

THE BRONZE DOORS OF UNITED STATES CAPITOL.

In a previous article, we gave you a brief description of our magnificent Capitol building in Washington for one year, with all its splendor of polished marble, glowing canvas and almost oriental richness of ornamentation.

Imagine yourself standing on the eastern boundary of the broad esplanade in front of the Capitol. The velvety turf of the wide lawn is shaded by few stately trees; and one is pointed out to you as "Summer's tree," for whose life the green leaves are so eloquently and effectively. The smooth, orange-red marble, winding through the malachite green sward, are bordered by flowering shrubs and plants; that, from the blossoming crocuses of early April to the splendor of May roses and the pale chrysanthemums of late December, light up the wide park with bands and masses of brilliant color.

The longer you gaze at the eastern facade of the building, the greater will be your admiration for the pure simplicity of its outlines and the combination of grace and majesty in its proportions. Let us ascend to the entrance of the north, or Senate, wing of the Capitol by a broad flight of polished marble steps. We cross the pillared portico, with its 24 Corinthian columns, 38 feet in height, and a pair of magnificent bronze doors swing noiselessly before our entrance. We are here to compare our delight in finding the portals to this great building in fact keeping with the imposing grandeur of the exterior, as well as in harmony with the ornate beauty of the interior. These doors were designed by Thomas Crawford and modeled by William H. Rinehart.

They were cast and finished in 1865, by Ames & Co. of Chicopee, Massachusetts. The eight panels, four on a side, represent scenes from the life of Washington, almost exclusively. Beginning with the upper right hand panel, we see the "Battle of Brandy Hill" in 1777. The central figure is that of the beloved physician, brave officer and noble patriot, Gen. Warren, just as he receives the fatal wound in his heroic breast.

The second panel is in "Monmouth" in 1778; and the artist has depicted that moment when Gen. Washington delivers a stern rebuke to Gen. Lee, as he meets the latter flying from the advancing foe in disgraceful retreat.

The third panel is "Yorktown" 1781. The principal figures are those of Washington and General Alexander Hamilton, as the Commander-in-Chief sends the gallant officer to lead an attack with the brave Lafayette on the distant redoubt of Cornwallis.

The fourth panel, next the lower left hand corner, contains "Washington's oration at Trenton" in 1789. The triumphal arch is seen, bearing the inscription, "THE DEFENDER OF THE MOTHERS WILL BE THE PROTECTOR OF THE DAUGHTERS." "Virgins fair and matrons grave" with white-robed children are streaming the Heno's way with flowers.

The fifth panel represents Washington taking the oath of office as first President of the United States, April 30, 1789. The oath was administered by Chancellor Livingston, upon the balcony of the old Federal Hall, which stood on the site of the present Custom House in Wall St. New York.

The sixth and upper left hand panel, depicts "The Laying of the Corner Stone of the United States Capitol at Washington." The two lower panels represent allegorical scenes—that on the right is "War" and on the left is "Peace." The casings of the door are of bronze and are quite plainly finished.

A superb set of bronze doors open into the Rotunda from the eastern portico of the central building of the Capitol.

This magnificent portal is said to surpass anything of his kind in existence. It even surpasses the famous bronze gates to the Baptistery at Florence, erected by Ghiberti in the middle of the fifteenth century or the bronze door to the Sanctuary of St. Mark in Venice, designed by Sansovino about the same period.

The doors to the Rotunda were designed by Randolph Rogers, an American sculptor residing at Rome, in 1838. They were cast at the foundry at Munich, Germany, by F. von Malle, and completed in 1861. These doors are entirely composed of bronze, back and front, and are remarkable as being the only doors in the world, thus constructed. They are seventeen feet high, nine feet wide and weigh the enormous amount of ten tons. They cost \$80,000 and are among the noblest ornaments of our beautiful Capitol.

"The casing is semicircular at the top and projects about a foot in front of leaves of the door. Around the outer edge of the casing extends an elaborate border, emblematic of conquest and navigation. The key of the arch of the casing is ornamented with a fine head of Columbus, beneath which is the American Eagle with outspread wings. Four figures, representing Asia, Africa, Europe and America, stand at the four corners of the casing, beginning with Asia at the upper left hand corner.

There are eight square panels in the two halves of the door, besides the semicircular transom panel. Between these panels are ten bas-reliefs, five on each door, representing historic events which have written on Columbus' voyages, from his own time down to the present day, ending with Irving and Prescott.

On the right and left of the panels are sixteen statues, set in niches, representing the most eminent of the friends and contemporaries of the great Discoverer. In describing them we shall begin with the figure on the left hand side, opposite the first part of the story told by the door.

The figure is that of Juan Perez, Prior of the Convent of LaBabida, a former confessor of Queen Isabella. He was a staunch friend of Columbus and it was through his intercessions that the adventurous navigator gained an audience with the Queen.

The next is Cortez, the Conqueror of Mexico. The third is Don Juan de Ojeda, a distinguished but unfaithful follower of Columbus. The top figure is Amerigo Vesputi, after whom the Continent was named.

At the top of the double row, between the two leaves of the door, are Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, Archbishop of Toledo and Grand Cardinal of Spain, sometimes called on account of his immense influence, "the third King of Spain," on the right, and Pope Alexander VI on the left.

The figures below are Ferdinand on the right and Isabella on the left. Below them are Charles VIII, King of France, and Donna Beatriz de Bobadilla, Marchioness of Moys, who was a favorite lady-in-waiting of the Queen of Spain. The artist could not find any likeness of the noble lady and gave her the features of Mrs. Rogers, his wife.

Henry VII of England and John II of Portugal, form the lowest central pair, the English monarch being on the right.

Francisco Pizarro, the cruel Conqueror of Peru, fills the topmost niche on the right.

Below him is Vasco Nunez de Balboa, who, crossing the Isthmus of Darien, with his followers, discovered the Pacific Ocean on the 20th of September, 1510.

Next comes Bartholomew Columbus, brother of the discoverer, and by him appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Indies. He wears the face of Mr. Rogers, the artist.

Martin Alonso Pinzon stands at the bottom of the last row. He was the captain of the "Pinta," one of the little squadron of Columbus, and the first to see the land of the Western World. Eventually he betrayed his friend and Commander and died of grief and mortification.

We now come to the exquisite pictures in the panels of the door. The work is in alto relievo, the figures standing out boldly from the surface. An oil painting, or steel engraving could scarcely tell the story more perfectly.

The lowest left hand panel begins the history, the transom containing the central scene.

Panel I. Columbus is expounding his theory of finding the Indies by sailing due west, to the Council of Salamanca.

Panel II. Weary and discouraged, Columbus has sought the Convent of La Rabida, near Pado. He unfolds his plans to Juan Perez, who mentions them to Donna Bobadilla. The two esplanades his cause so zealously with the Queen, that she sent for Columbus to appear at Court and plead his case in person. It was at La Rabida that the first met Alonso Pinzon, who accompanied him in his subsequent voyages.

Panel III. Represents Columbus laying his plans before the King and Queen of Spain. Isabella leans forward with eager interest, but Ferdinand holds back coldly and distrustfully.

Panel IV. This is the departure from Palos. The Admiral, with questioning faith in his own success, is sending his son Diego to the care of the faithful prior, Juan Perez.

The transom panel extends across the whole door, is semi-circular in form, and represents the Admiral and his companions landing at San Salvador. The banner of Spain is proudly held aloft by Columbus. A group of natives crouch at the foot of a tree and gaze at the strange "pale-faces" with wonder and fear.

Panel V. This is the first of the right leaf of the door, and represents the first interview between the Indians and the discoverer. A sailor approaches with an Indian girl, whom he has captured and bound, and is carrying her on his shoulders. The Admiral reprimands him for his cruelty and commands the instant release of the frightened girl.

Panel VI. Represents the "Triumphal Entry into Barcelona," where Columbus is seen on horseback, and is greeted by the knights of the crown.

Panel VII. Represents the "Wrongs of Columbus." Bobadilla, having been sent to the New World to investigate the charges made against the Admiral, sides against him and sent him back to Spain in chains. The officers of the ship are filled with indignation and wish to set him free. Columbus is represented at the moment when he refuses their generous offer, and holding up his manacled hands, exclaims: "No, I will not be the memento of the gratitude of princes!"

Panel VIII. This represents the last scene in an adventurous life, the "Death of Columbus." May 20th, 1506, at about seventy years of age. The picture portrays the chamber in which he died. The priestly confessor, who enters alike the palaces of wealth or the huts of poverty, stands by his bedside and administers the sacred rites of religion. The dying eyes which have gazed on the wonders of a New World, were turned toward the Cross, the precious symbol of redemption. The weak lips tremulously murmur: "Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit," and the grand, heroic soul passes into the perfect peace and rest of a blessed eternity.

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