# THE GLORY THAT IS REFLECTED IN FEDERAL HALL IN NEW YORK CITY

## BY GEORGE W. GOWEN

There are two elements to every historic structure—the structure itself and what happened there. For Independence Hall the event is the signing of the Declaration of Independence; for Mount Vernon it is George Washington; for Monticello it is Thomas Jefferson; for the structure on Wall Street between Nassau and William Streets—Federal Hall—it is the reflection of America's Greco-Roman heritage and the birth of the nation.

As we approach Federal Hall, we are greeted by a larger-than-life statue of George Washington—the work of John Quincy Adams Ward created in 1883. (Ward's other works include "Pilgrim," "Indian Hunter," the "Seventh Regiment Memorial"—all three in Central Park—and the "Victory Statue" in Yorktown, Va.) As you ascend the steps, you should take a close look at Ward's depiction of George Washington and think of visiting his "Pilgrim" on a hill at Seventy-Second Street overlooking the boat pond. These are two of New York's finer vistas: one depicts our first President keeping an eye on Wall Street and the Stock Exchange, and the other shows the New England Puritan surveying the sweep of Central Park and the apartment buildings on Fifth Avenue.

Federal Hall, completed in 1842, is a fine example of the Greek revival style and replaces the building that Washington knew. The columns come from the Tuckahoe quarry in the Bronx, the stone floor comes from a quarry in Massachusetts, and the capitals come from Italy. Other buildings designed by Town and Davis, the architects of Federal Hall, include the State Capitols in New Haven, Conn., and Raleigh, N.C., and the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Conn. The laborers who fashioned these stones were immigrants from across the seas. The exterior is reminiscent of the Parthenon in Greece and the interior is akin to the Pantheon in Rome. Only in America do the two co-exist in one structure.

But more important than the building is the inspiration that we may draw from what happened on this site. It was here that a dream was fulfilled, a promise made, and a challenge offered. In 1735, Peter Zenger was arrested and jailed for offending the royal governor; he was tried and acquitted of the charge. Thus, freedom of the press was born here. In 1765, our Colonial ancestors assembled here and proclaimed that taxation without representation is a violation of basic rights. It was on this spot, the first Capitol of the United States, that the Congress convened on March 4, 1789, and a federal government was created under the Constitution. And on April 30, 1789, as indicated on the stone slab displayed here, George Washington was inaugurated and delivered the new nation's first presidential address.

On Sept. 25, 1789, Congress adopted the first 10 amendments to the Constitution—known as the Bill of Rights—on this site, proclaiming the words we should never forget: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

The prior day, the Judiciary Act established an institution that endures to this day: the U.S. court system. At that time the judiciary consisted of a Supreme Court with six justices and 13 judicial districts, each with a circuit court and a district court. The Judiciary Act also created the office of U.S. attorney general and the appointment of a U.S. marshal and a district attorney in each district. U.S. marshals have served as the instruments of civil authority for more than 200 years. As the nation expanded, marshals brought law and order to the raw frontier. Today, among other duties, they guard over 800 courthouses and are the very guarantors of a functioning and safe judiciary.

A clause in the Judiciary Act granting the Supreme Court the power to issue writs outside its appellate jurisdiction was declared unconstitutional by the decision reached in *Marbury v. Madison*, a seminal case that established the power of the Supreme Court to invalidate an act of Congress.

It was on this spot of land that the Northwest Ordinance was adopted, setting the basis for the admittance of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin into the union as free states in which slavery would be prohibited—a historic stride in the long march to the abolition of slavery.

The columns and the dome we see today were erected as reminders of our lineage, which can be traced to Greek democracy and Roman economic might—as Edgar Allen Poe said, "The Glory that was Greece and the Grandeur that was Rome." But these stones merely echo the distant past. What was fashioned here in words and deeds transcends such ancestry and summons the future.

It is here that our ancestors fulfilled the promise of creating a union, dreamed of a larger nation, and offered the challenge of "securing the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." **TFL**

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