figure, drawing-room ceiling in house of Mr. Collis P. Huntington (George B. Post, architect). From Architectural League of New York, *Catalogue of the Tenth Annual Exhibition of the Architectural League of New York.* (New York: December 1893), p. 9.

Fig. IV:7. Simmons, *Terpsichore*, 1896, north corridor. Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

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KEY

Lunettes

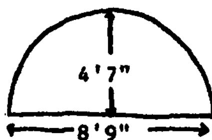
123 Calliope
124 Urania
125 Polyhymnia
126 Erato
127 Terpsichore
128 Euterpe
129 Thalia
130 Clio
131 Melpomene

Spandrels and Dome Figurines

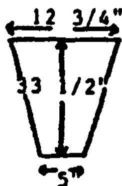
0.1 NW Penddntive
0.2 NE Pendentive
0.3 SE Pendentive
0.4 SW Pendentive
0.5 West Dome Figurine
0.6 NW Dome Figurine
0.7 North Dome Figurine
0.8 NE Dome Figurine
0.9 East Dome Figurine
0.10 SE Dome Figurine
0.11 South Dome Figurine
0.12 SW Dome Figurine

Painting Dimensions

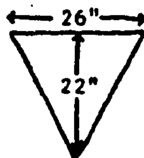
Lunettes



Dome Panels



Pendentives



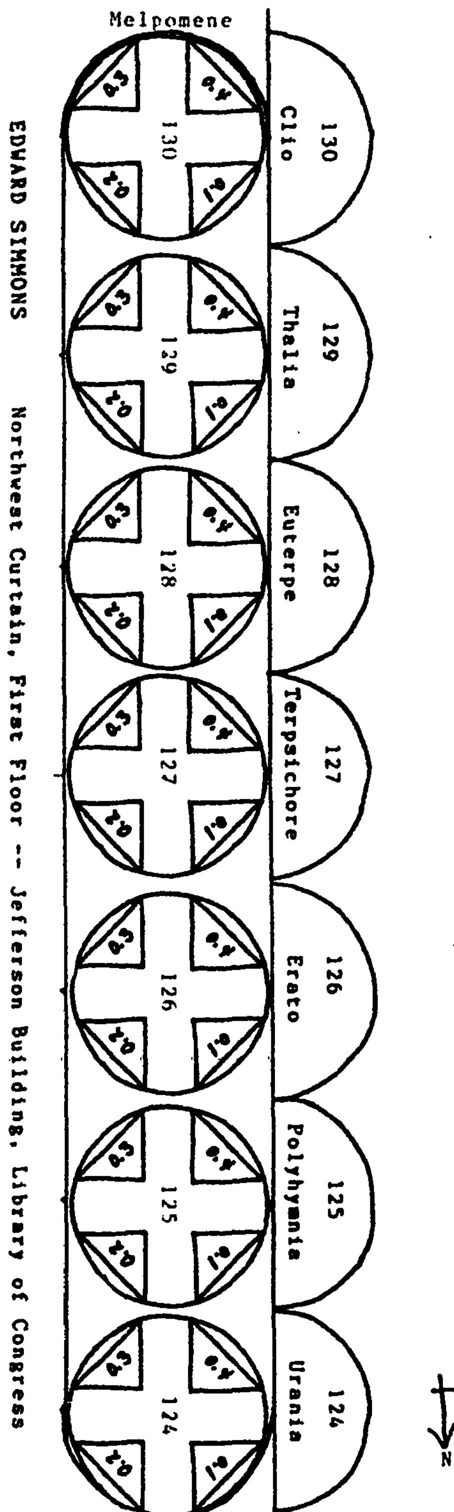


Fig. IV:8. Diagram of northwest curtain corridor, Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, Perry Huston and Associates, Fort Worth Texas, 1994. Courtesy Architect of the Capitol.

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Fig. IV:9. Simmons, *Melpomene*, north corridor, Library of Congress, copyright, 1896, Simmons. From a Copley Print, copyright, 1896, by Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting* (Boston: Noyes, Platt and Company, 1902), p. 178. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

Fig. IV:10. Simmons, *Calliope*, north corridor, Library of Congress, copyright. 1896, Simmons. From a Copley Print, copyright, 1896, by Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting* (Boston: Noyes, Platt and Company, 1902), p. 177. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. IV:11. Simmons, *Clio*, north corridor, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

Fig. IV:12. Simmons, *Euterpe*, north corridor, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

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Fig. IV:13. Simmons, *Thalia,* north corridor, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

Fig. IV:14 Simmons, *Erato,* north corridor, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

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Fig. IV:15. Simmons, *Polyhymnia*, north corridor, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

Fig. IV: 16. Simmons *Urania*, north corridor, Library of Congress copyright, 1896, Simmons. From a Copley Print, copyright, 1896, by Curtis and Cameron. From Pauline King, *American Mural Painting* (Boston: Noyes, Platt and Company, 1902), p. 176. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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Fig. IV:17. North corridor (Hall of Muses), Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

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Fig. IV:18a. Simmons, female figure with yellow flower and putto, in northwest pendentive by Erato, north corridor, Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

Fig. IV:18b. Simmons, female figure with pink rose and doorknocker, in southwest pendentive by *Erato,* north corridor, Jefferson Building. Library of Congress. author's photograph, 1999.

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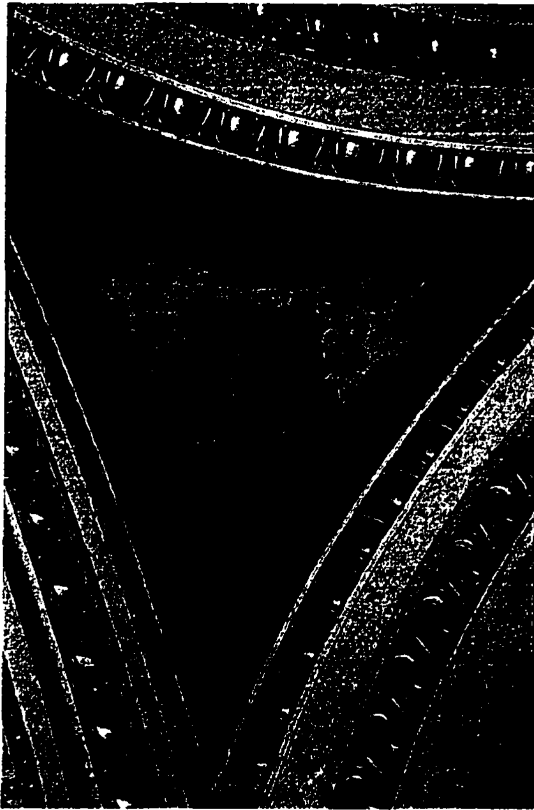

Fig. IV:18c. Simmons, female figure with putto, in southeast pendentive by *Erato*, north corridor, Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

Fig. IV:18d. Simmons, winged figure, in southeast pendentive by *Clio*, north corridor, Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

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Fig. IV:19. Simmons, wreath for pendentive, north corridor, Jefferson Building. Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

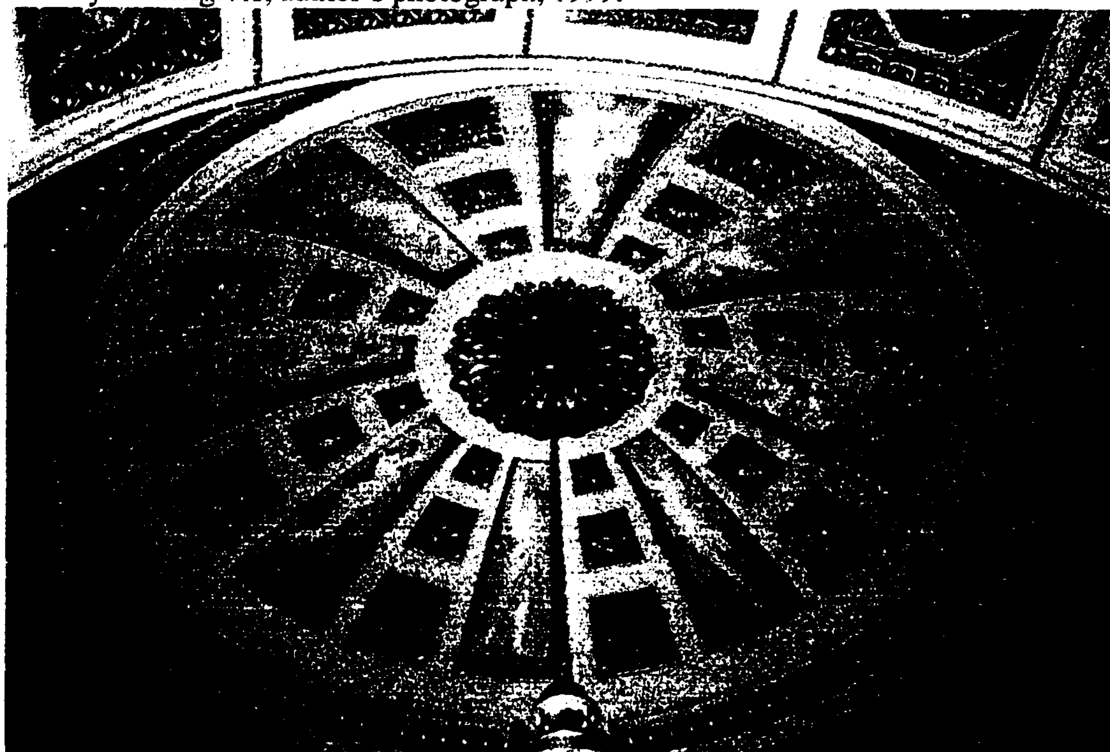

Fig. IV:20. Sidney Starr or Starr and Simmons, dome panels, 1896, north corridor, Jefferson Building. Library of Congress, author's photograph, 1999.

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THE HEAVENLY CITY, GRACE CHAPEL

Fig. IV:21. Sidney Starr, *The Heavenly City*, ca. 1896, west transept wall, Grace Chapel [now Immaculate Conception Church], New York. From *Year-Book of Grace Parish New York*, 1898, Grace Church Archives, New York, New York.

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MURAL PAINTING WEST WALL GRACE CHAPEL.

Fig. IV:22a. Starr, *The Glorious Company of the Apostles*, ca. 1896, central panel of triptych, west wall, Grace Chapel, New York. From *Year-Book of Grace Parish New York*, 1897, Grace Church Archives, New York, New York.

MURAL PAINTING, WEST WALL, GRACE CHAPEL.

Fig. IV:22b. Starr, *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets*, ca. 1896, side panel of triptych, west wall, Grace Chapel, New York. From *Year-Book of Grace Parish New York*, 1897, opp. p. 157, Grace Church Archives, New York, New York.

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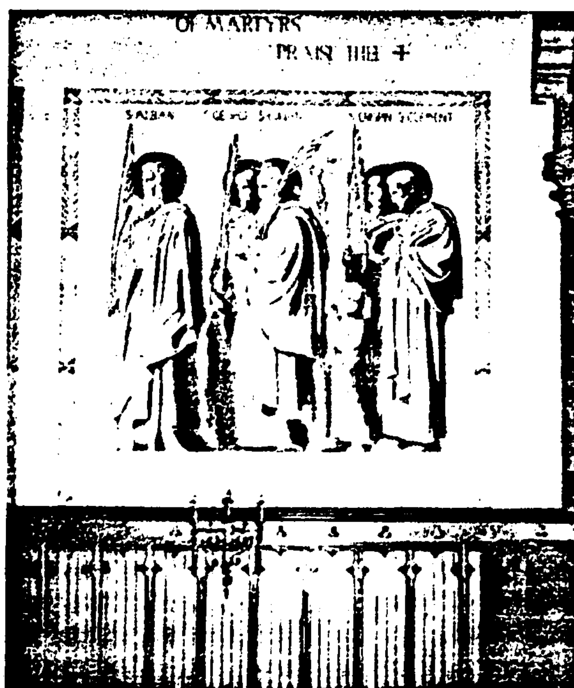

MURAL PAINTING. WEST WALL. GRACE CHAPEL.

Fig. IV:22c. Starr, *The Noble Army of Martyrs*, ca. 1896, side panel of triptych, west wall, Grace Chapel, New York. From *Year-Book of Grace Parish New York*, 1897, Grace Church Archives, New York, New York

Fig. IV:23. *Melpomene* by Edward Simmons, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C., postcard (5703) "Phostint," Detroit Publishing Company.

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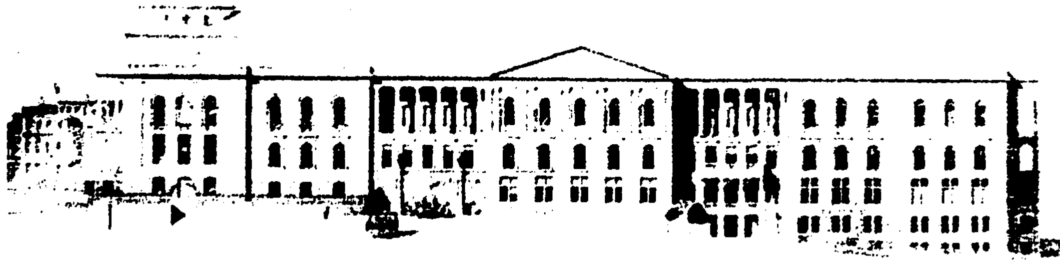

Fig. V:1. Brigham and Spofford, Massachusetts Statehouse, competition project for an addition, 1888, From Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy* (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1976), p. 209.

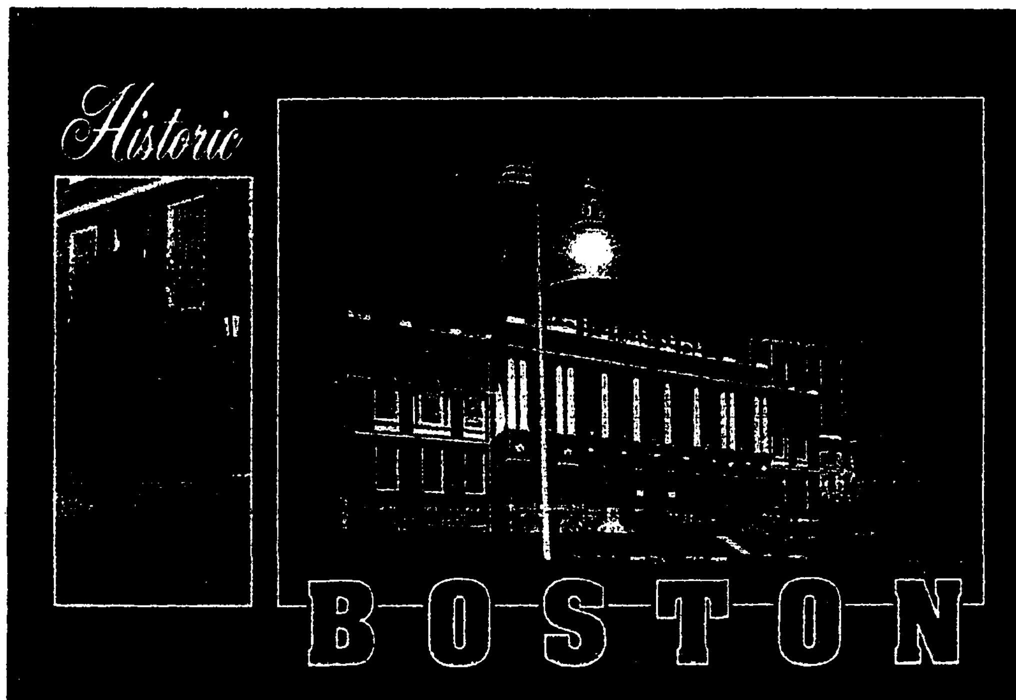

Fig. V:2. The State House, Boston, Massachusetts, postcard, photographs by J. Ethan Duran, Glenn Le Blanc, Arts and Cards, Inc., Boston ca. 1995.

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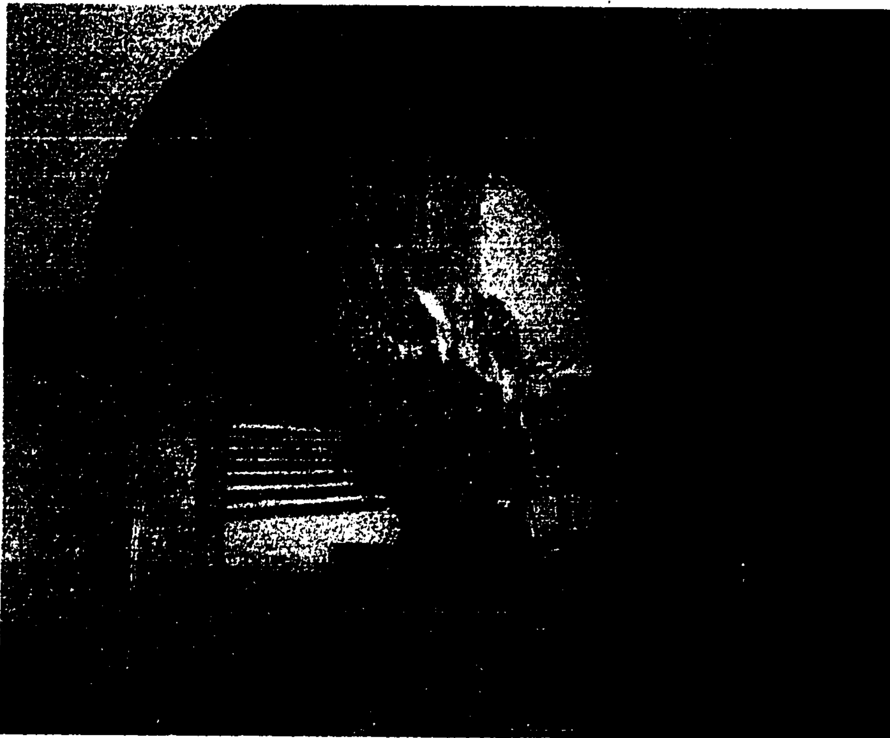

Fig. V:3. Simmons, *The Return of the Colors*, 1902, rotunda, Massachusetts State House, author's photograph, 2000.

Fig. V:4. Simmons, *Battle at Concord Bridge*, 1902, Massachusetts State House, author's photograph, 2000.

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Fig. V:5. Walker, *John Elliot Preaching to the Indians*, 1903, Massachusetts State House, author's photograph, 2000.

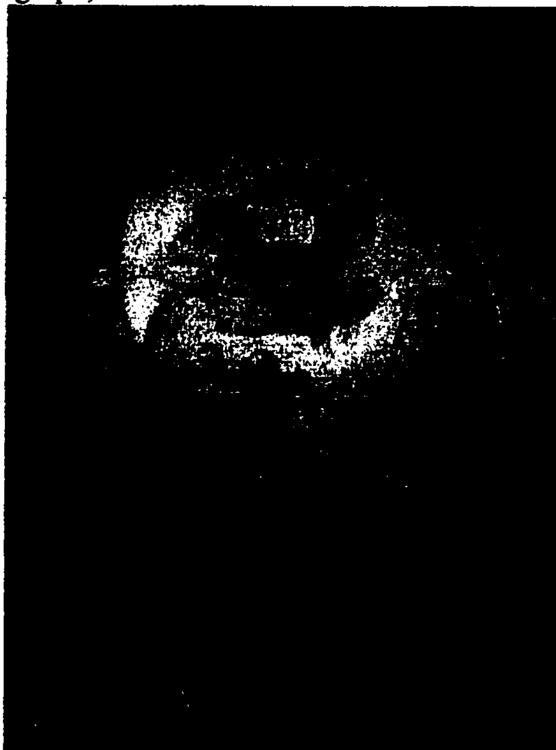

Fig. V:6. Walker, *Pilgrims on the Mayflower*, 1902, Massachusetts State House, author's photograph, 2000.

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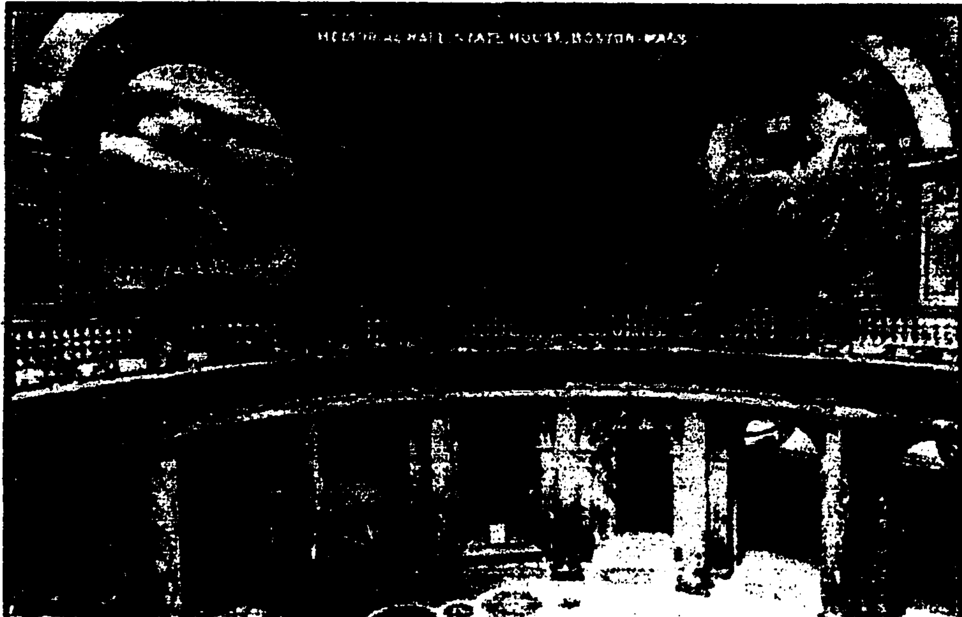

Fig. V:7. Two postcard views of the rotunda, Massachusetts State House, ca. 1910. Courtesy Susan Greendyke Lachevre.

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Fig. V:8. Amsterdam Room, The New Amsterdam Theater, Terry Helgesen Collection. From Joel Loebenthal et al., "The New Amsterdam Theater," Theater Historical Society, *Annual*, No. 5 (1978), p.15

Fig. V:9. Simmons, *Eric the Norseman's Discovery*, postcard, ca. 1910. From Mary Henderson, *The New Amsterdam: The Biography of a Broadway Theater* (New York: Hyperion, 1997) p. 32.

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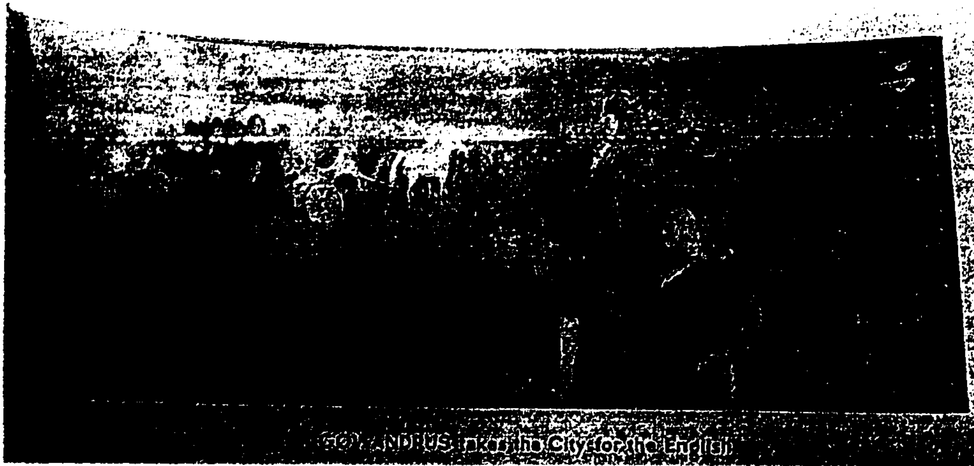

Fig. V:10. Simmons, *Governor Andrus Takes the City for the English*, 1903. Photograph: Sujit Sarkar. From Crane and Lehman, "Edward Simmons: The New Amsterdam Murals," *American Art Review*, vol. 11, no. 5, 1999, p. 189.

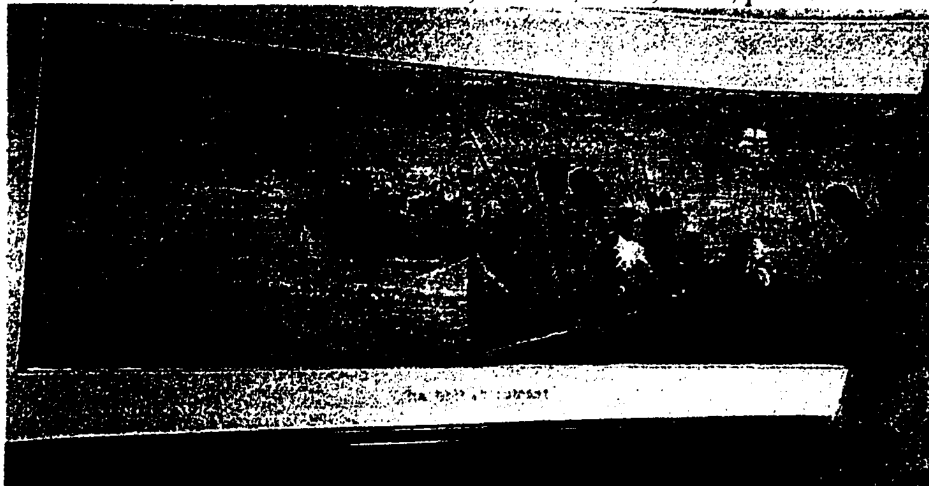

Fig. V:11. Simmons, *The British Retreat*, 1903. Photograph: Sujit Sarkar. From Crane and Lehman, "Edward Simmons: The New Amsterdam Murals," *American Art Review*, vol. 11, no. 5, 1999, p. 189.

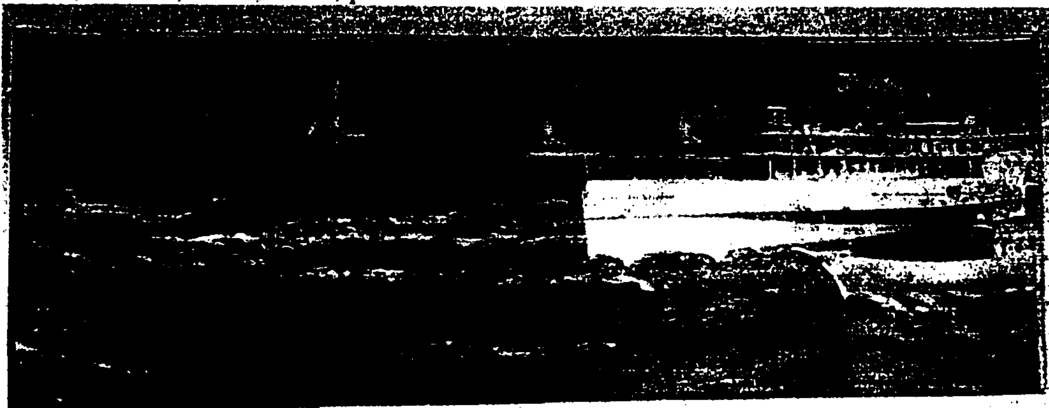

Fig. V:12. Simmons, *The Reliance Winning the International Race*, 1903. Photograph: Sujit Sarkar. From Crane and Lehman, "Edward Simmons: The New Amsterdam Murals," *American Art Review*, vol. 11, no. 5, 1999, p. 186.

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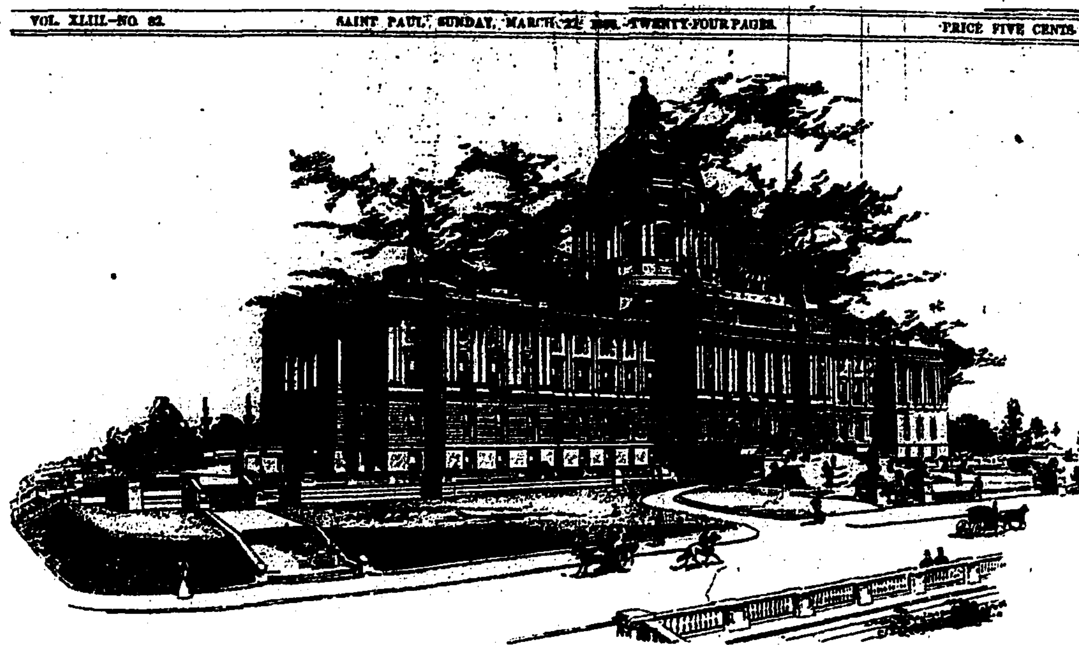

Fig. VI:1. "Minnesota's New Capitol—A Monumental Structure in Keeping with the Dignity of the North Star State," Saint Paul *Pioneer Press*, 22 March 1896

Fig. VI:2. Francis Davis Millet, *The Treaty of Traverse des Sioux*, 1904, Governor's Reception Room, Minnesota State Capitol, Saint Paul, Minnesota. From the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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American Genius, guided by Jan 4 1904
Wisdom — follows Hope —
2. banishes Savagery. —
3. breaks the ground.
4. as Minnesota gives her products to the four winds —
Am. Genius as a male figure —

Fig. VI:3. Notes on subjects of Simmons's four spandrel panels for the rotunda of the Minnesota State Capitol, 4 January 1904, Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society.

Description of Mr. Simmons's pictures for the Minnesota Capitol.

MINNESOTA CAPITOL

Jan.4,1904

1. The American Genius, guided by Wisdom, follows Hope.
2. Wisdom banishes Savagery.
3. Wisdom breaks the ground.
4. Wisdom, as Minnesota, gives her products to the four winds.

American Genius as a male figure.

Fig. VI:4. "Description of Mr. Simmons's pictures for the Minnesota Capitol," 4 January 1904, Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society.

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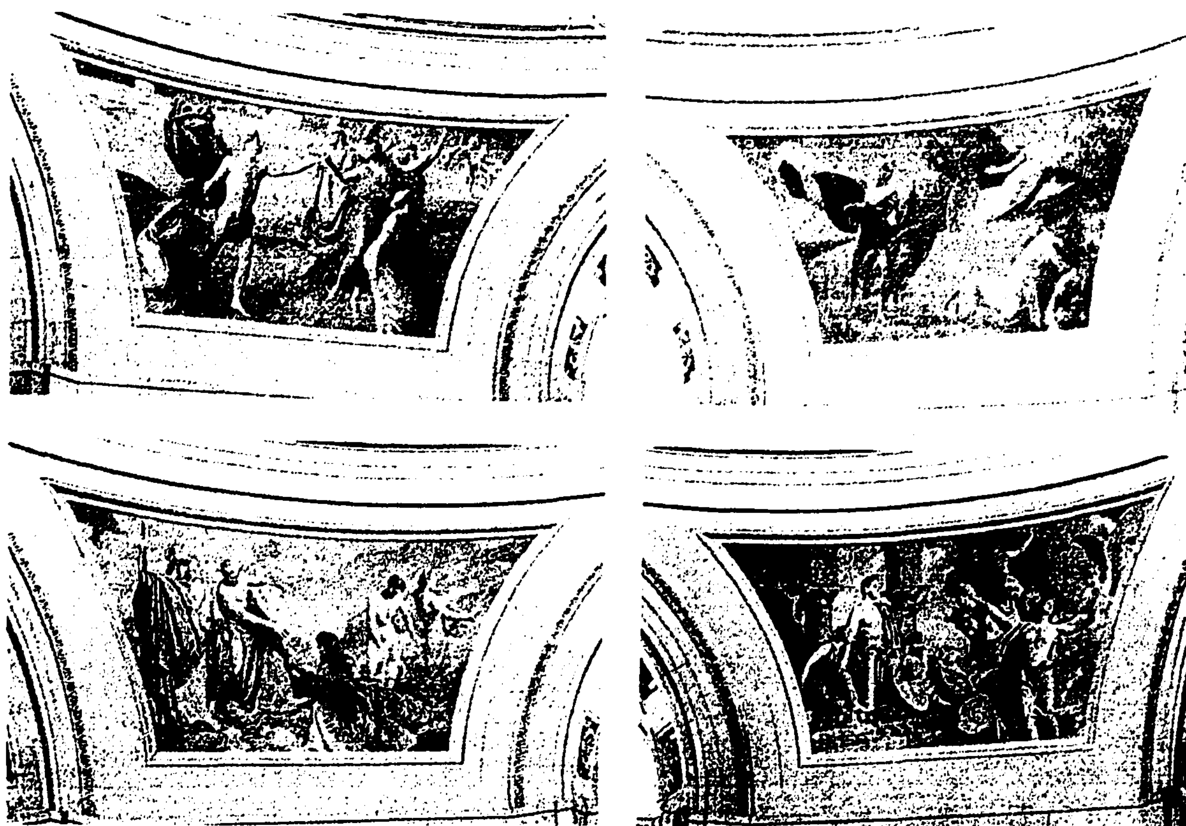

Fig. VI:5. Simmons, *The Civilization of the Northwest*, 1904-06, four spandrel panels for the rotunda of the Minnesota State Capitol. From Neil B. Thompson, *Minnesota's State Capitol: The Art and Politics of a Public Building* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1974) p. 69.

Fig. VI:6. Simmons, *Cleansing the Soil of Bad Elements*, second in series of panels representing *The Civilization of the Northwest* for the rotunda, Minnesota State Capitol. From Edward Simmons, *From Seven to Seventy*, p. 331.

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108 mums

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

OF

The New Capitol Building

SAINT PAUL, MINN.

Please return to Cass Gilbert

Fig. VI. 7a. *Brief Description of the New Capitol Building, Saint Paul Minnesota*, printed pamphlet (cover). Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society.

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Violette marble (Italy). The casings of the doors and windows are Echaillon marble (France).

In the floors, Joliet (Illinois) stone and Tennessee marble prevail, but other marbles, such as the Numidian (Africa) Siena and White Vermont are used, to give proper designs and coloring.

DECORATIONS ON SECOND FLOOR.

The general decorations of the entire building are by Mr. Elmer E. Garnsey, of New York. The picture at the east end of the east corridor is by Mr. Kenyon Cox. The central figure represents "Contemplation" or "Thought." The figures to the right and left represent "Law" and "Letters," respectively. The corresponding place at the west end of west corridor, over entrance to senate, is to receive a painting by Mr. H. O. Walker, "The Progress of the Flame" (or the Transmission of Knowledge from the Past, through the Present, to the Future). The twelve smaller paintings (by Garnsey) in the corridors, are as follows: East—Milling, Stone Cutting, Winnowing, Commerce, Mining and Navigation. West—Hunting, The Pioneer, Sowing, Dairymaid, Logging, Horticulture.

In the rotunda, the four large panels are to be filled with paintings by Mr. Edward E. Simmons, as follows:

1. The American Genius, guided by Wisdom, follows Hope.
2. Wisdom banishing savagery.
3. Wisdom breaking the ground.
4. Wisdom, as Minnesota, distributes her products.

SUPREME COURT ROOM.

The marble used is white Vermont; the furniture Mahogany.

There are to be four paintings by Mr. John La Farge, one of which, the "Moral and Divine Law" (Moses receiving the Law on Mt. Sinai), is now in place. The other three will typify the development of Law.

SENATE CHAMBER.

The marble used in this chamber is Fleur de Peche (France). The two paintings in the large lunettes are by Mr. Edwin H. Blashfield. The title of the lunette in the north wall is "The Discoverers and the Civilizers led to the Source of the Mississippi." The title of the lunette in the south wall is "Minnesota, the Grain State." The four decorative compositions, "Courage," "Equality," "Freedom" and "Justice," and the general decora-

Fig. VI:7b. *Brief Description of the New Capitol Building, Saint Paul Minnesota*, printed pamphlet (inside page), Gilbert Papers, New-York Historical Society.

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Fig. VI:8. Minnesota State Capitol, rotunda looking northwest, ca. 1910, showing Simmons's panels two and three in the series *The Civilization of the Northwest.* From the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Fig. VI: 9 . Governor's Reception Room, Minnesota State Capitol, ca. 1907. From Barbara S. Christen and Steven Flanders, eds., *Cass Gilbert Life and Work: Architect of the Public Domain* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), p. 98.

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Fig. VII:1. South Dakota State Capitol, ca. 1915, photo: Miller Studio, Pierre. From Harold H. Schuler, *The South Dakota Capitol in Pierre* (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1985), p. 35.

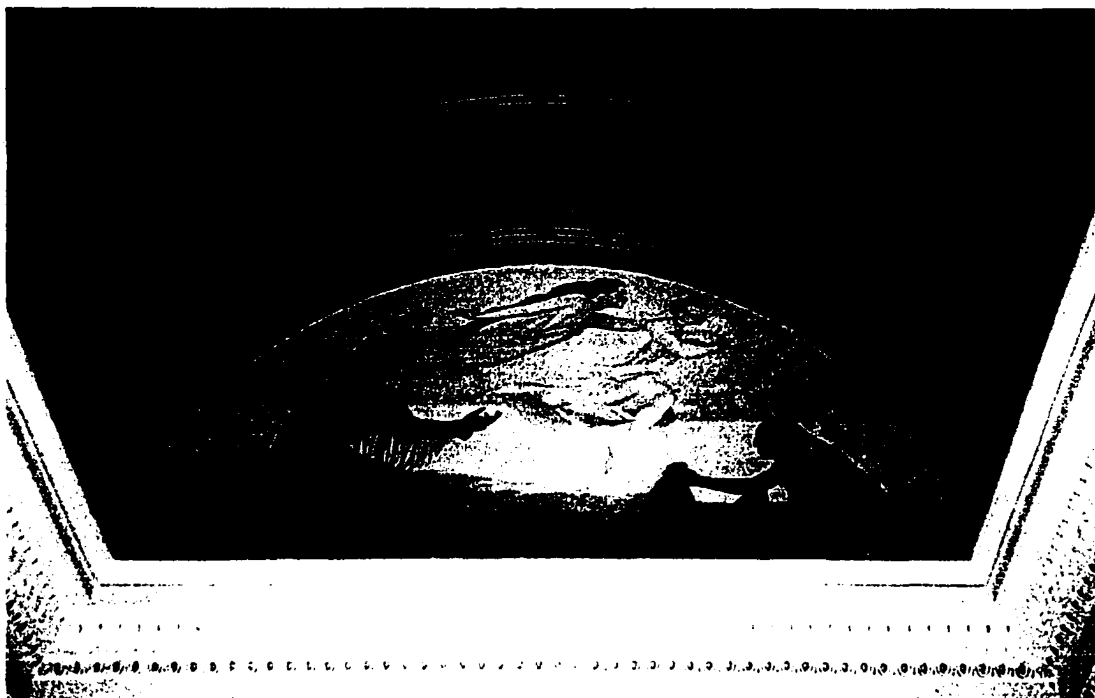

Fig. VII:2. Edward Simmons, *Beginning of Commerce*, 1910, mural above grand stairway, South Dakota State Capitol, author's photograph, 1999.

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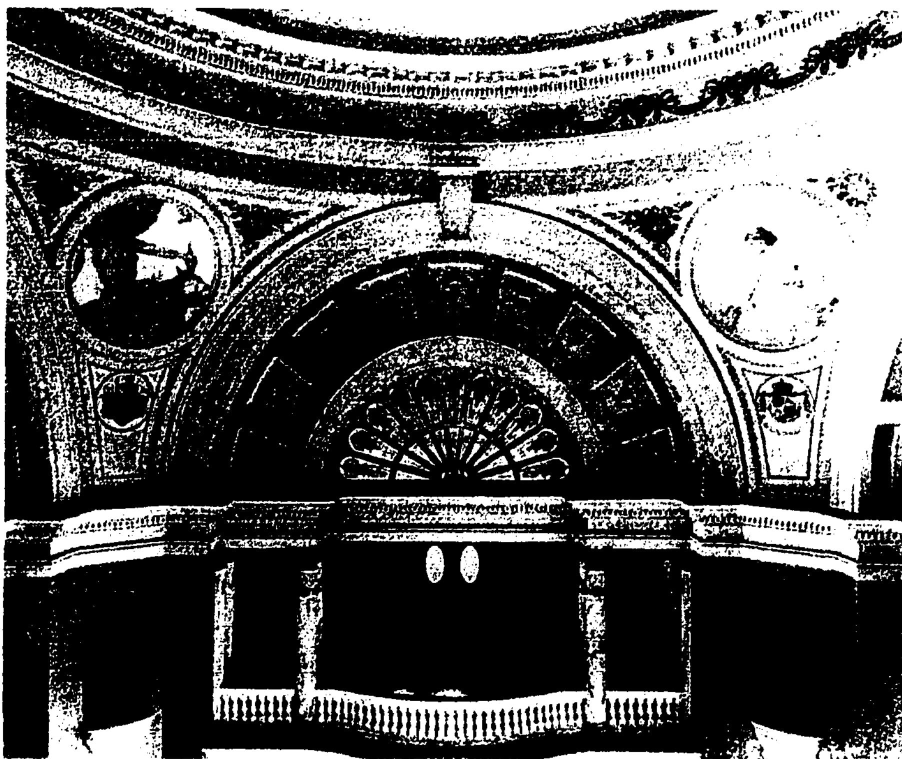

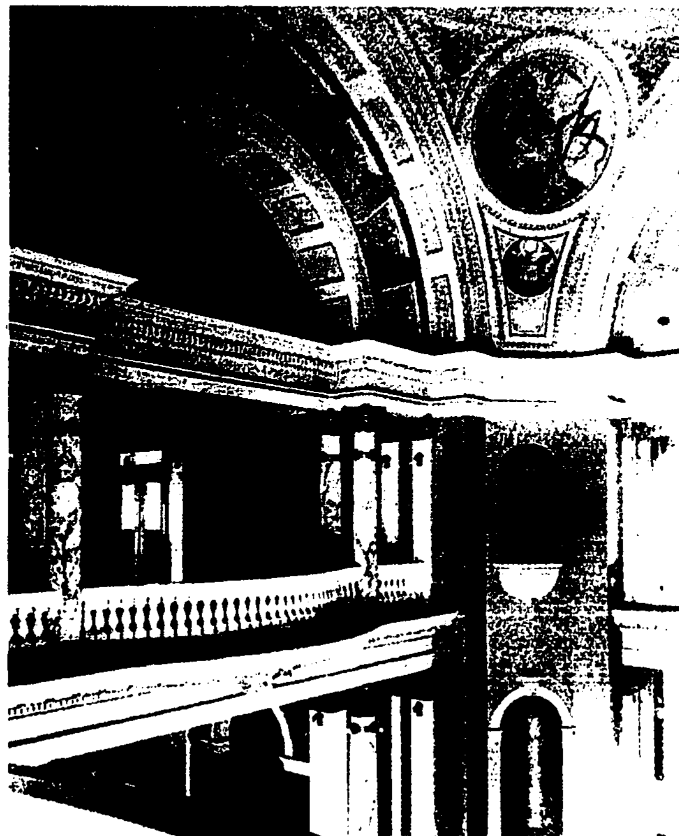

Figs. VII:3a and b. Views of the rotunda of the South Dakota State Capitol showing Simmons's murals *Livestock Raising* and *Mining* (top) and *Agriculture* (bottom), ca. 1910. Photographs courtesy of South Dakota State Archives.

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Fig. VII:4. Simmons, *Agriculture*, 1910, rondel for pendentive in the rotunda, South Dakota State Capitol. From Schuler, *The South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre*, p.56.

Fig. VII:5. Simmons, *Mining*, 1910, rondel for pendentive in the rotunda, South Dakota State Capitol. From Schuler, *The South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre*, p.56.

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Fig. VII:6. Simmons, *Livestock*, 1910, rondel for pendentive in the rotunda, South Dakota State Capitol. From Schuler, *The South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre*, p.56.

Fig. VII:7. Simmons, *Family*, 1910, rondel for pendentive in the rotunda, South Dakota State Capitol. From Schuler, *The South Dakota State Capitol in Pierre*, p.56.

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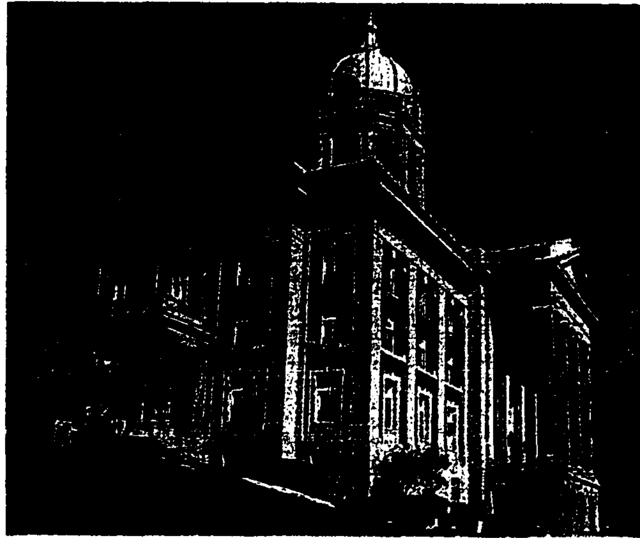

Fig. VII:8. Mercer County Courthouse, Mercer, Pennsylvania, completed 1911, postcard. Photograph: Bron Miller, copyright, Modem-Ad. Butler, PA.

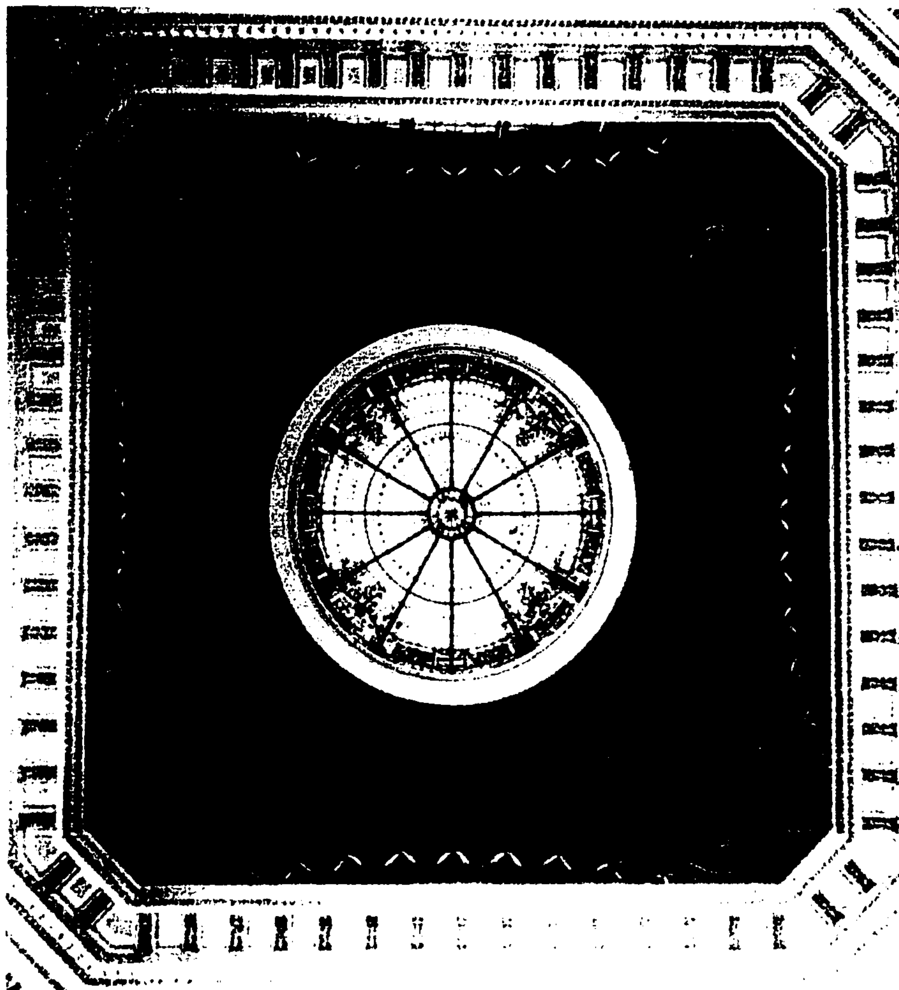

Fig. VII:9. Dome ceiling, Mercer County Courthouse showing Simmons's murals (clockwise from lower left) *Power*, *Guilt*, *Justice*, and *Innocence*. Photograph, ca. 1990, courtesy of Richard Murray.

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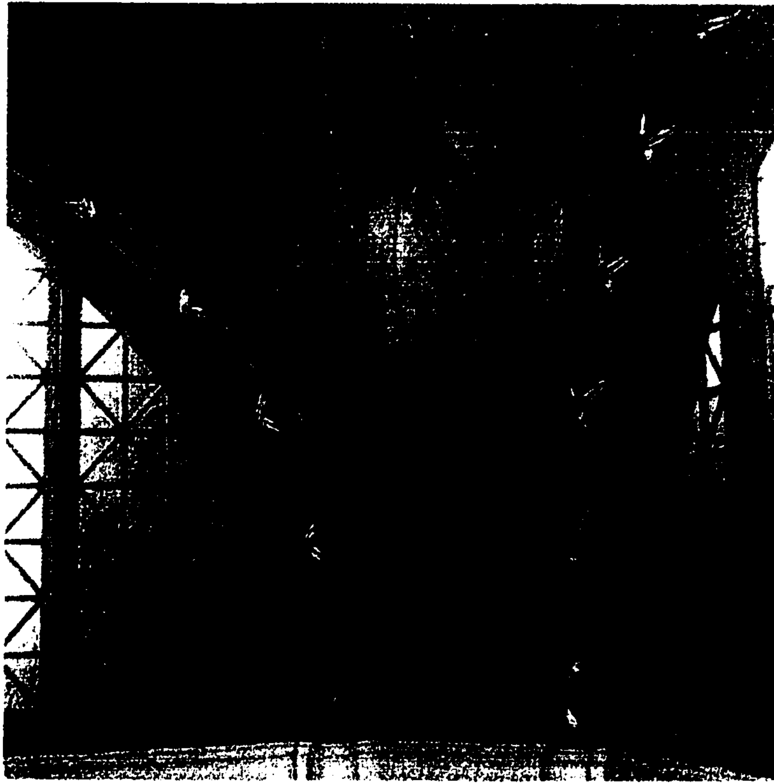

Fig. VII:10. Simmons, *Guilt*, 1911, dome of the Mercer County Courthouse.
Photograph, ca. 1990, courtesy of Richard Murray.

Fig. VII:11. Simmons, *Innocence*, 1911, dome of the Mercer County Courthouse.
Photograph, ca. 1990, courtesy of Richard Murray.

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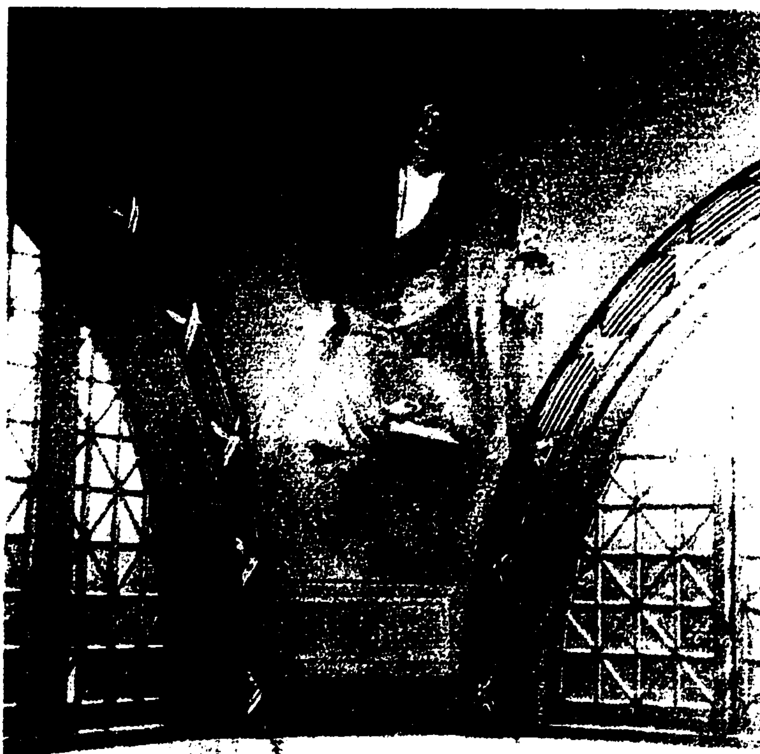

Fig. VII:12. Simmons, *Justice*, 1911, dome of the Mercer County Courthouse. Photograph, ca. 1990, courtesy of Richard Murray.

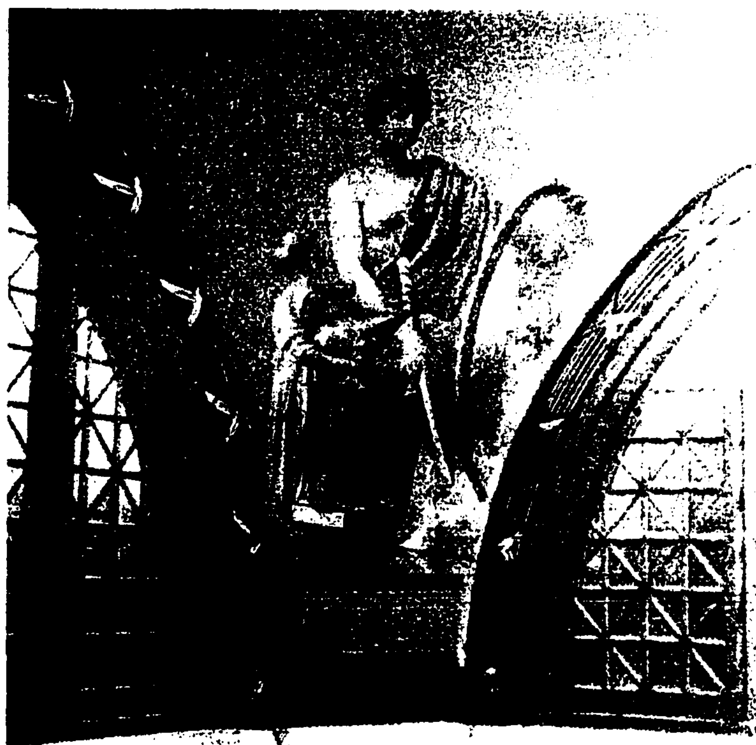

Fig. VII:13. Simmons, *Power*, 1911, dome of the Mercer County Courthouse. Photograph, ca. 1990, courtesy of Richard Murray.

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Fig. VII:14. Polk County Court House, 1906, Proudfoot and Bird, architects. From *Art Work of Des Moines, Iowa* (Chicago: Gravure Illustration Company, 1915).

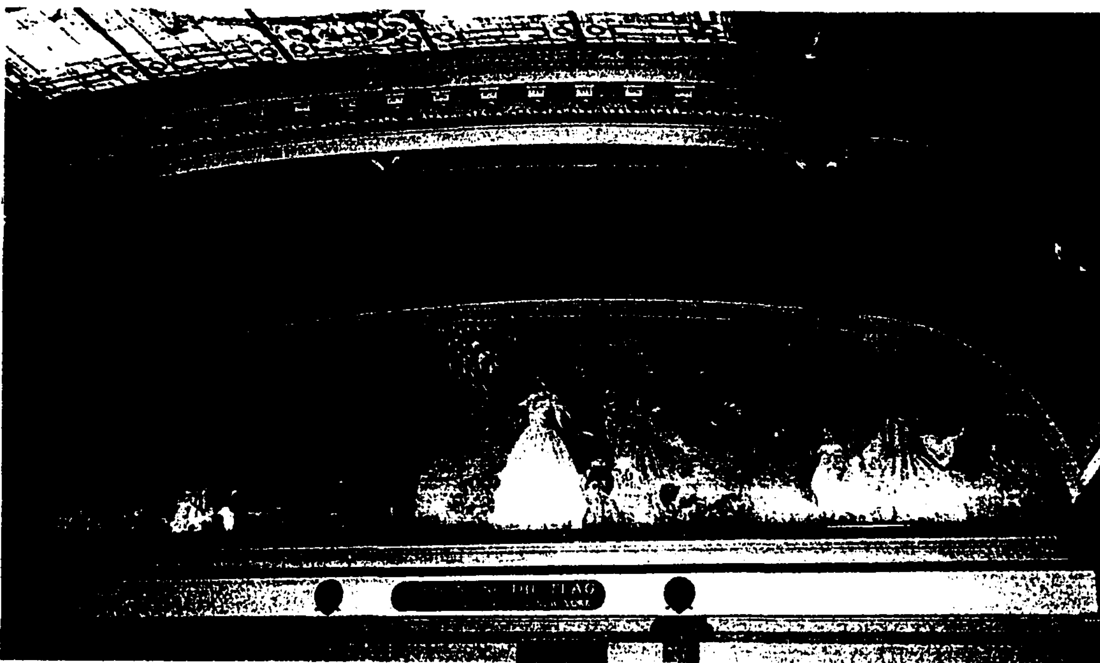

Fig. VII:15. Simmons, *Presentation of the Flag to Troops Departing for the Civil War*, 1912. Author's photograph, 1999.

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Fig. VII:16. Jules Guerin, *Arch of the Rising Sun from the Court of the Universe*. 1915, Panama-Pacific Exposition, watercolor on paper, 40 x 38 in. Collection San Francisco Public Library. Photograph, Schopplein Studio. From *The American Renaissance, 1876-1917*, (Brooklyn, New York: Brooklyn Museum), 14.

Figs. VII:17a and b. Simmons, *Lure of the Atlantic* (bottom) and *Visions of Exploration* (top), 1915, for Arch of the Rising Sun. From *Sculpture and Painting of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition at San Francisco, 1915.*

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Fig. VII:18. Simmons, figures representing Exploration, Inspiration, Truth and Beauty, and Religion, detail of mural *Visions of Exploration.* From *California's Magazine* 2 (1915), p. 287. Courtesy Visual Resources, GC, CUNY.

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