

Acceptable Activists, Absence, and Antifeminists:  
A Feminist Historical Critique of National Statuary Hall

By

Jordan Stish

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The Members of the Committee approve the thesis of  
Jordan Stish, presented on \_\_\_\_\_

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Dr. Cheryl Jimenez Frei, Chair

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Dr. Joanne Jahnke Wegner

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Dr. Kong Pheng Pha

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Dr. John W.W. Mann

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

Dean of Graduate Studies

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Under the Supervision of Dr. Cheryl Jimenez Frei

In recent years, debates surrounding monuments and the messages they transmit through public space have exploded. A public, cultural conversation has emerged about monuments, collective memory, systemic racism, and societal values, not just in the United States, but globally. While academic conversations about monuments and their meanings have been present in the fields of history and art history since the 1990s, specific analysis about gender representation in the monumental landscape has only just begun. This thesis will examine National Statuary Hall and the monuments within it at the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C., the capital city that serves as both the political and commemorative core of the nation. By analyzing government legislation, lobbying records, Congressional reports, and other primary sources, I argue that Statuary Hall is a site of State-constructed monumental antifeminism. The existing monuments of women in Statuary Hall when it reached its capacity of 100 represented a constructed image of patriotic femininity reflecting specific images of an idealized American woman in the national narrative. Through primary source analysis, I examine how lobbyists and legislators at the state and federal level utilized constrictive ideas of gender norms to shape the legacies and histories of specific women to construct a core narrative of patriotism, loyalty to the State, and an ‘acceptable’ female activist within the Hall. I also examine the silences in Statuary Hall, particularly of feminist historical figures, to underscore my argument that the monuments within this national commemorative space have worked to present a specific narrative of the ‘ideal’ US-American woman, intended to serve as examples of virtue, patriotism, and acceptable feminine identity.

I focus on three primary case studies of monuments in Statuary Hall: Frances E. Willard of Illinois, Maria Sanford of Minnesota, and Sacajawea of North Dakota. My analysis includes an examination of the legislative decisions behind the creation of each monument, the iconography in the statues themselves, and the power of place in their location in the Capitol Building. In addition, I discuss the overall gender inequity of the Hall and critique the inclusion of monuments honoring documented antifeminists. Overall, I argue that by manipulating the legacies of activist women to fit a nationalist ideal, ignoring gender

inequity at the site, and commemorating men who have promoted antifeminist ideals, legislators with the power to influence representation at Statuary Hall have contributed to the creation of a powerful commemorative space that diminishes women's roles in the national narrative, constructs an image of an ideal American woman centered on strict gender norms and notions of patriotism, and creates a falsified and damaging legacy for women and their activism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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Dr. Cheryl Jimenez Frei, Thesis Advisor

Date

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*This thesis is dedicated to Lynn Stish, for always encouraging me to follow my dreams and cheering me on, every step of the way.*

*And to Ryan Castaneda, for learning to love my love of history.*

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## Introduction



Figure 1: National Statuary Hall Rotunda, December 20, 2008. Photo by Adam Fagan, Flickr, Creative Commons ShareAlike license, CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0.

June 1, 2000, began as a regular day for Congressman John Edward of Illinois. He went to work on Capitol Hill and introduced legislation to the House of Representatives about updating one of the rooms inside the Capitol Building. For Edwards, it was likely a routine piece of legislation, but for public historians it was anything but routine.

Edwards' bill related to National Statuary Hall, a rotunda in the United States Capitol Building that had existed since 1864. Its grandiose features and superlative structure were indicative of national pride and promise. Architecturally, Statuary Hall is a space of beauty. Symbolically, it means so much more. Statuary Hall is a room in which each state can showcase two monuments honoring individuals they find to be the best



representatives of their state’s legacy in relation to national ideals and identity. The process of creating and unveiling a monument in the Hall begins at the state legislature. State representatives submit a resolution to the legislative body for a vote. If a majority vote is obtained and the governor of that state provides a signature of approval, the resolution moves on to Congress. Once introduced into the federal legislature, both the House of Representatives and the Senate will hear testimony in favor of or against the approval of the monument. If the resolution is successfully voted upon by the House and the Senate, it is passed on to the Architect of the Capitol and the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress for logistical planning. Both the Architect of the Capitol and the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress oversee the aesthetic maintenance of many federal buildings, including the National Statuary Hall. The Joint Committee on the Library of Congress and the Architect of the Capitol work with state representatives to secure plans to create, commemorate, and unveil the monument in Statuary Hall.<sup>1</sup>

The one hundred monuments dedicated to individuals within the Hall are meant to serve as examples, to inspire Capitol visitors to be excellent patriotic participants in the national narrative. Up until the legislation Edward put forth in 2000, Statuary Hall also represented something else: permanence. Monuments included within its walls were always intended to remain there forever, but Edward’s bill set out to change that:

Any State may request the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the replacement of a statue the State has provided for display in Statuary Hall in the Capitol of the United States under section 1814 of the Revised Statutes. A request shall only be considered under paragraph (1) only if the request has been approved by a resolution adopted by the legislature of the State, and the request has been

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<sup>1</sup> Architect of the Capitol, “Procedure and Guidelines for Replacement of Statues in the National Statuary Hall Collection,” January 2014, Accessed April 15, 2023, [https://www.aoc.gov/sites/default/files/statue\\_replacement\\_guidelines\\_2014.pdf](https://www.aoc.gov/sites/default/files/statue_replacement_guidelines_2014.pdf).

approved by the Governor of the State, and the statue to be replaced has been displayed in the Capitol of the United States for at least ten years as of the time of the request is made, except that the Joint Committee may waive this requirement for cause at the request of a State.<sup>2</sup>

For the first time since 1864, states were granted the opportunity to replace their original monuments in Statuary Hall. Edward's bill was important for many reasons, but he likely did not realize how much his legislation would open the door for a deep contextual analysis of Statuary Hall, its meanings, and the messages it portrayed. An examination of Statuary Hall's history and evolution reveals that the space, meant to commemorate and honor the most important figures in United States history, held fundamental and foundational flaws. Scholars and public historians have analyzed those flaws through lenses of race,<sup>3</sup> but another aspect of Statuary Hall's history must be examined: gender representation and women's roles within the space.

Issues of gender representation in Statuary Hall are both obvious and nuanced. In its most obvious form, the number of monuments honoring women in Statuary Hall is vastly unequal. By the time Statuary Hall reached its capacity of one-hundred monuments in 2005, only nine depicted women. In 2023, that number has only grown to eleven. Beneath the obvious numerical inequality lies a more nuanced and symbolic misrepresentation of women. Monuments serve as both public art and symbolic historical relics. In most cases, a monument's timing, message, and the reasoning behind both is just as intentional as the design itself. Statuary Hall is controlled by legislators at the state

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<sup>2</sup> United States Congress, Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2001, 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 4577, Sec. 311, pp. 114.

<sup>3</sup> Megan Irene Fitzmaurice, "Commemorative Privilege in National Statuary Hall: Spatial Constructions of Racial Citizenship," *Southern Communication Journal* 81 no. 4 (2016): pp. 252-262.; Kevin L. Parnell Jr., "Politics in the Pantheon: Commemoration, White Supremacy, and National Statuary Hall," *Panorama: Journal of the Association of Historians of American Art* 7 no. 1 (Spring 2021).

and federal levels. When looking at the legislative logistical methods used by representatives with power to control the monuments displayed in Statuary Hall, a pattern of methodical misrepresentation is revealed. Legislators have used the monuments in Statuary Hall to construct a version of the national narrative that fits within a set of specific political and cultural connotations reflective of intense patriotic loyalty. The women selected to be honored in Statuary Hall are meant to fit that narrative of patriotism. If their lives and legacies do not exactly fit in to the story, their legacies are reconstructed through monument styles, descriptions, unveiling ceremonies and placements within the Hall. The monuments honoring nineteenth and twentieth century women in Statuary Hall have been manufactured to represent a methodical and rigid image of an idealized feminine patriotic identity meant to inspire loyalty to the State and to the gendered status quo.

Above all else, monuments were—and still are—meant to influence the masses. Historians specializing in monuments and memory have made very compelling cases illustrating how classical monuments, pieces of public art designed in Greco-Roman style, were clearly understood at the time as a means to provide citizens with “an identity and model for proper behavior.”<sup>4</sup> Classical monuments have been regarded as the standard ‘hero’ monument. Typical of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, classical monuments feature a bust or full-length sculpture made of marble or stone sitting on top of a pedestal. The figure honored in the classical monument was intended to appear taller and almost godlike to the people who looked upon it. Classical monuments

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<sup>4</sup> Gerald Danzer, *Public Places: Exploring Their History* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1987), 1.

reflected heroism and democratic tradition, and they were meant to separate the common person from the sculpture on the pedestal.<sup>5</sup> Classical monuments are often regarded as a relic of the past. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, monuments have evolved to become more abstract.<sup>6</sup> However, regardless of creation date, the monuments in Statuary Hall have remained in the same classical style, freezing the Hall in a particular historical moment of national identity creation and chaos reflective of the tumultuous nineteenth century.

The monuments of Statuary Hall assume a position of authority, informing the public of its perceived ideal values as well as a model for behavior. Monuments were intended to remind viewers of a specific person or event, but also to encourage the populous to remember an *ideal*,<sup>7</sup> providing moral and ideological guidelines for the public. Scholars and public historians examining the issue have asserted that these types of monuments contain specifically chosen and embedded meanings, chosen by political figures and artists to convey authority and serve as a representation of a society's collective values.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the location of a monument is always telling, and can reveal more about a chosen ideology than the monument's intended interpretation itself.

As art historian Kirk Savage argues, the placement of a monument signifies its level of perceived importance.<sup>9</sup> A monument placed in a high-traffic location with vast

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<sup>5</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 120-123.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 207.

<sup>7</sup> Gerald Danzer, *Public Places: Exploring Their History* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1987), 9.

<sup>8</sup> Cheryl Jiménez Frei, "Columbus, Juana, and the Politics of the Plaza: Battles over Monuments, Memory and Identity in Buenos Aires," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51 no. 1 (2019): pp. 607-638, 610.

<sup>9</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1.

historical or cultural significance to a population would be perceived as more significant and relevant than a monument placed in a low-traffic region with no real cultural or historical capital. Statuary Hall is located not only in Washington, D.C., but in the United States Capitol Building, the site in which the foundations of American national democracy are created and upheld. Statuary Hall's location in the Capitol Building shows that the space and the monuments within it are held to the highest standard of influence and importance. Additionally, the location of the Capitol Building emphasizes patriotism. The building itself is where democracy is upheld. The monuments inside are meant to reflect patriotic sentiments and loyalty to democracy. The monuments in Statuary Hall are meant to show the public that the people they honor are the legacy of the nation and its foundational story and should be held patriotically, in highest regard and esteem.

Building upon existing scholarly work on monuments, memory, and identity, I turn towards commemorative gender representation in Statuary Hall to illustrate how the construction of ideal feminine identities is much deeper than a simple description of a woman in a monument. Centered on the National Mall in the US capital, Statuary Hall is a commemorative space that holds a near-sacred status. The monuments inside are meant to represent not only US-American history, but also values. The women commemorated in Statuary Hall were chosen by legislators for a specific meaning. Through detailed primary source analysis that examines case studies of women honored in Statuary Hall from its early history to the present, I argue that politicians and lobbyists have constructed an identity for American women in the Hall that reflects a strict narrative of female patriotism, gender norms, and 'acceptable' activism. Overall, this constructed identity diminishes women's roles in the national story. When analyzed alongside the

absence of many other monuments to women and the intentional inclusion of monuments of men who held starkly misogynist views, Statuary Hall represents a site of antifeminism, both in the past and the present.

In July of 2022, I traveled to Washington D.C. to see Statuary Hall for myself. Just prior to my trip, a new statue of Mary McLeod Bethune was added to the Hall, making her the first African American commemorated. Shortly afterwards, a statue of Amelia Earhart was scheduled to be unveiled, over twenty years after Congressional approval. But these women are outliers in Statuary Hall. Of the one hundred monuments located in the rotunda, only eleven (including Bethune and Earhart) honor women, and most monuments do not authentically honor the legacies of the women they commemorate.

The inequity in monumental gender representation in the Hall is apparent. Women make up over half the population of the United States, but they are routinely excluded from histories and narratives. Of the nearly 50,000 monuments in the United States, only a fraction depict women. The Washington Post compiled a list of people with the most monuments dedicated to them in the United States in 2021. Of the 50, only three women made the list. The monumental landscape in the United States has given the impression that white men, particularly white military men, are most worthy of honor and remembrance.<sup>10</sup> This logic can be applied specifically to Statuary Hall. In its present state in 2023, monuments honoring women do not even make up one quarter of the Hall. Monuments are meant to inspire the public, encouraging them to reflect and remember—

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<sup>10</sup> Gillian Brockell, "America's 50,000 Monuments: More Mermaids than Congresswomen, more Confederates than Abolitionists," *The Washington Post*, October 6, 2021, Accessed July 1, 2022.

but remember what, exactly? In its present state, the monuments in Statuary Hall encourage the public to forget about most women rather than remember them. Of the ones who are commemorated in the Hall, the public is encouraged to remember a specific, cherry-picked history rather than the authentic story of their lives and roles in shaping the nation.

It is important to note that Statuary Hall, no matter how sacred, is just a building that houses monuments. It is only the site, and the site cannot be responsible for perpetuating narratives. The Hall itself does not have a say in monumental selection and construction, but who does? Who has had a say in shaping gender representation in the Hall? The masses do not have control over the monumental selection process; that responsibility has been left to a small number of powerful lawmakers. Since the inception of Statuary Hall, for a monument to be introduced, lobbyists and members of Congress have to obtain a majority vote of approval. The process in which lawmakers introduced and selected specific individuals for monumental commemoration shows a methodology indicative of patriarchal influence. The obvious gender disparity within Statuary Hall, coupled with the inclusion of women justified as ‘acceptable’ subjects for commemoration by lawmakers and their associates reflects a methodical construction of an idealized identity of an American woman. That identity does not reflect the true lives and legacies of the women commemorated and in turn, shows that those in power prefer the women’s constructed identity reflected in Statuary Hall rather than an actual representation of American womanhood. Moreover, the presence of monuments honoring men who held antifeminist and misogynistic ideals within Statuary Hall is indicative of further historical silencing that diminishes women’s contributions to the national story,

reinforces patriarchal constructions of femininity, and overtly excludes women activists as central to national history and identity.

### *Methodology*

The goal of this thesis is to understand the complicated relationship between identity and constructed gender roles National Statuary Hall. It was not until 1905, forty-one years after the creation of the Hall, that the first statue of a woman, Frances E. Willard, was included. Since then, only ten other women have been added, and no women inducted have been considered to be feminist leaders after 1920. This research explores the construction of national identity through the creation and implementation of Statuary Hall and its monuments. This work will add to scholarly conversations on monuments, public memory and memory control, and women's roles and representation in the national narrative. It is important to note that this project does not aim to critique the actions or lives of the women already honored in Statuary Hall. Each woman (and man) commemorated in Statuary Hall was chosen for a specific reason by individuals who lived decades after them. The intention of this work is to examine how constructions of national history and identity have been shaped through monuments in Statuary Hall by legislators and other political figures with decision-making power to elevate or reject certain individuals for commemoration within the Hall. By looking at the political and cultural maneuvers made by those responsible for the monumental evolution within the Hall as a historic site, I argue that Statuary Hall represents a site of constructed antifeminism through monumental commemoration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and beyond.



This thesis offers a chronological analysis of the origins of Statuary Hall as well as comparative case studies of the commemorative processes for Frances E. Willard, Maria Sanford, Sacajawea, Ronald Reagan, and Barry Goldwater within the Hall to determine just how much Statuary Hall represents a manufactured public memory of the ideal American woman. While it is difficult to write about something that does not exist, this work will also explore archival and contemporary primary source documents as well as personal fieldwork to explain why the commemorative practices of adding feminists to Statuary Hall is nonexistent.

### *Definition of Terms*

Throughout this work, the term ‘acceptable activist’ will frequently be used to describe the ways in which the public memory of several women honored in Statuary Hall has been reconstructed. This term is what I have deemed appropriate to describe the end result of a process of memory manufacturing and narrative reconstruction. As will be discussed in later chapters, each woman mentioned in this work lived an extraordinary life of activism, advocacy, or inspiration. They each faced gross misogyny (and with the case of Sacajawea, the intersections of racism and white supremacy as well). They challenged the status quo and publicly intervened against the authority. Their mere existence within systems of gender inequality makes their legacies extraordinary and worthy of honor in Statuary Hall.

However, as will be further discussed in Chapter Two, these women were not chosen for their radical presence as activists. Instead, legislators and their constituents selected these women because their legacies could be useful. Based on the language used to describe the women and vote upon their monument approval and the context behind

each unveiling, I argue that these women were chosen because they could help support a particular agenda. The radical aspects of their lives could be ‘written out’ of the public’s memory with the methodical representation of each monument.

Further, each of these women possessed parts of their identity that fit in within the parameters of the status quo for women at the time. They were mothers, teachers, caretakers, religious voices of reason, and wives. These aspects of their lives were emphasized in their monuments. Those in charge of the monuments made sure to include the traditionally feminine aspects of their identities when reconstructing their legacies. The acceptable portions of their identity were emphasized to stress the importance of traditional femininity in the national narrative. These women’s lives were methodically reconstructed so they would represent acceptable activists, and through the passage of time and fading memory, their constructed acceptability has become all that remains of their legacy. The authentic histories of each woman have been all but lost in public memory. A secondary goal of this work is to reframe each woman’s authentic life within the national narrative by bringing attention to the misconstructions that live on in Statuary Hall.

### *Chapter Outline*

This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter will follow the history of Statuary Hall itself, beginning with its conception and construction in 1864 and the power behind the space itself. This chapter will consist mostly of archival research, using Congressional legislation to chart the original use of the Hall, its evolution and expansion, and its purpose in the construction of the national narrative. Examples showing the legislative and commemorative strategies used to commemorate three Civil

War era men in the early years of Statuary Hall will be used to set the precedent for strategies used by twentieth century persons of power to shape the monumental landscape within Statuary Hall.

Chapter Two will provide details on the women currently commemorated in Statuary Hall. Architectural plans along with spatial analysis will be used to discuss the importance of the placement of these statues and why their location within Statuary Hall is important to the discussion on commemorative equity. Three case studies will be used in this chapter to discuss women's constructed roles within the national narrative to show which kinds of 'acceptable' women are honored in Statuary Hall. The Temperance Leader, the Teacher, and the 'Good Indian' will serve as case studies to discuss the commemoration of Frances E. Willard, Maria Sanford, and Sacajawea. The public memory of these women will also be examined, and the question, "why are women who are considered helpers often commemorated in spaces like Statuary Hall?" will be posed. The memory of these women today and the celebration of their ability to help rather than to lead will be critiqued and analyzed through a feminist historical lens.

Chapter Three will pose the question: "Where are all the Feminists?" This chapter will first use an archival approach to look at which women in the Hall are described as suffragists and why describing them as such does not reflect accurate women's history. The chapter will also use an analytical approach to discuss the backlash to feminist activism in the post-war era and its long-lasting cultural consequences. Archival sources and other primary sources like political platforms of feminists and antifeminists show how backlash culture was generated and sustained. Lastly, contemporary primary sources will be analyzed to show that the backlash culture established in the post-war era has

made its way into contemporary culture and can be used to explain the lack of commemoration of feminists in Statuary Hall. Memory work will also be used in this chapter to show how a negative public memory of feminism and feminists themselves during the counterculture era has sustained the negative public memory of feminism today.

Chapter Four will discuss the anti-feminists honored within Statuary Hall. Case studies of the commemorations of Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater will be used to show that while the lack of commemoration of feminists is harmful, the active and recent commemoration of documented anti-feminists is just as problematic. Archival and legislative research will be used to highlight Reagan and Goldwater's antifeminist politics and beliefs. Legislation and political commentary commending Reagan and Goldwater around the time of their induction to Statuary Hall will also show that these anti-feminists are still highly regarded and revered in politics and history.

### *Historiography*

As mentioned before, this work situates itself inside historical conversations about monuments, public memory and memory control, and women's and feminist history. The literature for each theme is extensive; this work will connect all three through the analysis of Statuary Hall. As academic inquiry surrounding monuments, memory, and feminism continues to grow, three key themes have emerged. First, an understanding of the clear interplay between monuments, power, and messaging is expressed through the existing historiography. Historians such as Kirk Savage, Gerald Danzer, Erika Doss, and Cheryl

Jimenez Frei have examined the power of monuments to construct historical and political narratives, effectively arguing that monuments, their placement, and their meanings are all constructed around perpetuating power and influence over the masses.

Secondly, when looking at scholarship on public memory and narrative control, John Bodnar, David Goebel and Daves Rossell, and Diane F. Britton have asserted that public memory can be highly malleable, furthering the point that whoever controls the public memory controls the historical and cultural narrative. Additionally, these historians claim that public history spaces are the prime place for individuals and institutions like the State to fight for memory control.

Finally, an analysis of feminist scholarship in the United States intersects with literature on both monuments and public memory. Historians Teresa Bergman, Danielle Drozdewski and Janice Monk, and Victoria Lamont have examined American public memory of women in the post-war period as well as their coinciding commemorations in public sites across the nation. Through this work, each has argued that public perception and memory of feminists and other women activists directly correlates to the commemoration of women in public space.

My own work situates itself at the intersection of each of these three key themes. By using Statuary Hall as a specific case study, this work relates directly to each historiographical conversation. Statuary Hall represents a site of monumental messaging, public memory and control and women's history and feminist commemoration. This analysis of the Hall supplements the historiography by relating all three themes under one case. Statuary Hall is important for analytical study because the space itself is sacred alongside the monuments within. By adding a gendered component to my analysis, I am

filling a historiographical gap on equitable commemoration of women through monuments in public history spaces.

### *Monuments*

The historiographical conversation surrounding monuments stretches back several decades. In 1987, historian Gerald Danzer emphasized the power of monuments in public space in his work, *Public Places: Exploring Their History*. Using the Washington Monument as a case study, Danzer argues that monuments were understood to provide a position of authority, informing the public of its perceived ideal values and behavior.<sup>11</sup> At its most basic form, the Washington Monument is intended to commemorate George Washington. However, the monument's form and iconography were chosen by its creators to represent symbols of Western Civilization and the notion of progress for mankind.<sup>12</sup> The monument's obelisk shape symbolizes the significance of American independence from British imperial rule as well as the great power of the new nation. The monument towers over the rest of the city, standing over 500 feet tall. The sheer physicality of the monument exudes messages of power and greatness. By placing the tallest monument at the center of the capital city, the creators alluded to the ideology of American power and strength over other nations. Like other historians, for Danzer, the placement and execution of a monument can be more telling of a community's ideals than the monument's intended interpretation itself. By looking at monuments through the

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<sup>11</sup> Gerald Danzer, *Public Places: Exploring Their History* (Nashville: The American Association of State and Local History, 1987), xii.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

lens of sacred ideals, Danzer asserts the cultural relevance of monuments within sacred historical space.

Kirk Savage emphasized the importance of iconography and placement in his 2009 work, *Monument Wars: Washington DC, the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape*. In this work, Savage analyzes the creation of the monumental landscape in Washington, D.C., but perhaps more importantly, he emphasizes the significance of Washington, D.C. as the epoch of national identity. Savage argues that the monumental landscape represents a paradox, where the fluidity and evolutionary nature of history meet.<sup>13</sup> Because Washington, D.C. was specifically chosen to represent the nation politically, Savage argues that constructors of the nation were also tasked with creating a National Mall that represented the nation ideologically.<sup>14</sup> Because Washington, D.C. is the national political capital, it is also the nation's historical capital. The public looks to the National Mall and the monuments within it to tell the story of the nation and its perceived greatness. The National Mall carries enormous influence over the public, and its monuments leave a lasting cultural legacy just based on their placement alone. Savage's reference to the National Mall and the Memorial landscape will be referenced in Chapter One of this work to discuss the power of place and the significance of Washington, D.C. under the context of Statuary Hall's creation.

In her 2010 work, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, historian Erika Doss examines the period from the late-nineteenth to early twentieth century when the United States and many other nations emerging from periods of conflict experienced a

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<sup>13</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, DC, The National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 18.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

wave of monument building projects. Doss describes the “mania” that emerged as a global pattern as, “an obsession with issues of memory and history and an urgent desire to express and claim those issues in visibly public contexts.”<sup>15</sup> For Doss, memorial mania represents heightened anxieties on the part of emerging nations in the nineteenth century about what ideas the national identity should represent. Those who construct monuments and their meanings aim to harness those anxieties and control particular narratives about the nation and its publics.<sup>16</sup> Doss argues that, “driven by heated struggles over self-definition, national purpose and the politics of representation, memorial mania is especially shaped by the affective conditions of public life in America today: by the fevered pitch of public feelings such as grief, gratitude, fear, shame, and anger.”<sup>17</sup> Doss situates the origins of memorial mania around the nineteenth century, the same time in which the United States was engaging in bitter civil war to determine the nation’s values and vision for the future. Coincidentally, this was the same time in which legislators were constructing National Statuary Hall. When coupled with the significance and power of Washington D.C. as the nation’s capital, Statuary Hall is situated at the intersection of power and significance, both under the lens of physical space and the lens of constructed national public feeling, Statuary Hall becomes a prime case study for this work.

Historian Cheryl Jiménez Frei also explores the intersections of monuments, memory, politics, and identity in her 2019 article, “Columbus, Juana, and the Politics of the Plaza: Battles over Monuments, Memory, and Identity in Buenos Aires.” By centering on the case study of a monument to Christopher Columbus placed on the

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<sup>15</sup> Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*



grounds of the government house in Argentina's capital city of Buenos Aires in 1921, Jiménez Frei examines the influence of classical monuments in the construction of Argentine national identity.<sup>18</sup> In 2015, Argentina's president replaced the monument with one depicting an indigenous woman named Juana Azurduy, who fought in Argentina's wars of independence but was marginalized in the national narratives. Centering on an example of modern controversy that reflects similar discussions in the US, Jiménez Frei provides a compelling example to examine changing understandings of monuments and their reflections of a nation's values by analyzing the Columbus monument's iconography, placement, funding and external replacement, Jiménez Frei argues that monuments in Buenos Aires—the political and commemorative core of the nation—have served to both construct and contest notions of Argentine national identity that privileges European heritage and seeks to erase Indigenous identity.<sup>19</sup>

Each of these historians, though talking about different subjects, are essentially arguing towards the same assertion; while monuments themselves matter, the spaces in which they are placed and the messages their creators wish to convey is even more important to determining their intended messages. While these historians have set the precedent for the study of monuments and public space, other historians have presented scholarship on how those monuments impacts public memory.

### ***Public Memory***

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<sup>18</sup> Cheryl Jiménez Frei, "Columbus, Juana, and the Politics of the Plaza: Battles over Monuments, Memory and Identity in Buenos Aires," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51 no. 1 (2019): pp. 607-638, 607.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

John Bodnar contributed to the study of public memory with his 1992 book, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and the Twentieth Century*, where he argues that public memory is a tool utilized by the State to construct notions of identity and power. Using the example of the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., Bodnar, argues that public memory is a convergence of two competing institutions in the United States: vernacular culture and official culture.<sup>20</sup> When the decision was made to construct a monument honoring those who died in the Vietnam War. Legislators wanted the memorial to reflect bold patriotism and the power of the United States Military, but Vietnam veterans and their families felt differently. Those directly impacted by the war wanted the memorial to reflect the trauma and loss they experienced. The final memorial was a large black granite wall with the names of each individual who died in the war etched into the reflective stone. There were no flags, no color, and no reflection of traditional nationalistic patriotism seen in other war monuments. In the case of the Vietnam War Memorial, vernacular culture represented the people, specifically the veterans and their families. Vernacular culture is dynamic and emotional, and it often conveys lived experience. Conversely, official culture is represented by the State. In this case, lobbyists and legislators perpetuated official culture by insisting the memorial convey a patriotic message.<sup>21</sup> Official culture perpetuates loyalty to the State, and obedience to the status quo. For Bodnar, whichever institution, vernacular culture, or official culture, controls the site also controls the public memory of the particular theme in history. Bodnar's definition of vernacular and official culture has been instrumental in

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<sup>20</sup> John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 16-17.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

discussing public memory. Throughout this work, his definitions and theories of public memory will be applied to the following discussion of Statuary Hall and the power of the monuments inside. For the purposes of this work, it is important to note that in the case of Statuary Hall, legislators and lobbyists at the state and local level represent official culture in the construction of public memory.

Diane F. Britton answer's Bodnar with her 1997 article, "Public History and Public Memory." Britton poses a similar question as Bodnar: who owns the past? Britton makes the case that public historians must learn how to harness the reigns of public memory to ensure that popular culture does not become popular history.<sup>22</sup> Britton uses survey data from university students and museum professionals to assert that in general, Americans tend to associate history with heroism and military power.<sup>23</sup> Britton uses this data to warn public historians not to let popular assumptions in culture become historically hegemonic. Memory is malleable, public historians have the responsibility to make sure it does not fall into the wrong hands.

David Goebel and Daves Rossell furthered Bodnar and Britton's ideas of public memory with their 2013 anthology, *Commemoration in America: Essays on Monuments, Memorial, and Memory*. In this collection, Goebel and Rossell assert the importance of conveying truthful memories in history through commemorative practice. They warn of memory misrepresentation through time with their example of the myth of the Confederacy in North Carolina. In Raleigh, a monument dedicated to Confederate soldiers resides on the grounds of the state capitol. The monument depicts a strong

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<sup>22</sup> Diane F. Britton, "Public History and Public Memory," *The Public Historian* 19 no. 3 (1997): pp. 11-23, 12.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

narrative of Confederate history and heritage in North Carolina, though the message does not match the complicated history of Confederacy in the State. During the Civil War, North Carolina was bitterly divided between Union and Confederate alliances. Approximately fifty percent of North Carolina's soldiers fought for the Union, but the monument tells a different story.<sup>24</sup> Monuments directly correlate to public memory. If used improperly, the public memory of something, like the Confederate legacy in North Carolina, can be skewed, especially as contemporary culture grows further away from the event.

### *Women's History and Feminist Studies in Public Space*

As some historians have made the case for the significance of monuments in specific space and the power of memory in its formative state, others have taken those theories and applied them to women's history and feminist studies. The historiography on gendered commemoration in the United States is a small, yet growing field of literature, and it mostly consists of articles depicting singular monuments as case studies. While this scholarship aims to complete this historiography by creating an entire thesis on this topic, it is important to recognize that the foundation for this scholarship has been laid by a group of women historians in the United States and Canada.

The first historian to comment on gender representation in commemorative public space is Victoria Lamont with her 2006 article, "More than She Deserves: Women Suffrage Memorials in the 'Equality State.'" In this work, Lamont offers a critique of the American memorial landscape by studying the 1920s women's suffrage movement and

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<sup>24</sup> David Goebel and Daves Rossell, *Commemoration in America: Monuments, Memorial and Memory*, ed. David Goebel and Daves Rossell (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2013), 44.

its subsequent commemoration. Writing from a Canadian perspective, Lamont argues that the American memorial landscape tends to commemorate women who played a minor role in the suffrage movement rather than honoring the ‘key players’ of the movement who would have been perceived as radical activists at the time.<sup>25</sup> Lamont mentions Statuary Hall in her article, using the monument dedicated to Esther Hobart Morris. In her commemoration, Lamont argues that Morris is heralded as a suffrage hero, even though her involvement in the suffrage movement has been proven to be minimal.<sup>26</sup> This case study shows that even in 2006, historians were already beginning to examine the commemoration of women in Statuary Hall. This analysis provides the foundations for further examination (further examination that will happen in later chapters of this work), but the analysis leaves room for interpretation. Lamont poses the question, showcases an issue, but her article does not entirely answer the question of gendered commemoration in Statuary Hall. This thesis will fill in the gaps.

Besides Lamont’s Canadian publication, scholarship about women’s history and public commemoration does not show up in monograph form until 2019 with Teresa Bergman’s book *The Commemoration of Women in the United States: Remembering Women in Public Space*. Bergman comments on the opening of two women-focused national parks as well as the recent dedication of a portrait monument in the US Capitol Building to share examples of progress, but she asserts that the commemoration of women in public space is slow at best.<sup>27</sup> Bergman argues that while it is important to

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<sup>25</sup> Victoria Lamont, “More than She Deserves: Woman Suffrage Memorials in the ‘Equality State,’” *Canadian Review of American Studies* 36 no. 1 (2006): pp. 17-43, 17.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Teresa Bergman, *Commemorations of Women in the United States: Remembering Women in Public Space* (England: Routledge Publishers, 2019), 8.

represent women commemoratively, the intersections of history, memory, and gender studies have made it clear that commemorating the ‘universal woman’ is nearly impossible. Even though it may seem impossible, though, Bergman urges scholars and public historians examine the legal, social, and political barriers that have limited women’s contributions to American society and their subsequent commemoration.<sup>28</sup>

Finally, in 2020, Danielle Drozdewski and Janice Mont published an article in 2020 entitled, “Representing Women and Gender in Memory Landscapes,” Converging all three historiographical themes of monuments, memory, and women’s history. Drozdewski and Mont argue that while it is true that monuments and memorial landscapes hold power for those in which the monument represents, they also control a public influence over memory, and looking at the memory of women provides the perfect example of the harm monuments can do.<sup>29</sup> The authors continue the conversation of Danzer and Savage, arguing that memory shapes national identity and a communal belonging to the nation. They provide the example of Lillia Weneda, a monument in Britain depicting an allegorical woman. The authors assert that commemorating fictional women is easier because there is less controversy around their existence. The public can associate her with their own interpretation rather than the woman’s own real-life history.<sup>30</sup> Through the lens of this work, the case can be made that real-life women are

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<sup>28</sup> Teresa Bergman, *Commemorations of Women in the United States: Remembering Women in Public Space* (England: Routledge Publishers, 2019), Chapter One.

<sup>29</sup> Danielle Drozdewski and Janice Mont, “Representing Women and Gender in Memory Landscapes,” in *Handbook of Gender and Feminist Geographies*, ed. Anindita Datta, Peter Hopkins, Lynda Johnston, Elizabeth Olsen, and Joseli Maria Silva (England: Routledge Press, 2020), 256.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

too controversial, and that can be used as an excuse by those who have the power to control a historic site or narrative to eliminate them from the story completely.

As previously mentioned, this work situates itself at the intersection of each of the aforementioned key historiographical trends. By analyzing Statuary Hall with monuments, memory control, and women's history and feminism in mind, this work will unite the historiographical discussions between public history and gender history. Overall, the historiography suggests that controlling power over a space of historical and cultural significance allows an individual or institution to control both the current narrative as well as the future understandings of an element of history, like feminism and gender equality. The following chapters in this work will highlight how Statuary Hall came to be, as well as the history behind its symbolic significance. Then, a summary of commemorative efforts to control a narrative in the early of Statuary Hall will be examined before specifically commemorating (and not commemorating) specific women. As the scholarship concludes with examples of contemporary commemorations of antifeminists, I will argue that the history of Statuary Hall can be situated in multiple historiographical trends and bridges an important gap between history in practice, memory control, and feminism in the United States.

## Chapter One

### *Narrative Creation and the Construction of a New National Identity:*

#### *Statuary Hall and the Power of Place*

Before one can dissect the commemorative issues and constructed narratives through monuments represented in Statuary Hall, it is imperative to understand just how the Hall became a site of national power and influence and why the space is so sacred to American identity and the national narrative. Today, Statuary Hall welcomes thousands of visitors from around the world on tours each day.<sup>31</sup> When it was created, it was also meant to serve as a site of public tourism for the masses. From its inception in 1864, the Hall served as a space of honor, remembrance, and most importantly, influence. Those who envisioned and maintained the space in the early decades of its existence created it with a specific intention to tell a story of power, victory, and virtue for the United States during a moment of sheer national chaos as the Civil War reached its violent and destructive peak. This phenomenon of searching for order out of national chaos was not unique to the United States at this time. The nineteenth century saw the birth of many new national ideals, with many European and South American nations engaging in revolution to reestablish new national ideals and a new national narrative. Statesmen in France and revolutionary leaders in Argentina faced the Americans' same problem; the

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<sup>31</sup> Architect of the Capitol, "National Statuary Hall," accessed January 30, 2023, [aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/buildings-grounds/house-wing/statuary-hall](https://aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/buildings-grounds/house-wing/statuary-hall).



chaos of revolution and bitter internal struggle meant a new narrative must be created—and those stories would be created through monuments and memory.<sup>32</sup>

While the intentions of the founders of Statuary Hall seem innocent enough, the national story created by the monuments was manufactured and constructed to represent idealized patriotism. The monuments inside were chosen for specific purposes at specific times in history. Statuary Hall represents an institution of near-permanent symbolic and physical power. From its inception to the present day, the Hall has served as a site of reinforced hierarchy, made possible through architectural and political design. The long history of the building itself, the statues inside, and their constructed meanings present an attitude of nationalism and official culture indicative of perceived ideal Americanness held by those with the power to influence the mission and values of the historic site. Those values are still reinforced today, revealing the problematic structures of inequality that have supported the slow diversification of statuary commemoration and constructed identity of American women being criticized in this work.

This chapter is not intended to chronicle every detail of the history of Statuary Hall, but instead will examine the origins of Statuary Hall's conception, the early issues with statuary selection and unveiling, and the use of monuments within the Hall as an enforcement of power. Additionally, this chapter will discuss the significance of time and place during Statuary Hall's creation. The fact that Statuary Hall was chosen to be located in the United States Capitol Building was a calculated and methodical decision.

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<sup>32</sup> Cheryl Jiménez Frej, "Columbus, Juana, and the Politics of the Plaza: Battles over Monuments, Memory and Identity in Buenos Aires," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 51 no. 1 (2019): pp. 607-638, 608; Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 20.

## *The Creation of the Capital City and the New National Identity*

Long before Statuary Hall was constructed, President George Washington had dreamed of a new capital city for the newborn United States of America. In 1790, Congress passed “An Act for Establishing the Temporary and Permanent Seat of the Government in the United States,” also known as the “Residence Act.” Washington D.C. was officially selected as the site of the permanent national capitol in 1791.<sup>33</sup> After the Residence Act was passed, Washington selected three commissioners to survey the land and assist with design and construction. Those commissioners hired French engineer Pierre Charles L’Enfant to design the layout for the new city. The selection of L’Enfant is significant because of the timeline. At the time the capital was moved to Washington, D.C., the United States was only fifteen years old. During those first fifteen years, the leading founders scrambled to create systems of order and organization including establishing a constitution, centralized government, monetary system, and military. By the time the logistics of the newborn nation were established, over a decade had passed, and the State was still trying to establish an American identity. L’Enfant was also chosen because of his French identity. At the time, France had emerged as the global cultural leader. Countries across the world were trying to emulate the French essence of design and cultural capital in their own buildings, and the United States was no different. L’Enfant embodied France, and his design skills would help the United States achieve the cultural essence they were hoping to accomplish in constructing the layout for the new capital city.

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<sup>33</sup> United States Congress, “An Act for Establishing the Temporary and Permanent Seat of the Government of the United States”, 1<sup>st</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 28<sup>th</sup> Chapter, 1790, 130-131.

L'Enfant was officially appointed to the job of designing the new capital city on January 29, 1791. In March of that year, L'Enfant requested maps and city layouts of London, Madrid, Amsterdam, and most significantly, Paris for inspiration.<sup>34</sup> Each of the cities L'Enfant requested information about was also in the process of developing a new national narrative and a new framework for democracy. This idea of setting the precedent for a national framework and narrative was not a new idea, but the fact that it was keenly on L'Enfant's mind at the earliest stages of his design process shows that creating a city of significance, power, and influence comparable to great European city-states was of the utmost importance to him. L'Enfant also had identity on his mind when furnishing the designs for the city itself. In a published note entitled "Observations Explanatory of the Plan" in 1793, L'Enfant emphasized the importance of national identity and patriotism, saying, "it [the design of the building] must leave to posterity a grand idea of [the] patriotic interest that promoted it."<sup>35</sup> Creating a patriotic narrative associated with the forthcoming capital city was key to the success of the design of the city and its public spaces.

After choosing the layout of the city, L'Enfant's first task was to design the President's House and the Congress House (later to be known as the Capitol Building). In a personal journal entry, L'Enfant described his desired location for the Capitol Building, located on the east end of what would become the National Mall on Jenkins' Hill, as "a

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<sup>34</sup> Caren Yglesias, "To Build a Metaphor: L'Enfant's Design for the City of Washington," *Journal of Planning History* 18 no. 6, (2019): <https://journals-sagepub-com.proxy.uwec.edu/doi/full/10.1177/1538513218798346>.

<sup>35</sup> Pierre Charles L'Enfant, design blueprints, "Observations Explanatory of the Plan," Washington, D.C., 1793.

pedestal waiting for a monument.”<sup>36</sup> By placing the Capitol Building at the top of the Hill, L’Enfant made the building visible across the city, creating an image of hierarchical power and strength over the rest of D.C. L’Enfant also set the precedent for monumental commemoration by describing the space as a place waiting for a monument. L’Enfant knew the power in which the Capitol Building would hold culturally, politically, and symbolically. By designing the space with the intention that it would house monuments, L’Enfant created an even more sacred space in the sacred city destined to reflect patriotic loyalty and power.

### *The Birth of Statuary Hall*

The original Capitol Building was completed in 1807, though it did not last long. In 1814, the House of Representatives wing was completely destroyed when British troops set the building on fire during the War of 1812. After the conclusion of the war, architect Charles Bulfinch, L’Enfant’s protégé, was tasked with redesigning the Capitol. The House of Representatives wing was completed again in 1819, and it was used by Congress until 1857, when a larger rotunda was needed to house the growing number of representatives.<sup>37</sup> As members of the House moved to their new, larger chamber, the question of what to do with the empty space was raised. However, it was not until nearly ten years later that the question was answered.

The old House chamber remained empty until the 1860s. During that time, the United States entered a bitter Civil War, leaving the nation in shambles. At the height of

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<sup>36</sup> Architect of the Capitol, “History of the U.S. Capitol Building,” accessed January 30, 2023, [aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/buildings-grounds/capitol-building/history](https://aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/buildings-grounds/capitol-building/history).

<sup>37</sup> United States House of Representatives, “Old Hall of the House: 1819-1857,” accessed January 30, 2023, [history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/Capitol/Old-Hall-of-the-House/](https://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/Capitol/Old-Hall-of-the-House/).

conflict, Justin Morrill, a senator from Vermont proposed legislation to use the empty old House chamber for commemorative purposes. In 1864, Morrill proposed the following legislation:

Suitable structures and railings shall be erected in the old hall of Representatives for the reception and protection of statuary, and the same shall be under the supervision and direction of the Architect of the Capitol. And the President is authorized to invite all the States to provide and furnish statues, in marble or bronze, not exceeding two in number for each State, of deceased persons who have been citizens thereof, and illustrious for their historic renown or for distinguished civic or military services, such as each State may deem to be worthy of this national commemoration; and when so furnished, the same shall be placed in the old hall of the House of Representatives, in the Capitol of the United States, which is set apart, or so much thereof as may be necessary, as a national statuary hall for all the purposes herein indicated.<sup>38</sup>

Upon presenting the legislation, Justin Morrill urged his fellow congressmen to support the idea, asking:

Will not all the States with generous emulation proudly respond, and thus furnish a new evidence that the Union will clasp and hold forever all its jewels—the glory of the past—civil, military, and judicial, in one hallowed spot where those who will be here to aid in carrying on the Government may daily receive fresh inspiration and new incentives and where pilgrims from all parts of the Union, as well as from foreign lands, may come and behold a gallery filled with such American manhood as succeeding generations will delight to honor and see also the actual form and mold of those who have inerasably fixed their names on the pages of history.<sup>39</sup>

The timing of this legislation is telling. The Civil War was quite literally tearing the country apart. By 1864, over 600,000 people had died. At the time of the legislation, there was no end in sight. The Confederacy would not surrender for nearly

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<sup>38</sup> United States Senate, Establishing National Statuary Hall, 2 USC 2131, 38<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1876, Accessed February 1, 2023.

<sup>39</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation's Capitol* (Washington DC: Monumental Press, Inc., 1955), 7.

another year. Creating Statuary Hall was Morrill's attempt to reignite a sense of national unity and pride amongst legislators and citizens of the United States. It is apparent that Morrill aimed to use Statuary Hall to promote national re-unity during a time of bitter struggle and ideological destruction. Morrill urged his colleagues to use Statuary Hall as a site to prove the strength of the nation as well as emphasize loyalty to the State that had been disrespected by the secession of Confederate states. In an attempt to reunite the warring states, Morrill proposed one of the first restorative commemorative spaces in the United States. Statuary Hall would become a space for individuals to reflect upon the turmoil of the past and to gain inspiration for the future by admiring the monuments that were placed there to inspire them.

After the conclusion of the Civil War, previous Confederate states were welcomed to contribute to Statuary Hall as a part of the period of Reconstruction. In the early years of the legislation and furnishing of the Hall, Morrill's vision gained popularity with many members of congress—both Unionists and former Confederates. One of Morrill's most notable and unlikely supporters was Alexander Stephens of Georgia. The former Vice President of the Confederacy served in the House of Representatives for nine years after the conclusion of the Civil War. During discussions of the parameters of Statuary Hall prior to its official approval, Stephens went on record to say in 1866,

The National Statuary Hall will teach the youth of the land in succeeding generations as they come and go that the chief end of human effort should be usefulness to mankind, and that all true fame which should be perpetuated by public pictures, statues and monuments is to be acquire only

by noble deeds and high achievements and the establishment of a character founded upon the principles of truth, uprightness, and inflexible integrity.<sup>40</sup>

Again, the notion of inspiring the future was at the forefront of the creation and early years of Statuary Hall. Additionally, for Stephens, the Hall should emphasize usefulness. The public should be inspired to be useful to their country and the State; by creating a space of monuments dedicated to individuals whom legislators felt were useful to the national story, legislators could construct an ideal American identity that would benefit the State above all else. Those in congress were well aware of the power each monument inside the Hall would hold, both historically and culturally.

Those witnessing the establishment of the Hall knew its purpose; to bolster inspiration for the future, incite loyalty to the State, and to reflect upon the struggles of the nation in a sacred space within the walls of the Capitol Building. At the time of original legislation, there were few stipulations as to who could be commemorated in Statuary Hall. Almost immediately, legislators began commissioning statues of their proposed heroes, and Statuary Hall began to grow.

### ***Earliest Monuments and Memory Manufacturing:***

#### ***Statuary Hall's Confederate Beginnings***

In the first decades after the conception of Statuary Hall many of those commemorated were honored for their distinct military achievements. Veterans from both the Revolutionary War and the Civil War were commemorated within the Hall. Of course, all these figures commemorated fit the parameters of recognition for 'military

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<sup>40</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation's Capitol* (Washington DC: Monumental Press Inc. 1955), 8.

service' set out in the original legislation. However, when, and why congressmen and other legislators advocated for their proposed selections being 'illustrious for their historic renown' (also a requirement in the legislation) is telling.

In the nineteenth century, the only legislative parameter for a monument to be added to Statuary Hall was that the individual being honored must be deceased. After one's death, it is much easier to construct a narrative surrounding one's life than it would be if that person were still alive. After death, the memory of a person is all that remains. To control the public memory of a person by placing a monument in Statuary Hall would allow legislators to both construct any narrative they wanted and assume ultimate power over the memory itself. A memory constructed by the State in a space as sacred as Statuary Hall would become much more nationally recognized and hold more power than a memory constructed by the common person in a space of far less significance.

Legislators in the twentieth century would take advantage of the stipulation of only deceased persons being allowed to be honored in Statuary Hall's legislation when making selections of both men and women. In the earliest years of the Hall's existence, only men were selected. An analysis of three monuments honoring Confederate leaders in the Hall will be used to set the precedent for memory manufacturing and identity creation.

Statuary Hall was created at the height of the Civil War. Many of the legislators who approved of its creation lived through the war, and many participated in it. By the time they died, a new generation of legislators was in charge of the Hall. Between 1890 and 1924, former Confederates-turned-Democratic leaders remained loyal to the



Confederate narrative and the fabricated idea that the Confederacy fought for states' rights rather than slavery. They repeated the narratives of the 'great injustice' done to the South and aspects of the Lost Cause of the Confederacy had already begun to form.<sup>41</sup> The Lost Cause narrative allowed ex-Confederates to reconstruct the narrative of the Civil War into the twentieth century and produce monuments laced with white supremacist ideology. Confederate monuments perpetuated ideology of white supremacy, cleverly disguised as military achievements. When coupled with the implementation of Jim Crow segregation across the South and the violent rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan, Confederate monuments represented a historical reconstruction of the narrative of the Civil War with sinister undertakings of white supremacy. The Confederate monuments placed in Statuary Hall proved to have even more power; if Confederates fit the parameters for the highest, permanent honor in the United States Capitol Building, the narrative of the Lost Cause and white supremacist ideology was given legitimacy in the most symbolically significant space in the entire country. The practice of erecting Confederate monuments during the first three decades of the twentieth century was not unique to Statuary Hall. Across the southern states, Confederate sympathizers with governmental power were preserving the myths of the Confederacy through monuments. Like the monuments in Statuary Hall, other Confederate monuments in the south emphasized military accomplishments, states' rights, and individual heroes. By creating a cast of military leaders and white heroes through monumental commemoration, southern state legislators could instill ideological values and racial pride that would last for several generations. Confederate monuments

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<sup>41</sup> Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020), 16.

were the most prominent way to celebrate white supremacy and emphasize hegemonic control over the memorial and cultural landscape in the south.<sup>42</sup>

In the early decades of Statuary Hall, three Confederates were added: General Joe Wheeler (unveiled in 1925 by the state of Alabama), Alexander Stephens (Georgia, 1927), and Jefferson Davis (Mississippi, 1931). The unveiling of these three monuments sparked a decade of monument additions to the Hall, leading to the most active decade in which statues were added in the twentieth century. Wheeler, Stephens, and Davis represent the earliest examples of memory construction and identity influence in Statuary Hall's history. By looking at these three monuments, two key themes emerge. First, when analyzing why legislators in the 1920s and 30s selected each monument for Statuary Hall, patterns of narrative management and memory manufacturing are revealed. Each of these men betrayed the United States to sympathize with and join the Confederacy. Legislators had to adjust the way in which the three men's legacies were presented to make them suitable candidates for this honor in the sacred space. After examining the legislation and commemorative portrayal of each of these men through their monuments, one can see how a militaristic identity and a commitment to war was perceived as ideal above all else. Secondly, examining the contextual timeline for when each of these monuments were unveiled, an understanding of the methodical strategies legislators used to make political statements through Statuary Hall can be seen as well. The timing in which each of these statues were presented shows that those with the power to construct narratives about figures of the

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<sup>42</sup> Adam H. Domby, *The False Cause: Fraud, Fabrication, and White Supremacy in Confederate Memory* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020), 21.

past did so to push current political agendas of their contemporary time. Both of those themes will be seen through the examples of Wheeler, Stephens, and Davis, and will also be seen when examining Statuary Hall's monuments to women in the later twentieth century.

A soldier and a statesman representing the state of Alabama, General Joe Wheeler, was described in the legislation proposing his monument as a man with the "most unbelievable war records in three wars under two flags"<sup>43</sup> Wheeler served in the United States military during the Spanish-American War and later commanded a fleet of soldiers as a general for the Confederacy during the Civil War. During his statutory unveiling ceremony, the Honorable Henry Bascom Steagall, a high judge from the state of Alabama who had liaised with legislators to create Wheeler's monument, commended Wheeler for his service to "both nations" (The United States and the Confederacy) and admired Wheeler's ability to return to the Union after defeat. Steagall continued:

When the armies of the Confederacy went down in defeat, General Wheeler, with the same courage that had characterized his conduct on the field of battle accepted bravely and without murmur the result of conflict and went back home to engage in the struggle to bring order out of chaos, to free his people from misrule and usurpation, and to set his State once more on the glad highway of peace and happiness.<sup>44</sup>

Wheeler's monument and dedication in Statuary Hall is significant for two reasons. First, the mention of his ability to serve 'under both flags' shows that the legislators responsible for maintaining his legacy after death wanted to remind members

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<sup>43</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation's Capitol* (Washington DC: Monumental Press Inc. 1955), 15.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

of congress and the public that Wheeler was not only a Confederate sympathizer—he was first and foremost a military man who had also fought for the United States of America in his life. This was done to distract from the fact that Wheeler went against the very idea of the Union. By reminding the public that he fought for both flags, Wheeler’s legacy is reconstructed around his service to the military and his patriotism rather than his willingness to secede with the Confederate states under the usurpation of black enslaved individuals. Legislators manipulated Wheeler’s legacy to reconstruct the public’s memory of him. With Wheeler being portrayed as a patriotic military man rather than an active participant in the Confederacy, his constructed story fits the parameters of a patriotic national narrative. The tradition of molding an individual’s legacy to fit a political objective was apparent in Statuary Hall from its earliest years.

Secondly, during the unveiling ceremony, Steagall emphasized Wheeler’s ability to ‘bring order out of chaos.’ This is significant when looking at the context surrounding his commemoration. The 1920s were still reflective of the global chaos surrounding the mid-and late-nineteenth century. By referencing that chaos in the unveiling ceremony, Steagall reflected upon the tumultuous past many Americans had lived through themselves and witnessed across the world. Further, culturally, the 1920s were seen as the ‘Roaring Twenties,’ and many (white) Americans were reaping the benefits of the conclusion of the Civil War and Reconstruction. It was a period of great wealth and celebration. Wheeler’s perceived ability to bring order out of chaos was reflective of the celebratory culture of American society at the time.

In 1927, a familiar name was cemented in Statuary Hall. Alexander Stephens, a man who had previously voiced his support for Statuary Hall on the grounds of

“inspiring future generations of greatness”<sup>45</sup>, was inducted into the Hall from the state of Georgia. Stephens served as the Vice President of the Confederacy, and on the commemorative plaque next to his statue, the phrase: “He loved the American Union, but he loved more his sovereign state of Georgia.”<sup>46</sup> Again, this construction of Stephens’ legacy is misleading. When reading the plaque, one is led to believe that Stephens was simply supporting his home state by remaining loyal to it during the Civil War. In actuality, Stephens’ relationship to the Confederacy is much more sinister than simply remaining loyal to his home state. Historians often remember Stephens for remarks he made during his famous “Cornerstone Speech” on March 21, 1861, in defense of slavery. In the speech, Stephens laid his groundwork for a new government while critiquing the Union for its disregard of the importance of slavery for national economic success. In what is perhaps the most famous line of the speech, Stephens bellowed, “Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea [of the equality of races]; its foundations are laid, its corner-stone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery subordination to the superior race is his natural and normal condition.”<sup>47</sup> The Cornerstone Speech implied that slavery and white supremacy were the foundation of the Confederate States of America. By simply describing Stephens as an individual loyal to the state of Georgia, the facts relating to his allegiance to the Confederacy are seemingly covered up. Like Wheeler,

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<sup>45</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation’s Capitol* (Washington DC: Monumental Press Inc. 1955), 8.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander Stephens, “Cornerstone Speech” (1861), in *American Battlefield Trust*, [battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/cornerstone-speech](http://battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/cornerstone-speech).

Stephens' legacy is constructed to create a more appropriately usable monument in the sacred space.

During the unveiling ceremony for Stephens' monument, Senator William Julius Harris of Georgia praised Stephens for his commitment to his own principles, asserting that remaining true to one's own ideology "without mercy" was more admirable than any other act and expunged any other misgivings in life.<sup>48</sup> Harris' insistence that Stephens should inspire the public to be true to their own belief system disregards the documented fact that the beliefs Stephens held dear were overtly racist. Harris' apparent pardons of Stephens' joining the Confederacy and inciting secession on the basis of principality is indicative of his own willingness to overlook the horrors of chattel slavery and a system of racist injustice. Through this speech, Harris is responsible for the construction of a narrative that lessens the harm of slavery in favor of creating an ideal American identity that is based on standing one's own ground.

Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy, was inducted into the Hall in 1931 to represent the state of Mississippi. In the attempt to cement Davis in the Hall, Senator Pat Harrison argued that "He is not among strangers; there are his comrades of the South—Lee, Hampton, Wheeler, Stephens, Kirby Smith, and James Z. George [all known Confederate sympathizers or supporters already present in Statuary Hall]."<sup>49</sup> During his unveiling ceremony, Senator Pat Harrison, the lead legislator responsible for Davis's monument in Statuary Hall said, "Jefferson Davis was a devout Christian...He detested hypocrisy and loathed deception...Candor, courage and conviction were the

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<sup>48</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation's Capitol* (Washington DC: Monumental Press Inc. 1955), 27.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

dominating qualities of his matchless character.”<sup>50</sup> By emphasizing Davis’s character and commitment to his religion, Harris is able to revert the public’s attention away from his service to the Confederacy. For Harris, presenting Davis as a man of courage, candor, and conviction was of the utmost importance. By describing Davis in such way, Harris is both removing him from the stain of the Confederacy and also presenting ideals in which American should strive to emulate. Harris successfully reconstructed Davis’s legacy to mold him into a man in which the public should revere and imitate.

While the specific timing of each of these men’s monument unveiling is slightly different, they all have one thing in common; each monument was unveiled during a heightened sense of racial tensions that had not been seen since the Civil War. During the 1920s and 30s, a rise in Jim Crow systems of racism and racist thinking were growing. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) had burst into prominence across the nation, and racial violence and lynching was exponentially on the rise.<sup>51</sup> The experiences of Black individuals under slavery and Jim Crow are completely disregarded. The unveiling of three monuments dedicated to prominent Confederate leaders and sympathizers in one of the most sacred commemorative spaces in the sacred capital city during the height of Jim Crow was no coincidence. Each of these monuments was unveiled to convey a specific political narrative that fit the context of Jim Crow culture. Additionally, the inclusion of each of these monuments legitimized white supremacy. Honoring the leaders of the Confederacy and perpetuating the Lost Cause narrative by emphasizing each man’s

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<sup>50</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation’s Capitol* (Washington DC: Monumental Press Inc. 1955), 49.

<sup>51</sup> Linda Gordon, *The Second Coming of the KKK: The Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s and the American Political Tradition* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017).

military and governmental contributions rather than his white supremacist ideals in a space as symbolic and sacred as Statuary Hall allowed legislators to solidify the Confederacy as a legitimate entity in the national narrative. White supremacy would now live on in Statuary Hall, reinforcing a racial hierarchy through monuments.

By manipulating the legacies of Wheeler, Stephens, and Davis to construct a memory of valor, military service, and state loyalty, legislators responsible for the monuments recast the image of these men to make them lovable characters in the national story. In doing this, the legislators were able to reemphasize the values of the Confederacy to symbolically intimidate black Americans and their supporters.

The descriptions of Wheeler, Stephens, and Davis reveal patterns of memory construction and narrative manipulation exercised by the legislators responsible for earning them a space in Statuary Hall. Additionally, analyzing the decade in which these men were commemorated is also telling. The commemorations of three famous Confederates in Statuary Hall during the Jim Crow era are no coincidence. While the men responsible for their statues may have truly believed in the principles and military achievements held by Wheeler, Stephens, and Davis, their actions reinforced a racial hierarchy in the United States. By intentionally placing Confederate statues in Statuary Hall during Jim Crow, legislators aimed to send a message to Black Americans and their allies—the most admirable men illustrious for their historic renown were responsible for the sustainability of American slavery and instigated one of the deadliest wars in the history of the United States. This same methodology will be analyzed when discussing the gender inequity in Statuary Hall in years following the Jim Crow era.



These case studies of Confederate commemorations set the precedent for how future legislators would continue to reconstruct the memory of individuals to create a specific American ideal and push a political agenda through Statuary Hall. As will be evident in future chapters, the same strategies used by legislators when commemorating Confederates will be used to reconstruct the memory of others commemorated later in the twentieth century. By eliminating specifics of Wheeler, Stephens, and Davis's allegiance to the Confederacy when unveiling their monuments, legislators were able to construct an American identity based on strength and valor, commitment to one's ideals, and character, effectively telling an idealized version of the national narrative.

By including monuments of Joe Wheeler, Alexander Stephens, and Jefferson Davis during a time of heightened racial violence in the United States, the history of Black triumph and struggle in the Antebellum South is repressed in Statuary Hall. Even today, with only one Black individual, Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, commemorated in the Hall, the history of Black Americans and their involvement in the national narrative is largely absent. The same can be said about women in Statuary Hall. As will be discussed in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, both the manipulation of women's legacies in the monuments that do exist as well as the jarring absence of women is reflective of a pattern of repression. Erasure by proxy is achieved in Statuary Hall when individuals' lives are manipulated to create a constructed national narrative at the hands of legislators and lobbyists. As the twentieth century continued, the same erasure continued to happen as legislators aimed to control the understanding of what a 'good' American looked like. The monuments unveiled in Statuary Hall during the late twentieth century and early

twenty-first century would continue to reflect political agendas of legislators and political parties to control and influence the current population.

## Chapter Two

### *Narrative Production and the Manipulation of Women's Legacies:*

#### *The Temperance Leader, the Teacher, and the 'Good' Indian*

As seen in Chapter One, the idea of memory manufacturing and narrative management precedes even the birth of Statuary Hall. When the Hall became a reality, legislators and lobbyists engaged in the same practices to construct a space that presented an idealized version of patriots, leaders, and most of all, Americans. This practice of identity construction is not limited to military monuments in the space. As will be seen in the remaining chapters of this work, legislators continued to use the same principles of monument management and narrative construction when monuments honoring women were unveiled within Statuary Hall. Like the monuments to Confederate generals, the monuments honoring women were chosen to spread a specific political and cultural message. The cases of the monuments honoring Frances E. Willard, Maria Sanford, and Sacajawea show that politicians chose these specific women because they could be portrayed as acceptable women activists during the time of their unveiling. Each woman's likeness and legacy were reconstructed by state and federal legislators to construct a memory of her life that was reflective of the confinements of traditional gender roles. By reconstructing the lives of these women during commemoration, politicians used the symbolic significance of Statuary Hall to influence American women to emulate the identity of ideal American patriotic womanhood, even when the women being commemorated would not fit the parameters of that constructed identity during their authentic lives.

### *Frances E. Willard: The Temperance Leader*

Relatively speaking, it did not take long for the first woman to be honored in Statuary Hall. Though there were only men for the Hall's first forty years, the first woman was selected for commemoration in 1905. A monument to Frances E. Willard, an education activist and advocate for temperance, was placed in Statuary Hall by the state of Illinois. There are stark differences between Willard's life, how legislators presented her to Congress for monumental consideration, and how she was represented once her monument was placed in Statuary Hall. Frances Willard was a complicated woman with many interests and legislative passions for women in the nineteenth century, though her memory has been reduced to emphasize her physical beauty, and her rhetoric has been reconstructed to portray her in a specific way so as her life is given an ulterior meaning in the present day.

In her early life, Willard was a champion for education reform. She graduated from Northwestern Female College in 1859. Upon graduation, she became the first female president of the Evanston College for Ladies, and in 1873 she co-founded the Association for the Advancement of Women.<sup>52</sup> In her published diary, an entry from October 12, 1863, Willard wrote of the importance of her own education and her role as an activist long before her national crusade for educational rights began, saying:

Do you [speaking to herself] know that you have a great many kind, fresh, beautiful thoughts that you never tell? Do you know that the new and striking comparisons come to you, and pleasant, queer ideas, and you let them pass in and out, leaving not even a sedimentary deposit there. Stir yourself, be determined to write books if you please. Why not? Be intent

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<sup>52</sup> National Women's Hall of Fame, "Frances E. Willard," 2023, Accessed February 13, 2023, [womenofthehall.org](https://www.womenofthehall.org).

upon it. Your flight of usefulness might be very much extended. God thinks it right to have ambitions...It is nonsense to think you can not do it [write books] while you are teaching. Now do this without fail. You can.<sup>53</sup>

Long before her educational career grew to national attention, Willard was advocating for herself and other women to pursue careers in education. Citing her Christian religion as precedent for her ambitions, Willard believed that it was her God-given right to serve others and become an activist. Willard's rhetoric and musings were not entirely uncommon for her time, though she was one of the few women publishing her thoughts and speaking her mind in public about her beliefs.

Willard's passion for education was not her only work. An advocate for prohibition, she joined the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1874. By 1879 she founded the World's Woman's Christian Temperance Union. In this role, Willard advocated for protections for women and children in the workplaces, kindergarten education across the United States, more equitable marriage and divorce laws, and dress code reform for women.<sup>54</sup> As she was rising through the ranks in the WCTU, Willard came up with the slogan, "Do Everything" to describe the activism of the group. She encouraged other WCTU members to do everything to change society. She asked them to lobby and petition lawmakers, preach, publish written works in newspapers, and teach.<sup>55</sup> Throughout her life she promoted the outlawing of alcohol. She relied heavily on her religious affiliations to lead other women in the fight against alcohol production and

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<sup>53</sup> Frances E. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: An Autobiography of an American Woman* (Chicago: Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1889), 174.

<sup>54</sup> National Women's Hall of Fame, "Frances E. Willard," 2023, Accessed February 13, 2023, [womenofthehall.org](https://www.womenofthehall.org).

<sup>55</sup> Frances Willard, speech, 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the National Women's Christian Temperance Union, Chicago, IL, 1893, accessed April 15, 2023, [https://www.joliet86.org/assets/1/6/4-20\\_Francis\\_Willard\\_Speech\\_-\\_Primary\\_Source\\_-\\_Google\\_Docs.pdf](https://www.joliet86.org/assets/1/6/4-20_Francis_Willard_Speech_-_Primary_Source_-_Google_Docs.pdf).

consumption. Frances Willard gave speeches, published articles, and encouraged other women to do the same. In the 1880s and 1890s, Willard worked with suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony to form the International Council of Women in a nationwide attempt to unite suffragists with temperance supporters. Willard believed that if women were granted the right to vote, they would vote in favor of prohibition. In 1888 at the National WCTU convention in New York, Willard approved the following legislation:

That we re-affirm our allegiance to that party which makes its dominant issue the suppression of the liquor traffic, declares its belief in Almighty God as the source of all power in Government, defends the sanctity of the Christian Sabbath, recognizes equal suffrage and equal wages for women, demands the abolition of polygamy and uniform laws governing marriage and divorce, and aims to remove sectional differences, promote national unity, and insure the best welfare of our land.<sup>56</sup>

Shortly after the convention, Susan B. Anthony released a statement showing her support for Willard's WCTU efforts, calling her "the commander in chief of an army of 250,000 women."<sup>57</sup> In her autobiography, Willard explained that serving the WCTU was one of the greatest pleasures of her life. In explaining her decision to join and eventually lead the Union, Willard said, "Hence I have felt that great promotion came to me when I was counted worthy to be a worker in the organized Crusade for God and Home and Native Land."<sup>58</sup> Throughout her life, Willard ran exceptional campaigns meant to promote gender equality, social reform, and education for women. All of these aspects of her life were reason enough to nominate her for induction into Statuary Hall. What is astonishing,

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<sup>56</sup> Frances E. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: An Autobiography of an American Woman* (Chicago: Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1889), 460.

<sup>57</sup> "Frances Willard, 1839-1898," *Suffrage 100 MA*, the Commonwealth Museum, <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mus/pdfs/17-Willard.pdf>.

<sup>58</sup> Frances E. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: An Autobiography of an American Woman* (Chicago: Women's Christian Temperance Union, 1889), 342.

though, is how her story has been twisted by the men responsible for her memory after her death.

Frances Willard's monument story begins in early 1905. By the turn of the twentieth century, temperance societies were gaining national attention. By 1905, several states had begun their own campaigns to ban alcohol production and consumption. Willard's home state of Illinois was heavily involved in the banning of alcohol. Through the work of the WCTU and other independent temperance organizations, legislation to outlaw alcohol had begun to be produced in the Illinois legislature in 1900. In 1907, the Illinois General Assembly passed a local option bill that allowed for communities to outlaw alcohol at a more local level. The crusade to outlaw alcohol in Illinois was inspired by Frances Willard, and the national campaign for Prohibition could not have happened with her.<sup>59</sup> On January 15, 1905, at the height of the Illinois prohibition campaign, Illinois Senator Albert J. Hopkins went on record to promote the inclusion of a monument honoring Willard in Statuary Hall. To promote Willard for monumental consideration, Hopkins said the following during a Congressional meeting:

No man or woman of her time wrought better or accomplished more for the protection and upbuilding of her sex and the cause of temperance than Frances E. Willard. The endearments of home and the quiet of her fireside were sacrificed in the interest of the unfortunate among both men and women.<sup>60</sup>

In this quote, Senator Hopkins makes it clear that Willard sacrificed the life she was supposed to have for a life of activism outside the home. This quote implies that Willard

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<sup>59</sup> Illinois State Senate, "Anti-Saloon League," October 4, 1907, Accessed April 15, 2023, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn2008060405/1907-10-04/ed-1/seq-1/>.

<sup>60</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation's Capitol* (Washington, DC: Monumental Press, Inc., 1955), 31.

should receive a monument in Statuary Hall because she had to give up the way of life American women were meant to live in order to help others. Senator Hopkins' words give the impression that Willard was an honorable woman *in spite of* the fact that she worked outside the home, rather than *because* she worked outside of the home.

Senator Shelby Moore Cullom of Illinois officially introduced the congressional legislation to place a monument of Frances E. Willard in Statuary Hall in February 1905. When describing her accomplishments for his constituents, Senator Cullom first described Willard as being "in loyal obedience to the law of Christ."<sup>61</sup> Cullom goes on to praise Willard for her moral science and her commitment to her Christian beliefs. To close his statement, Cullom urges Congress to make Willard an example for women to look upon, saying,

And in after generations, as long as this venerable edifice remains, the women of America, as they look upon the chiseled beauty of that face, standing like a goddess among our heroes and our sages, will whisper a word of gratitude to the people of Illinois when they remember the act of her general assembly, which careless alike of custom and of precedent, has added to the title of their citizenship this perpetual dignity in the Capitol of the United States.<sup>62</sup>

In his proceedings, Cullom makes it clear that Willard's monument is intended to serve as a role model for women. Describing her as a beautiful goddess residing among the true heroes of American history, legislatively, Willard's accomplishments are reduced to her physical beauty. Cullom, like the politicians who came before him, wanted Willard to represent an ideal for Americans, specifically American women. Willard was beautiful,

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<sup>61</sup> Shelby Moore Cullom, Speech to the Senate Floor on behalf of Statuary Commemoration of Frances E. Willard, 58<sup>th</sup> Congress, 3<sup>rd</sup> Session, February 23, 1905, 2785.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*



and that was what American women should strive to be. Willard's adherence to alcohol also made her a prime candidate for commemoration. With Illinois and the rest of the United States entering debates over prohibition, Willard's temperance activism made her a morally appropriate candidate for a monument in Statuary Hall. By giving one of the most nationally recognized temperance activists the highest honor in the Capitol Building, legislators were able to promote the banning of alcohol by making Willard an example for the masses. The first woman to earn a space in Statuary Hall was morally righteous, and her monument presented a message to inspire the public to support her cause and behave in her likeness.

The language Senator Cullom used to describe Frances Willard to Congress is different from the language used to describe men honored in Statuary Hall at the time. Only two years before Frances Willard's induction, Charles Carroll, signer of the Declaration of Independence was inducted into the Hall in 1903. The language used to describe Carroll varies greatly than the legislative descriptions of Willard. In his description of Carroll, Senator McComas of Maryland said on December 20, 1902, "To his lasting honor, Carroll unwaveringly supported on the board of war and in Congress, the Great Commander [George Washington] and helped defeat the Conway Cabal...Long before his fellows, Carroll had advocated independence, and in advance of his associates, he advocated for a Federal Union."<sup>63</sup>

The linguistic differentiation between Willard's legislation and Carroll's legislation speaks volumes. Above all else, Willard was revered for her beauty and her

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<sup>63</sup> "Proceedings in the Senate and House of Representatives Upon the Reception and Acceptance from the State of Maryland of the Statues of Charles Carroll of Carrollton and of John Hanson", January 31, 1903, Annapolis, Maryland, 24.

service to her religion. Carroll was promoted for his strength and sagacity, and no mention of his looks was made by any member of Congress. Patriarchal biases have run so deep in American history and culture that even when describing what seems to be one of the most influential educators and outspoken activists at the time, Senator Cullom cannot help but to comment on her physical appearance.

Willard's statue itself reveals more manipulation of her memory. Designed by Helen Farnsworth Mears, Willard is depicted standing tall beside a lectern, holding paper in one hand, and resting the other on the lectern itself. She does not smile, and her face is solemn.



*Figure 2: Frances Willard, Statuary Hall, January 1, 1910. Photo by Harris and Ewing, GetArchive, Creative Commons ShareAlike Commons, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.*

The statue of Willard herself is not the issue. Helen Farnsworth Mears created a work of artistry with her design. What is perplexing, however, is the quote etched into the pedestal beneath her. The quote reads:

Ah it is women who have given the costliest hostages to fortune out into the battle of life they have sent their best beloved with fearful odds against them. Oh, by the dangers they have dared by the hours of patient watching over beds where helpless children lay by the incense of ten thousand prayers wafted from their gentle lips to heaven, I charge you give them power to protect along life's treacherous highway Those whom they have so loved.<sup>64</sup>

This quote comes from a speech Willard gave at the third annual convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1876. In this speech, Willard urges WCTU members to write to legislators to urge them to outlaw vices such as alcohol. She appeals to the mothers in attendance, encouraging them to help their sons afflicted by the terrors of wartime and the temptation of alcohol. The aforementioned quote comes from the end of her speech. She implores women to act against alcohol consumption. The entirety of the quote reads:

Ah, it is women who have given the costliest hostages to fortune. Out into the battle of life they have sent their best beloved, with fearful odds against them, with snares that men have legalized and set for them on every hand. Beyond the arms that held them long, their boys have gone forever. Oh! by the danger they have dared; by the hours of patient watching over beds where helpless children lay; by the incense of ten thousand prayers wafted from their gentle lips to Heaven, I charge you give them power to protect, along life's treacherous highway, those whom they have so loved. Let it no longer be that they must sit back among the shadows, hopelessly mourning over their strong staff broken, and their beautiful rod; but when the sons

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<sup>64</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation's Capitol* (Washington, DC: Monumental Press, Inc., 1955), 31.

they love shall go forth to life's battle, still let their mothers walk beside them, sweet and serious, and clad in the garments of power.<sup>65</sup>

The end passage of the quote changes the meaning of the message entirely. Willard aimed to inspire women to act outside of the home alongside the men in their lives. However, when the quote is reduced to what is etched on her statue, the tone changes completely. The reduced quote makes it seem like Willard is only wishing for change, not taking it. Without the inclusion of the entire quote, Willard's legacy is misrepresented.

The manufacturing of Willard's life and legacy did not stop in 1905. In 1955, the plaque beside Willard's statue simply read, "She dedicated her life and great ability to the cause of temperance."<sup>66</sup> Again, reducing Willard's lasting legacy to that of only temperance organization and omitting the final stanza of her famous quote rewrites her narrative to that of a one-dimensional woman who is acceptable for commemoration in Statuary Hall in spite of the activism she performed outside the confinements of the home. Willard was an outspoken activist who championed many social and political causes. Reducing her activism to a fraction of her accomplishments puts her into a symbolic box, containing her power to only acceptable activism and acceptable womanly ideals in both 1905 and 1955.

### ***Maria Sanford: From Teacher to Cold Warrior***

It would not be until 1958 that the next woman would be honored in Statuary Hall. At the time, the United States had entered in to its second Cold War with the Soviet

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<sup>65</sup> Frances E. Willard, Speech, Temperance and Home Protection, Third Annual Convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Newark, New Jersey, 1876.

<sup>66</sup> Myrtle Cheney Murdock, *National Statuary Hall in the Nation's Capitol* (Washington, DC: Monumental Press, Inc., 1955), 31.

Union. With national tensions high and suspicions of communism apparent in every facet of American life and culture, an urgency to promote anti-communist sentiments in symbolic and significant democratic spaces cannot be ignored. Political leaders needed another example of American patriotism and virtue within the context of the anticommunist agenda, and in 1958, legislators from Minnesota would provide one. On February 26, 1958, the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration heard testimony from a man only known as Mr. Harrison, a representative from the state of Minnesota. Mr. Harrison was vouching for the inclusion of a monument honoring Maria Sanford to serve as the second monument produced by Minnesota in Statuary Hall. In describing Sanford, a lifelong educator and women's rights activist, Harrison testified:

She was one of the moving spirits in the early days of the University of Minnesota. She was a leading educator entirely devoted to duty. She was one of the best loved women in Minnesota.... She was a woman of striking classic handsomeness who grew more impressive with every year that she lived. She was an apostle of culture and patriotism.<sup>67</sup>

Mr. Harrison appeared to be a devout supporter of Sanford, but his testimony did not fully describe Sanford's worthiness of commemoration. It is true that Maria Sanford served the state of Minnesota as a diligent and dedicated educator, becoming the first woman university professor in the United States in 1869.<sup>68</sup> When teaching rhetoric and oratory at the University of Minnesota in 1880, Sanford received an abundance of praise from her students. Known on campus as an energetic lecturer, her classes were known for their difficult workload. Sanford was deeply involved in the lives of her students, and she often offered advice and support when she could. Sanford aimed to help students in as

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<sup>67</sup> United States Senate, Committee on Rules and Administration, Executive Session, February 26, 1958, 5.

<sup>68</sup> Helen Whitney, "First Woman Professor: Maria Sanford: 1836-1920," *Improving College and University Teaching* 23 no. 1 (Winter 1975): 3.

many ways as she could. During her tenure at the University of Minnesota, she opened her home to students, taking in student boarders and hosting student social events.<sup>69</sup>

Sanford spent the majority of her adult life advocating for students and her fellow educators, routinely meeting with the Chairman of the Salary Committee and the University of Minnesota Board of Regents to lobby for higher salaries for university educators when possible.<sup>70</sup> Sanford's passion for education cannot be overstated, and it makes sense that Minnesotans would want to honor her for her educational legacy.

However, Maria Sanford's life as an educator coincided with the societal parameters of her identity as a woman. While it is true that Sanford tried when she could to advance the status of women in education, there were instances in her own life in which she was silenced by the State. In 1903, after her retirement from teaching, Sanford was appointed by Minnesota Governor Samuel R. van Sant to serve as a delegate for the state Prison Association. Governor van Sant granted Sanford the appointment as a sign of appreciation for her dedicated years of service as an educator. However, the new position came with a drastic pay decrease from her already miniscule teaching salary. Though she did protest her newfound salary, she wrote to the governor shortly after her appointment, saying, "I shall try to bear my present humiliations with dignity and by my faithfulness and devotion to duty to convince all who are willing to be fair minded how grave an injustice has done to me."<sup>71</sup> Later that year, Sanford wrote to the Board of Regents, saying, "I do not ask at this time any change in my salary. I appreciate the difficulties of

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<sup>69</sup> Katheryn R. Goetz, "Sanford, Maria (1836-1920)", MnOpedia, February 11, 2012, last modified November 4, 2022, <https://www.mnopedia.org/person/sanford-maria-1836-1920>.

<sup>70</sup> Helen Whitney, *Maria Sanford* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1922), 189.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

the present situation, and I am willing to wait for better times... I shall go on working hard and meeting privations cheerfully, believing the time will come when I shall have the great delight of full vindication, and the complete restoration of my salary.”<sup>72</sup> Though Sanford was enraged by the reduction in her salary, she still promised loyalty to the Governor, the Prison Association and the institutions of power that which they both represented.

What is interesting, though, is the final line in Mr. Harrison’s testimony in favor of commemorating Sanford. In his testimony, Harrison emphasized Sanford’s patriotic tendencies. The last line of his testimony read, “She was an apostle of culture and patriotism.”<sup>73</sup> Sanford was indeed a patriot, her loyalty to the State and her support for the military was apparent toward the end of her life. However, throughout her life, Sanford’s loyalty to education and her support for teachers was at the forefront of her advocacy. As an educator, Sanford taught with the intent to produce useful citizens that would make societal contributions that would make both the University of Minnesota and the United States proud. In a commencement speech she gave at the University of Minnesota when she was seventy-two years old, Sanford shared her beliefs about education and patriotism:

Nations as well as individuals have shown the marvelous result of this intellectual activity, of living up to the full measure of their powers. England under Elizabeth, Athens in the days of Pericles and all Western Europe in the Renaissance are examples of what is possible when every man is awake, when full life throbs in every vein...I need mention but a single instance, the influence of William Pitt on England. WE know how his voice transformed the whole nation, how it sprang up at his call conscious of its

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<sup>72</sup> Helen Whitney, *Maria Sanford* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1922), 188.

<sup>73</sup> United States Senate, Committee on Rules and Administration, Executive Session, February 26, 1958, 5.

strength. This has been the secret of all success of nearly all the great leaders of men; they knew how to call up the latent energy of their followers to put into them a purpose and determination... The moral of this for the University is plain. It may, it can, it should, give to the youth of the state this awakening impulse, breathe into them this breath of life, rouse them not to mere physical courage but to the courage of high conviction, give to them aims, ambitions, purposes, which shall transform, transfigure their whole lives.<sup>74</sup>

Sanford likened the work being done by University of Minnesota students to that of great patriotic and national leaders in England and Rome. By comparing her students to national leaders, Sanford's own patriotism shines through as she urges students to be useful citizens of the nation and to use their gifts to serve the State as leaders, just as William Pitt did.

After her career in education, Sanford gave hundreds of patriotic speeches, showing support for the government and for the State. Her most famous speech came at the end of her life, when she delivered a speech entitled, "An Apostrophe to the Flag" to the twenty-ninth Continental Congress on behalf of The Daughters of the American Revolution on April 19, 1920, not long before her death. The speech embodied Sanford's support for the nation during wartime, saying:

Hail to thee, flag of our fathers, flag of the free! With pride and loyalty and love we greet thee and promise to cherish thee forever. How wonderful has been thy onward progress of conquest through the years! How marvelous the triumph of thy followers over the vicissitudes of fortune that met them on their way! Daring men have reverently placed thee on the icy crags of the frozen north and have as reverently stationed thee on the cloud-swept wastes of the far-off frozen south. They have followed thee in willing service over the wastes of every ocean, and into the depths of the impenetrable blue. Stalwart, strong-hearted men have willingly laid down their lives at thy command, to guard the outposts of freedom.

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<sup>74</sup> Maria Sanford, commencement speech, University of Minnesota, in Helen Whitney, *Maria Sanford* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1922), 210



Glorious and beautiful flag of our fathers, the Star Spangled Banner — beautiful in thine own waving folds, glorious in the memory of the brave deeds of those who chose thee for their standard — more beautiful, more glorious is the great nation which has inherited their land and their flag — if we who claim, who boast our lineage from those heroes gone — if we inherit not along their name, their blood, their banner, but inherit their nobler part, the spirit that actuated them, their love of liberty, their devotion to justice, their inflexible pursuance of righteousness and truth.<sup>75</sup>

Sanford's words emulate an attitude of patriotism the State found favorable. She promoted loyalty to the State with this speech. Her patriotism was specifically noted in the legislative testimony in 1958. She used her widespread platform and power to promote patriotic sentiments at the end of her life, a fact that many legislators highlighted when using her memory to promote acceptable activism. Though she was taking a stand outside of traditional gender roles by speaking publicly on national speaking tours, she was using her voice to celebrate the power of the government and its accomplishments— an idea that many legislators would use to their advantage when choosing her for commemoration nearly forty years after her death.

Just like Frances Willard, Maria Sanford was chosen for commemoration for a specific, symbolic reason. When looking at the context surrounding the time in which Sanford was chosen for commemoration, one can learn a lot about the decision. In 1958, the United States was in the midst of a tumultuous culture war in the context of anticommunism. The Red Scare, a time of suspicion, hyperbolic Cold War rhetoric and action, and exponential nationalistic sentiment blanketed every aspect of American life. Celebrities were blacklisted for appearing to be Communist sympathizers, the FBI was engaging in phone tapping and harassment of many social activists supporting civil

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<sup>75</sup> Maria Sanford, speech, "An Apostrophe to the Flag," Washington, DC, April 19, 1920.

rights, and legislators were suspicious of espionage and Soviet support across all facets of the federal, state, and local government.<sup>76</sup> Fueled by fear, many Americans were doubling down on their nationalism, and many institutions like the Federal government were aiming to retain the status quo of power and control. Additionally, local, state, and federal legislators used the Red Scare as an opportunity to control educational policies and curriculum guidelines. Many educators felt as though they were under surveillance, and college campuses were placed under enormous scrutiny by conservative legislators. For legislators, Maria Sanford could be portrayed as an overt patriot and a fierce anticommunist, even though her support for the State was not at the forefront of her life's mission. Maria Sanford's life, legacy, and memory was reconstructed to fit the needs of the State at the time. The United States needed an example of a devout supporter of the free world, and Maria Sanford could be made into that example, regardless of how she emphasized her activism.

Understanding the context of American society at the time of Sanford's commemoration offers insight into why she was likely chosen for Statuary Hall. Sanford was a fierce anticommunist. Throughout her life, she gave many speeches and statements against communism. Upon her death, the Minneapolis Star Tribune published a column of some of her most famous quotations, one of which read:

Aims of the Bolshevists are to destroy our capital and ruin our prospects. It is our special duty and privilege to down the lie, to show that we appreciate the institutions we have. We working people—teachers, salespeople,

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<sup>76</sup> Stuart J. Foster, "The Power and Ubiquity of the Red Scare in American Post-War Culture," in *Counterpoints* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang AG, 2000), 11-13.

stenographers, and others—are the ones to stem the tide of opposition to the government which is sweeping over us.<sup>77</sup>



Figure 3: Maria Sanford, National Statuary Hall, 1958. Photo by Architect of the Capitol, GetArchive, Creative Commons ShareAlike license, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

When looking at the context of American society at the time of Sanford’s commemoration, it makes sense as to why legislators would choose her. During her life,

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<sup>77</sup> “Maria Sanford’s Career Eulogized in Glowing Tributes by Minnesotans,” *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, Minneapolis Minnesota, April 22, 1920, 3.

Sanford expressed mass loyalty to the university system, lectured on the importance of progress, and lobbied in favor of the State and the military institutions during wartime, until the literal end of her life. Sanford embodied the image of a loyal servant to the State that would calm the fears of the nation over the threat of communism. Unfortunately, many of Sanford's more radical takes on education reform have been overshadowed by her constructed image of an acceptable activist. Just like Frances Willard, the memory of Maria Sanford has been manufactured to represent a manufactured historical hero to promote loyalty and the status quo.

### *Sacajawea: The 'Good Indian'*

The final woman presented in this chapter has an all too similar, yet far more controversial journey to National Statuary Hall. In 2003, the year of the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition westward, a monument honoring Sacajawea\* from the State of North Dakota made its way to the Hall. Before her commemoration in the Hall, the story of Sacajawea was not nearly as contested by white individuals as it is in 2023, though Native American groups across the Midwest have worked tirelessly to present the image and legacy of Sacajawea in the appropriate context.<sup>78</sup> Sacajawea's controversial commemorative story is closely related with the suffrage movement. In 1905, suffragists

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\* There are several different controversies about the life and legacy of Sacajawea from the perspective of indigenous groups, historians, politicians, and citizens. The dispute amongst groups surrounding the spelling of Sacajawea's name is one of the aforementioned controversies. Historian Joanna Brooks argues that the proper spelling of her name is heavily debated between white individuals and native groups across the United States in her essay, "Sacajawea, Meet Cogewea: A Red Progressive Revision of Frontier Romance." National Statuary Hall recognizes the spelling of her name as 'Sakakawea' in legislation and commemoration, so that will be the spelling used when speaking specifically about the monument. When speaking about the person, the spelling will be 'Sacajawea.'

<sup>78</sup> Laura E. Donaldson, "Red Woman, White Dreams: Searching for Sacagawea," *Feminist Studies* 32 no. 3 (2006): pp. 525-533, 523.

from several states gathered in Portland, Oregon to erect the first monument honoring Sacajawea. The monument entitled Sacajawea and Jean-Baptiste was unveiled in correlation with the thirty-seventh National American Woman Suffrage Association Convention and in relation with the centennial anniversary of the third year of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Suffragist leader Susan B. Anthony gave a speech at the unveiling ceremony, describing Sacajawea as the “unsung heroine” of the suffrage cause.<sup>79</sup> While the suffragists appeared to mean well with their monument, understanding Sacajawea’s complicated story through a feminist lens is quite limiting. When she was selected to be honored in Statuary Hall nearly one century later to commemorate the bicentennial of the Lewis and Clark expedition, her life and legacy was still represented in a limited way.

Sacajawea’s life was one filled with tragedy. As a child of the Shoshoni peoples, Sacajawea was kidnapped by the Hidatsa peoples, and when she was a teenager she was forced into an abusive marriage to a French fur trader named Charbonneau, the man who would later be ‘hired’ as the guide for the Lewis and Clark expedition.<sup>80</sup> Only two months after the birth of her son, Sacajawea left her village to accompany her husband on the Lewis and Clark expedition westward. She was the only woman among the 32 male members of the expedition, and she was the only member not paid for her work. Regardless, she was an asset to the mission, identifying Shoshoni landmarks and interacting with Native groups as a peaceful representative of the expedition. In Clark’s diary entry on October 13, 1805, Clark describes her as, “The wife of Shabono our

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<sup>79</sup> Karen Chernick, “The Complicated History of the First Monument to Sacajawea, Funded by Suffragists and Designed by a Woman,” *The Art Newspaper*, August 26, 2020, Accessed April 16, 2023, <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2020/08/26/the-complicated-history-of-the-first-monument-to-sacajawea-funded-by-suffragists-and-designed-by-a-woman>.

<sup>80</sup> Nancy Shoemaker, “Native American Women in History,” *OAH Magazine of History* 9 no. 4 (Summer, 1995): pp. 10-14, 10.

interpreter we find reconciles all the Indians, as to our friendly intentions a woman with a party of men is a token of peace,”<sup>81</sup>

It is not fully known how willing Sacajawea was to participate in the expedition so soon after giving birth. While William Clark continually described her as instrumental to the success of the mission in his diaries, her consent to be used in the work she did is questionable. As Charbonneau’s property, she would have had no choice in the matter. The fact that Sacajawea was forced to leave her community so soon in postpartum reveals that she was viewed as a piece of property that would help Charbonneau remain focused during the expedition.<sup>82</sup>

Regardless, the romanticized image of Sacajawea has been used to promote westward expansion and Manifest Destiny in public memory and public space. There are more monuments honoring Sacajawea than any other American woman in the United States. Her sentimental image is captured across different mediums and institutions, and many historians and Native peoples dispute how her legacy is interpreted in white society and culture. When she was selected by the state of North Dakota for statutory commemoration, imagery and promotion of Manifest Destiny were used in her legislation.

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<sup>81</sup> William Clark, journal entry, October 13, 1805, in “Sacagawea’s Role and Significance in the Lewis and Clark Expedition,” Sacagawea Historical Society, accessed February 20, 2023. [Sacagawea-biography.org/significance-role-lewis-clark-expedition/](https://sacagawea-biography.org/significance-role-lewis-clark-expedition/).

<sup>82</sup> Wanda Pillow, “Searching for Sacajawea: Whitened Reproductions and Endarkened Representations,” *Hypatia* 22 no. 2 (Spring 2007): pp. 1-19, 4.

Sacajawea's journey to Statuary Hall formally began in 1999 when Senate Concurrent Resolution no. 4024 was introduced by the North Dakota State Senate. The legislation read:

A concurrent resolution designating Sakakawea to be honored and memorialized with a statue in the National Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol in Washington, DC. Whereas, Sakakawea was a traveler and guide, a translator, a diplomat, and a wife and mother; and whereas, Sakakawea was an Indian woman guide for Meriwether Lewis and William Clark and Sakakawea's indomitable spirit was a deciding factor in the success of Lewis and Clark's two-year expedition to the northwest quadrant of the United States; and whereas William Clark wrote in 1806 that Sakakawea deserved a greater reward for her attention and services on the expedition that he had in his power to give her; and whereas Sakakawea is a legend of truly historic dimensions who lived in what would later become North Dakota and who made a lasting contribution through her courage and resourcefulness; and whereas Sakakawea's traits—strength, courage, a generous heart, and pioneering spirit—have been an essential part of the character found in North Dakotans, thereby representing the best of who we are and why we will always persevere.<sup>83</sup>

From the very beginning of her journey towards Statuary Hall, the rhetoric used to describe Sacajawea is indicative of Manifest Destiny and the myth of her pioneer spirit. Throughout the legislative process, Sacajawea was described as the champion of American values and the desire to expand, even though that story is largely a myth. The portrayal of Sacajawea as a willing and eager participant in the Lewis and Clark expedition reduces her agency and misrepresents her life and legacy. Sacajawea is celebrated for the work she was forced to complete while in an abusive relationship that separated her from her community. By manufacturing her story into a piece of Manifest

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<sup>83</sup> United States Senate, Committee on Appropriations, S. 4024, 106<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session. April 19, 1999.

Destiny propaganda, her story of strength and resourcefulness under duress is largely erased.

It is no coincidence that Sacajawea's monument was unveiled in Statuary Hall in 2003. 2003 marked the bicentennial anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the very mission that introduced the nation to Sacajawea. The bicentennial celebration gained national, and Sacajawea's monument unveiling ceremony in Statuary Hall was covered by news outlets across the United States. When her monument was unveiled in the Hall in 2003, she was again celebrated for her 'assistance' to the expedition. The state tourism magazine, *North Dakota Horizons*, published an article on the unveiling, and described her as the "national symbol of peace, courage, and diversity."<sup>84</sup> During the unveiling ceremony in Statuary Hall on October 16, 2003, North Dakota Governor John Hoeven opened his speech with remarks about Sacajawea, saying, "she represents our proud past, strength, and resourcefulness, but she also looks to the future...But just as she looked to the future, so did we."<sup>85</sup> Later on in the ceremony, Representative Nancy Pelosi spoke, describing her as, "giving the gift of discovery to the nation."<sup>86</sup> Nearly 200 years after the expedition, those in charge of her legacy continued to use her as a pawn in the narrative of westward expansion.

Locally, honoring Sacajawea in Statuary Hall was significant for the state of North Dakota. Since 2001, the state had launched a tourism program aimed to promote

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<sup>84</sup> Andrea Winkjer Collin, "Sakakawea Statue Newest Symbol at US Capitol," *North Dakota Horizons* (Winter 2003), accessed February 20, 2023.

<sup>85</sup> Governor John Hoeven, speech, Dedication Ceremony of Sakakawea statue in National Statuary Hall, October 16, 2003, c-span.org.

<sup>86</sup> Representative Nancy Pelosi, speech, Dedication Ceremony of Sakakawea statue in National Statuary Hall, October 16, 2003, c-span.org.



the state as a vacation destination. In 2001 the Tourism Bureau partnered with consulting firm Odney to construct a new tourism brand for the state. Odney and members of the Tourism Bureau came up with the new brand called Legendary. Odney released their strategy statement, explaining, “The ‘Legendary’ brand has worked because North Dakota is a land of legends-Theodore Roosevelt, Lewis and Clark, Sacajawea, Custer and Sitting Bull, among others.”<sup>87</sup> By promoting the ‘legends’ of the state to boost tourism activity, it makes sense that legislators wanted to further Odney’s strategy by honoring one of the mentioned legends in Statuary Hall. Sacajawea’s likeness would help boost revenue to the state. Odney reported that since 2003 (after Sacajawea’s unveiling at Statuary Hall), visitor spending has quadrupled in the state, from \$63.2 million to \$236.4 million.<sup>88</sup> Situating Sacajawea’s legacy within the economic needs of the Tourism Bureau was a methodical decision. Legislators took advantage on the national scale and their reconstruction of Sacajawea’s life around her identity as a mother within the story of Manifest Destiny paid off.

Sacajawea’s efforts to preserve her agency and power during a time of struggle during the expedition cannot be overstated. Sacajawea had tremendous amounts of courage to survive while being forced to travel thousands of miles from her home after already being abducted as a young girl. Her strength and tenacity in what seem to be an impossibly difficult set of circumstances should be at the forefront of her legacy. However, the violence and fear she faced at the hands of her captors was written out of her narrative to preserve the history of Manifest Destiny in the national story. The Lewis

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<sup>87</sup> “ND Tourism: How Smart Strategies have Quadrupled ND Visitor Spending,” Odney, Accessed April 16, 2023, <https://www.odney.com/work/NDTourism/>.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

and Clark expedition resulted in mass destruction and extermination of thousands of indigenous peoples across the western frontier. By bringing Sacajawea to the forefront of the story during the bicentennial anniversary, legislators were able to reinforce Manifest Destiny in the name of progress while de-emphasizing the horrific results of westward expansion.

In the monument, Sacajawea is depicted holding her infant child. Throughout her commemorative process, legislators at the state and federal level have emphasized Sacajawea's identity as a mother. When placed in Statuary Hall, that identity is capitalized upon to influence the masses as well. Other women in Statuary Hall had children, but Sacajawea is the only one whose child is present in her monument. This emphasis on motherhood is strategic. Again, the messaging of a mother's love and motherly instincts is presented through this monument. This is done to influence the identity of American womanhood to include motherhood within its ideals. This monument presents the narrative that ideal American women are courageous mothers that will put their own safety on the line to aid in progress. Additionally, good American women should not protest when they are tasked with aiding the nation under the notion of progress.



Figure 4: Sakakawea, National Statuary Hall, 2010. Photo by Architect of the Capitol, GetArchive, Creative Commons ShareAlike license, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

Sacajawea's story of abuse at the hands of her husband, and the struggles of taking an infant along on a journey of unknown has been largely eliminated from public memory of her. The forced indoctrination of Manifest Destiny created by legislators with powerful influence over the nation has led to Sacajawea's legacy and image being molded into exactly what is needed to sell the story.

***Memory Construction and Acceptability: Punishment or Honor?***

Frances Willard, Maria Sanford, and Sacajawea were remarkable women. They pushed back against the status quo and faced enormous amounts of danger, discrimination, and oppression throughout their lives. Each woman made incredible contributions to the national story, and their memory should be celebrated nationwide. However, these women's legacies have been reconstructed to produce the proper narrative appropriate for the context of the time. Each woman met the same commemorative fate; her likeness and image were manipulated by politicians and proponents of the State to enhance a narrative of official culture and acceptable public memory of women. Frances Willard's words were twisted to change the meaning of her most famous quote and her beauty was at the center of her constructed legacy. Maria Sanford's radical ideas of education reform were lost when her pro-military stance and anticommunist musings were used to promote nationalism during the Red Scare. And Sacajawea's violent story was redacted, and her agency again taken away from her when she was described as the greatest helper of Manifest Destiny, regardless of if she actually had freedom of choice in the matter. These women have been transformed into acceptable activists to represent the constructed idea of proper American womanhood in Statuary Hall. The misuse of these women within the historical narrative diminishes any good intentions made when commemorating them within Statuary Hall. If these women could see what their likeness and legacies were being used for at the time of their commemorations, would they be happy with the way they were being honored? If the honor is paved with ulterior, official motives, is it really an honor at all?

## Chapter Three

### *Narrative Management and Physical Constructions of Gender Inequality:*

#### *Idealized Suffragists and the Absence of Feminist Women post-1920*

The misrepresentation of Frances Willard's, Maria Sanford's, and Sacajawea's memory through monumental commemoration in Statuary Hall is harmful. Their legacies have been altered to fit politically driven cultural narratives. Memory manufacturing can happen in multiple ways, and legislators and their constituents have found many methods to reconstruct the national narrative to fit a political agenda. Memory manufacturing and narrative construction does not only happen with the monuments that already exist within Statuary Hall. The absence of many monuments honoring women who played an active role in the national story after the suffrage movement is apparent. Even further, the spatial relationships between the placement of monuments within Statuary Hall conveys a message about American women, their ideal identity, and their place within the national narrative. The absence of monuments honoring notable women activists and the intentional placement of the existing monuments to women away from mainstream public view implies that most women are neither important nor useful enough to be honored in Statuary Hall. Those that are worthy are sentenced to alternative locations to exist as a second-class monument.

As more states submitted monuments for Statuary Hall, legislators had to decide what to do as the space became more crowded. By 1933, there were 65 monuments placed in Statuary Hall, spanning three rows deep. Besides aesthetic issues, the weight of

all 65 monuments was beginning to put stress on the rotunda's foundation. To deal with the problems, Congress voted to expand Statuary Hall. On February 24, 1933, Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 47 to provide for the relocation of statues and to govern the authority to place future statuary additions in alternative locations within the Capitol Building.<sup>89</sup> Since then, further legislation has been enacted to spread out the monuments. Today, monuments given to Statuary Hall are placed in the original Hall, the Hall of Columns, the Crypt of the Capitol, the Rotunda, the Capitol Visitor Center, and the House and Senate Wings of the Capitol.<sup>90</sup> The Joint Committee on the Library, a bipartisan group of House and Senate members collaborates with the Architect of the Capitol to oversee the daily operations and design of Statuary Hall and the monuments inside.

### *Spatial Constructions of Misogyny*

It makes sense that one hundred monuments could not fit together in the original rotunda. By the time the first monument was placed in Statuary Hall in 1870, there were only 37 states that made up the nation. As the United States expanded, the number of monuments allowed to be placed in Statuary Hall grew as well. However, the rationale behind the decisions made by the Joint Committee of the Library and the Architect of the Capitol are not as simple as the need for a larger space. Since 1933, monuments have

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<sup>89</sup> United States House of Representatives, House Concurrent Resolution no. 47, "To provide for the relocation of statues and to govern the reception and placement of future additions," February 24, 1933, <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/about-national-statuary-hall-collection>.

<sup>90</sup> Architect of the Capitol, "National Statuary Hall Collection by Location" *Architect of the Capitol: Explore the Capitol Campus*, Accessed March 11, 2023, <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/statuary-hall-collection-by-location>.

moved in and out of Statuary Hall. Today, 38 monuments presently reside in the original rotunda. When looking at where each monument is located, a pattern begins to appear.

Currently, there are eleven monuments honoring women donated by states for the Statuary Hall Collection. Of those eleven monuments for women, only three are located inside National Statuary Hall. Monuments to Frances E. Willard, Mary McLeod Bethune, and Amelia Earhart are currently located in the main display. It is also important to note the context in which these monuments arrived at the Capitol Building. As previously mentioned, the monument to Frances E. Willard was the first monument honoring a woman to be donated to Statuary Hall in 1905. Mary McLeod Bethune of Florida and Amelia Earhart of Kansas' monuments were unveiled for the collection in the summer of 2023 and are the most recent additions to Statuary Hall. Only the first and the most recent monuments to women are on full display in the main rotunda of Statuary Hall.



*Figure 5: National Statuary Hall Main Rotunda, August 8, 1984. Photo by Bill Bazdo, Flickr, Creative Commons ShareAlike License, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.*

While the context of the placement of those three monuments is questionable, the placement of the other eight monuments is even more concerning. Six of the monuments

honoring Mother Joseph of Washington, Helen Keller of Alabama, Jeanette Rankin of Montana, Sacajawea of North Dakota, Maria Sanford of Minnesota, and Sarah Winnemucca of Nevada all reside in the Capitol Visitor Center.<sup>91</sup> The Capitol Visitor Center is the newest addition to the Capitol Building. Located completely underground, the Capitol Visitor Center is a part of the basement of the original building. Completed in 2008, eighteen monuments from the Statuary Hall collection were moved to the underground level, including those six monuments honoring women.



*Figure 6: Photo of the Capitol Visitor Center, 2008. Photo by Lara Dalinsky, Vessence, Creative Commons ShareAlike license, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.*

Patrons of the Capitol Visitor Center use the space to reserve tours, frequent the Capitol gift shop, and dine in the Capitol tourist restaurant. When one takes a tour of the Capitol Building, the tour begins in this space, but patrons do not stay in the Visitor Center for long. Tour guides begin the tour with an introduction to the space and quickly

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<sup>91</sup> Architect of the Capitol, “National Statuary Hall Collection by Location” *Architect of the Capitol: Explore the Capitol Campus*, Accessed March 11, 2023, <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/statuary-hall-collection-by-location>.



move on to the Crypt of the Capitol. Visitors are allowed to roam about the Visitor Center freely, but the guided tour of the Capitol does not fully begin until a tour guide can guide the group away from the chaos of the Visitor Center.<sup>92</sup> Without much structured tour guidance, the monuments in the Capitol Visitor Center appear to be decorative rather than symbolic, and their placement provides a false sense of unimportance to the visitors of the sacred space.

The final two monuments for women, honoring Esther Hobart Morris of Wyoming and Florence Sabin of Colorado were placed in the Hall of Columns, the 100-foot-long corridor located directly underneath the Hall of the House of Representatives. Monuments located in the Hall of Columns have resided there since 1976 when National Statuary Hall expanded for a second time.<sup>93</sup> The monuments honoring Morris and Sabin join 13 other monuments in the National Statuary Hall Collection.

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<sup>92</sup> This was my experience when I travelled to the Capitol Building in July 2023. I visited the Capitol Building and witnessed the chaos of the Visitor Center firsthand. To supplement this information, a video of the online tour of the Capitol Building can be found here: <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/education-resource/video-tour-capitol>.

<sup>93</sup> Architect of the Capitol, "Hall of Columns," *Explore the Capitol Campus*, Accessed March 13, 2023, <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/buildings-grounds/capitol-building/house-wing/hall-of-columns#:~:text=The%20Hall%20of%20Columns%20is,colums%20that%20line%20the%20corridor>.



Figure 7: Hall of Columns, US Capitol Building, February 21, 2012. Photo by William Beem. Flickr, Creative Commons ShareAlike license, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

When a monument is unveiled for Statuary Hall, it is unveiled in the middle of the rotunda, in public view. The unveiling is often a televised event, drawing legislators, lobbyists, and scholars from across the nation to witness the first glimpse of the new monument. After it is unveiled, it often remains in the rotunda for prolonged public viewing. However, in many cases, after so long, the monument is moved to a different part of the Capitol, away from mainstream public viewing. In the case of the eight monuments located in the Visitor Center and the Hall of Columns, they were brought to the basement level of the building to fill space and the mention of women throughout a Capitol tour is not consistent once a tour group leaves the Visitor Center. This phenomenon is reflective of the theory of commemorative privilege.<sup>94</sup> First used to describe commemorative racial inequality in National Statuary Hall, commemorative privilege explains the constitutive relationship between the prestige of a commemoration

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<sup>94</sup> Megan Irene Fitzmaurice, "Commemorative Privilege in National Statuary Hall: Spatial Constructions of Racial Citizenship," *Southern Communication Journal* 81 no. 4 (2016): pp.252-262, 253.

and its location within a space. Different spaces within the Capitol Building all hold distinct physical and symbolic differences. Not all spaces in the sacred building were created or understood to be equal, and the theory of commemorative privilege implies that the specific arrangements of monuments have ideological implications for racialized ideals.<sup>95</sup>

The theory of commemorative privilege can be applied to the monuments honoring women in the National Statuary Hall collection. The classic, main rotunda of National Statuary Hall depicting ornate details, Greco-Roman architecture, and original floorplan conveys a message of prestige, honor, and importance. Pierre Charles L'Enfant and Charles Bulfinch, the original designers of the Capitol and the Hall, wanted this rotunda to feel like a sacred space, filled with honor, pride, and national ideals. The monuments featured in the rotunda feel as though they are the most important monuments in the entire collection. The main rotunda sees the most foot traffic, and the monuments on display receive special attention on Capitol Tours. The fact that only three monuments honoring women are placed in this space, two of which were only placed there less than one year ago implies that most women, even those worthy of the symbolic honor of having a monument placed in Statuary Hall, are not worthy of commemoration in the main rotunda.

The Hall of Columns, though located inside the Capitol Building, is also a space representative of commemorative privilege. The Hall of Columns is located underground, beneath the Hall of the House of Representatives. The Hall of Columns is quite literally a

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<sup>95</sup> Megan Irene Fitzmaurice, "Commemorative Privilege in National Statuary Hall: Spatial Constructions of Racial Citizenship," *Southern Communication Journal* 81 no. 4 (2016): pp.252-262, 253.

hallway. Visitors and legislators use the Hall to travel between the north and south wings of the Capitol.<sup>96</sup> While the Hall of Columns does reflect design aspects of the rotunda and the rest of the Capitol Building, it is still merely a hallway. The monuments in the Hall of Columns feel as though they are not even worthy of commemoration in a real room.

Conversely, the design of the Capitol Visitor Center is cold and modern. It doubles as an administrative area and tourist space. Its modern design does not convey the same feeling of importance as the original rotunda. It looks and feels as if it is not truly part of the sacred space. The Visitor Center's lack of formal viewing organization also conveys a message that the monuments placed in this space are not nearly as important to see as the ones inside the ornate and historic Capitol Building. Guests are not required to view the monuments on display in the Visitor Center, implying that those monuments are merely there for décor purposes. The fact that a majority of monuments honoring women are placed in this space shows that even though women are part of the Statuary Hall Collection, their monuments are not worthy of being placed in the actual Capitol Building, let alone the rotunda.

This gendered commemorative privilege is indicative of a constructed spatial misogyny. It also reflects another facet of the constructed narrative of women in the national story. If only three women are truly worthy of being honored in the original rotunda and the rest are sentenced to being displayed in a hallway and in an administrative building, a constructed understanding of women's place in the national narrative is created. Through the lens of monument placement and applying the theory of

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<sup>96</sup> Architect of the Capitol, "Hall of Columns," *Explore the Capitol Campus*, Accessed March 13, 2023, <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/buildings-grounds/capitol-building/house-wing/hall-of-columns#:~:text=The%20Hall%20of%20Columns%20is,colums%20that%20line%20the%20corridor.>

commemorative privilege, the placement of monuments honoring women also reveals a pattern of spatial misogyny. The Joint Committee of the Library and the Architect of the Capitol make decisions regarding placement and movement of monuments in Statuary Hall. Their decisions since 1933 have allowed monuments honoring most women to be cast aside from public attention. The placement of these monuments supports the constructed narrative that women are supporting actors in the national narrative, nothing more. The spatial placements of monuments are significant, and theories of commemorative privilege and memory management can be applied to Statuary Hall. There is no denying that Washington, D.C., and the Capitol Building are significant spaces portraying symbolic messages of power, virtue, and democracy.<sup>97</sup> However, not every space within the Capitol Building is equally significant. The monuments placed in the original Statuary Hall reside in a space that resembles the historic beginnings of the nation. The beauty of the rotunda and special attention given to the artwork on the tour implies a special significance to the monuments. The original Hall is much more spatially significant than the recently added modern Visitor Center, giving the monuments in the Hall more commemorative privilege than the monuments residing in other spaces in the Capitol Building.

The prestige of being honored in the rotunda is reserved for only three women, and two of those three women were placed in the rotunda in 2022. Prior to that, only one woman was deemed worthy of the highest honor in the most sacred space. The spatial constructions of commemorative privilege in Statuary Hall have furthered the

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<sup>97</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, DC, The National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 18.

manufactured memory of women's lesser importance in United States History, and even though eleven women have been honored in the space, the placement of most in the Hall of Columns and the Capitol Visitor Center is a demotion of that honor.

### *(Mis)Constructions of Suffragists*

When looking at Statuary Hall in relation to suffrage, the main leaders of the movement are absent from monumental commemoration. The key suffrage leaders documented in history are nowhere to be found in Statuary Hall. Instead, some women honored in the Hall are labeled as suffrage leaders even though their role in the movement was miniscule.

One such woman honored in the Hall is Esther Hobart Morris, representing the State of Wyoming. Hobart Morris was the first female Justice of the Peace, and she is honored in Statuary Hall for her commitment to the suffrage cause and instrumental role in the movement. Described as a "suffrage pioneer" by the Architect of the Capitol,<sup>98</sup> Hobart Morris has been celebrated in Statuary Hall for her commitment to the cause and her instrumental role in the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

However, historians have criticized the claim that Hobart Morris was a suffrage pioneer. The suffrage movement in the western United States was less structured than on the east coast and in the south. As the United States continued to expand westward, structured activist movements were less common. Women who supported the suffrage cause in western states often attempted to solidify suffrage into the state's original

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<sup>98</sup> Architect of the Capitol, "Esther Hobart Morris," Explore the Capitol Campus, Accessed March 13, 2023, <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/esther-hobart-morris-statue>.

constitution. In 1869, Esther Hobart Morris allegedly organized a tea party to promote women's suffrage in Wyoming, her new home state. The tea party was meant to organize suffrage efforts across the new national territory, and when Wyoming granted suffrage to women in the state in 1869, Hobart Morris was celebrated as the champion of suffrage in the West.<sup>99</sup> But this tea party likely never happened. Herman Nickerson, one of the founders of South Pass City, Wyoming, the city in which the famed tea party was said to have taken place, published a letter in the *Wyoming State Journal* describing the tea party. According to Nickerson, when Hobart Morris hosted the tea party, she supposedly invited Nickerson himself as well as another man named William Bright, two candidates running for election to serve on Wyoming's territorial council. Hobart Morris allegedly asked each man to promise that if elected, they would introduce a women's suffrage bill.<sup>100</sup> When Bright was elected, he introduced the bill. Later, Nickerson credited Hobart Morris for her efforts, writing in the *Wyoming State Journal* letter, "To Mrs. Esther Hobart Morris is due the credit and honor of advocating and originating women's suffrage in the United States."<sup>101</sup>

However, there is no record of Bright and Hobart Morris meeting prior to the election. If he attended the tea party (if the party ever happened), there is no documentation of his presence. Hobart Morris herself did not claim credit for the passage of suffrage in Wyoming, even though Nickerson thanked her directly. Instead, in an 1871 letter to suffrage leader Isabella Beecher Hooker that was read aloud at the National

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<sup>99</sup> Victoria Lamont, "'More Than She Deserves:' Woman Suffrage Memorials in the 'Equality State,'" *Canadian Review of American Studies* 36 no. 1 (2006): pp. 17-43, 19.

<sup>100</sup> Herman Nickerson, letter published in *Wyoming State Journal*, in Abby Dotterer, "Esther Hobart Morris, Justice of the Peace and Icon of Women's Rights," Wyoming Historical Society, September 4, 2019.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

Women's Suffrage Convention, Hobart Morris gave all the credit to Bright, writing, "to William H. Bright belongs the honor of presenting the woman's suffrage bill."<sup>102</sup>

Additionally, Hobart Morris does not mention the alleged suffrage tea party at all.

No matter how or if the tea party happened, it is clear that Esther Hobart Morris did not feel responsible for the passage of women's suffrage legislation in Wyoming. If she herself did not feel like a suffrage leader, how did she become one in memory? I argue that Esther Hobart Morris and the story of her alleged tea party was a safe way to commemorate suffrage in National Statuary Hall. Her humility in giving full credit to William H. Bright as well as the story of the alleged tea party is much more palatable than some of the more radical documentations of women fighting for suffrage. While it is likely that Hobart Morris supported the suffrage cause, she was not a suffrage leader. She never organized a suffrage conference in Wyoming, and when invited to national suffrage events like the 1871 National Women's Suffrage Convention, she often declined to attend. Her activism remained localized and within her own home. But the story surrounding her tea party made her a prime candidate for a monument in Statuary Hall.

Hobart Morris was first considered for Statuary Hall in 1955. The Wyoming Legislature introduced House Bill no. 131 to recommend a monument of Hobart Morris be sent to Statuary Hall. In describing Hobart Morris, the Wyoming legislature described her as:

Esther Morris, deceased, is illustrious for her distinguished civic service to the Territory and the State of Wyoming, and for her historic renown as the proponent and advocate of a law bestowing the right to vote and to hold

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<sup>102</sup> Esther Hobart Morris, letter to Isabella Beecher Hooker, Washington, D.C., 1871, in Abby Dotterer, "Esther Hobart Morris, Justice of the Peace and Icon of Women's Rights," Wyoming Historical Society, September 4, 2019.



office upon the women of the Territory of Wyoming, the first government in the world to give the right of equal suffrage to its women, and the first woman to assume the responsibility of equal suffrage by becoming the first woman in the world to serve as a justice of the peace. The State of Wyoming therefore deems her worthy of national commemoration.<sup>103</sup>

When describing Hobart Morris to Congress, Wyoming Senators Joseph C. O'Mahoney, Gale W. McGee, and Representative Keith Thomson furthered the myth of the tea party, going on record saying:

Mrs. Morris and her family arrived at South Pass [Wyoming] in time to take part in the election of the first legislators for the Wyoming Territory. During the campaign, she organized a tea party for the 40 or so electors and the two candidates for the first Territorial legislature. To both, she put the question of woman suffrage. As the successful candidate was to write in later years: 'Of course we both pledged ourselves to introduce a woman suffrage bill.' Whatever the force of the promise secured, Colonel William Bright, the successful candidate, introduced the bill.<sup>104</sup>

William Bright, the successful candidate, did not write the letter, it was Nickerson. There is no record that Bright and Morris met prior to the election, and if the story of the tea party is true, William Bright has no part in it. Hobart Morris' life and involvement in the suffrage movement has been misused and mis-constructed. By hyperbolizing her involvement in the movement, and re-telling the inaccurate story of the tea party, legislators have misrepresented the suffrage cause and misled the public to believe a story that likely never happened. Further, by misrepresenting suffrage history through Esther Hobart Morris' monument in Statuary Hall, the site does not include

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<sup>103</sup> Wyoming House of Representatives, Original House Bill no. 131, Statue of Esther Morris, in United States Congress, *Acceptance of the Statue of Esther Morris Presented by the State of Wyoming: Proceeding in the Congress and the Rotunda, April 6, 1960* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 8.

<sup>104</sup> Joseph C. O'Mahoney, Gale W. McGee, and Keith Thomson, Congressional Delegation, "On the Statue of Esther Morris," in United States Congress, *Acceptance of the Statue of Esther Morris Presented by the State of Wyoming: Proceeding in the Congress and the Rotunda, April 6, 1960* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), 14.

authentic suffrage history. When coupled with the lack of monuments honoring documented suffrage leaders, an absence of suffrage history is also present in the site.

The stark disparity between monuments honoring men compared to women cannot be overlooked. When women consist of over half the population of the United States, only honoring eleven women with monuments is an obvious disparity. Additionally looking at which types of women are honored, and which types are excluded is also telling. As previously discussed in Chapter Two, women selected for Statuary Hall are often selected because their legacies can be manipulated to manufacture a narrative of acceptable American womanhood. But what happens to women who are not perceived as acceptable? Plenty of women have made significant contributions to the national story by questioning the authority of the State, protesting systems of oppression, and situating their own identity outside the realms of traditional gender roles. Yet these women are often nowhere to be found in Statuary Hall. Monuments honoring feminist women and well-known suffragists who made history are nonexistent in Statuary Hall. Their lives and their histories, no matter how significant to the authentic national narrative, do not match the ideals of patriotism, loyalty, and adherence to the status quo reflected in Statuary Hall's constructed national narrative. Because of this, the memory many activist women are absent from Statuary Hall. While there has been no attempt to commemorate feminist women in Statuary Hall, there have been congressional attempts to erase activist women from Statuary Hall and the national narrative itself.

In 1921, shortly after the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified granting white women the right to vote in the United States, members of over 70 women's organizations joined together with Congressional leaders in the Capitol Rotunda to welcome the Capitol's

newest statue: a portrait monument dedicated to the suffrage crusade. The monument commemorated three leaders of the suffrage movement, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott and would serve as a temporary addition to the monuments in Statuary Hall before being moved to a permanent location in the Capitol. All three women were instrumental in the 19<sup>th</sup> century suffrage movement, though none of them lived to see the ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Their portrait monument stood tall in the Capitol Rotunda, at the entrance of the original Statuary Hall. Beneath the monument, an inscription read, “Woman first denied a soul, then called mindless, now arisen, declaring herself an entity to be reckoned.”<sup>105</sup> At the time, it felt as though peace had been achieved and part of the battle had been won for women.

However, that victory would be short lived. The day after the unveiling ceremony, the statue was moved underground, and the inscription was scraped off the marble. The monument was placed in a Capitol service closet and was left unseen for decades. For 70 years the monument would remain unrecognized. In 1963, the service closet was opened for Capitol visitors to look inside, but no commemorative plaque was created for the monument, and the famous inscription still remained scraped off.<sup>106</sup> In 1995, several women’s activist groups lobbied for the relocation of the portrait monument with the support of several women members of Congress. The bill passed,<sup>107</sup> but not without opposition from several members of Congress. Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney, a strong supporter of moving the monument back to the rotunda, published a series of

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<sup>105</sup> Lorraine Boissoneault, “The Suffragist Statue Trapped in a Broom Closet for 75 Years,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 12, 2017, Accessed March 1, 2023, [smithsonianmag.com/history/suffragist-statue-trapped-broom-closet-75-years-180963274/](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/suffragist-statue-trapped-broom-closet-75-years-180963274/).

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> United States Senate, 104 S. Con. Res. 21 “Concurrent Resolution Related to the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Women’s Suffrage,” 1995-1996.

newsletters throughout Congress entitled, “The State of the Statue: All the Excuses Fit to Print,” in which she published many of the sexist remarks made by members of Congress in opposition to the monument. Some of the most famous remarks published in her newsletter included, “We can’t move it because the next thing you know, they’ll want us to pass the [Equal Rights Amendment].” and “They don’t have a ‘get out of the basement free’ card.”<sup>108</sup> It was not until 1997 that the Portrait Monument was officially moved back to the rotunda. As of June 2022, the famous inscription has still not been re-added to the monument.<sup>109</sup>

The case of the portrait monument serves as another physical and metaphorical example of the gendered commemorative issues within the Capitol Building. Just like the monuments already in Statuary Hall, women’s presence in the sacred space is minimized and deemed unnecessary both at the time of commemoration and generations later. The obscene comments made by contemporary legislators about the portrait monument show that the issue of feminism and gender equity in public Capitol space is neither a new problem nor a nonexistent issue. Misogynistic beliefs held by legislators with the power to change Statuary Hall’s messaging and story has allowed for the continued absence of monuments honoring women.

The cases of the Portrait Monument and the statues in Statuary Hall reveal a common theme. Women face a paradox. Those who can ‘fall in line’ and use their

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<sup>108</sup> Carolyn Maloney, *The State of the Statue: All the Excuses Fit to Print*, in “The Suffragist Statue Trapped in a Broom Closet for 75 Years,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, May 12, 2017, Accessed March 1, 2023, [smithsonianmag.com/history/suffragist-statue-trapped-broom-closet-75-years-180963274/](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/suffragist-statue-trapped-broom-closet-75-years-180963274/).

<sup>109</sup> United States House of Representatives, 116 H. Con. Res 44 “Concurrent Resolution directing the Joint Committee on the Library to Revise the Statue Commemorating Women’s Suffrage which is Located in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol,” 2019-2020.

activism in service to the State or in preservation of the status quo (or those whose image and legacy can be reconstructed and manipulated to make it seem as if they are loyal agents of the State and status quo) are worthy of commemoration. Those who ‘rock the boat’ and question the legitimacy of the State are literally and figuratively sent to the basement of Capitol, hidden from the public. Or worse, they are not commemorated at all, banished to the confinements of a fading public memory.

If one is looking to learn about activist women at the Capitol Building, there is an option to take the Votes for Women Tour. This specialized tour was created in June of 2020 to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. The tour pays homage to the suffrage leaders honored in the Capitol Building, including several women within the National Statuary Hall Collection. The tour details the fight for women’s suffrage and recognizes the multitude of intersectional individuals who advocated for suffrage in the early twentieth century.<sup>110</sup>

However, the Votes for Women Tour ends with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. There is no further analysis of the aftermath of suffrage or the feminist cause. While there are many reasons for why discussion of women’s activism ends after the granting of suffrage in 1920, one reason is because there are no feminist activists honored in Statuary Hall. There are no monuments honoring feminists in the Hall, so there are none to mention on the tour. Several feminists fit the logistical criteria for commemoration in Statuary Hall, but yet none exist. This absence of feminist leaders after 1920 is indicative of another historical theory: archival silences.

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<sup>110</sup> United States Capitol Building, guided tour, “Votes for Women Tour,” Capitol Visitor Center, June 2020, <https://www.visitthecapitol.gov/education-resource/votes-women-tour>.

Archival silence is a theory used to critique the archive as an institution as well as reconstruct the lives of individuals who have been written out of primary sources and in turn, history. Often used to describe the omission of many firsthand accounts of enslaved people during North American slavery, archival silences can misrepresent history while also forcing individuals and groups to remain unknown to scholars and the public.<sup>111</sup>

Statuary Hall is a commemorative archive. The monuments inside are meant to tell the history of the United States. Like an archive, Statuary Hall is filled with history of men, specifically white men. The story of the United States from the perspective of men is far more complete than from the perspective of women. The history of women in the United States is fragmented and incomplete. Most of the women honored in Statuary Hall lived in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Those specifically honored for their contributions to women's rights and suffrage are honored based on constructed stories and cherry-picked legacies. The silences in Statuary Hall exist, even if the monuments honoring some women do not.

Another facet of archival silences is epistemological gaps. Again, often used to describe archival gaps regarding the institution of chattel slavery and the perspectives and experiences of enslaved people, epistemological gaps refer to histories that disrupt commonly held narratives so profoundly, in a matter so unsettling, that it becomes difficult to see that an archival gap even exists at all.<sup>112</sup> For many legislators in charge of Statuary Hall from its inception, the idea that women could be leaders worthy of

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<sup>111</sup> Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 4.

<sup>112</sup> Danna Agmon, "Historical Gaps and Non-Existent Source: The Case of the Chaudrie Court in French India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 63 no. 4, (2021), pp. 979-1006, 981.

commemoration was unthinkable. Women who challenged systems of oppression and governmental control based on gender were deemed to be ‘troublemakers’ and an inconvenience to the national narrative. For those legislators, honoring activist women who stayed in line with the parameters of their gender was the way to include women in the Hall and in the national narrative. Understanding that radical suffragist women and other radical feminist activists were not the villains of the national story has only just become politically mainstream, though, many conservative politicians still refuse to acknowledge the importance of radical feminist activism in the United States. The gap in commemoration of radical activist women represents an epistemological gap indicative of another archival silence perpetuated in Statuary Hall.

Based on the spatial constructions of Statuary Hall and the commemorative privilege in the placement of each monument, the constructed history of suffrage and suffragists, and the absence of feminist women, the site remains a space of constructed antifeminism. The ways in which the Joint Committee of the Library and the Architect of the Capitol have designed the layout of the collection have conveyed a message of constructed hierarchies. According to the Committee and the Architect of the Capitol, not all monuments worthy of space in Statuary Hall are worthy of the same prestige. Additionally, legislators’ misuse of Esther Hobart Morris’ involvement in the suffrage cause represents further narrative construction through Statuary Hall. Documented suffragists are not present in the Hall, but a woman with little proven involvement in the cause is heralded as a pioneer and hero for women’s rights. When coupled with the blatant absence of feminists, those who have constructed and maintained the meanings and symbolism of Statuary Hall have created a narrative in which most women are not

worthy of the highest degree of commemoration, and if they are worthy, they are sentenced to a life underground as a second-class monument. If the history of American womanhood largely begins and ends with the early twentieth century, and that history mostly exists in the basement of the Capitol, Statuary Hall's relationship to women is indicative of antifeminist sentiments held by those with the power to document and commemorate history, and the women who made it.



## Chapter Four

### *Narrative Manipulation and Contemporary Misuse of National Ideals:*

#### *Antifeminists Cemented in Statuary Hall*

The use of monuments to construct the ideal acceptable activists, the misrepresentation of suffragists and other women, and absence of feminists in Statuary Hall each reflects patterns of State-constructed antifeminism. When looking at Statuary Hall through the lens of gender, it is clear that the absence of some monuments and the inclusion of monuments with constructed meanings have led to the misrepresentation of women at the sacred site. However, the issues surrounding the monuments honoring women are not the only antifeminist issues within Statuary Hall. In the last twenty years, legislators and their lobbyists have begun to push for new statues to be added to Statuary Hall's collection. While this would seem innocent enough, legislators have successfully unveiled two new monuments in the Hall in the last fifteen years that reveal that the problem with narrative reconstruction and memory manufacturing in Statuary Hall are far from over. Narrative construction and identity control in Statuary Hall remains a contemporary issue, and the recent monuments honoring Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater, two men with antifeminist platforms and beliefs, show that monuments in the space are still being used to reinforce a gendered hierarchy. Honoring antifeminists in Statuary Hall creates a narrative that sexism and misogyny are excusable crimes in the national story, and the resurgence of a new right-wing cultural and political agenda allowed conservative politicians to further push the narrative that women are meant to remain subordinate actors in United States history.

As previously discussed, in June 2000, Representative John Edward introduced H.R. 4577, known as the Consolidated Appropriations Act to allow states to replace their monuments in Statuary Hall.<sup>113</sup> Since 2000, eleven states have commissioned new monuments. Many states that have replaced monuments have done so to diversify the collection. Monuments honoring people of color and even some women have been unveiled since 2000, but two states have unveiled monuments that have not fit that pattern of diversity. In 2009, the state of California unveiled a monument honoring Ronald Reagan, and in 2015, the state of Arizona unveiled a monument honoring Barry Goldwater. While these two monuments have created controversy for many reasons, their individual feelings towards gender equality and women's rights made them harmful candidates for the highest honor in Statuary Hall. Both men have published several written works and given countless speeches during their political careers in favor of anti-feminist sentiments and platforms. Even so, legislators in California, Arizona, and national congressional leaders felt as if their antifeminist ideology could be overlooked when selecting the two men for statuary commemoration. By allowing two vocal antifeminists to reside in Statuary Hall, a place that is supposed to be reserved for those who should be celebrated and looked upon for inspiration, legislators and lobbyists have reinforced patriarchal assumptions of what leadership looks like. Politicians' willingness to overlook Reagan and Goldwater's attacks on women when awarding them one of the highest commemorative honors in the twenty-first century signifies that misogyny is still not taken seriously in Statuary Hall and by proxy, in contemporary national narrative. The problems in Statuary Hall are indicative of a broader national rejection of feminism

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<sup>113</sup> John Edward, United States House of Representatives, Consolidated Appropriations Act, H.R. 4677, 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, H.R. 4577, Sec. 311 June 1, 2001.

and gender equity that have spanned far past the legacy of the New Right that was created by Reagan and Goldwater. Their commemorations in Statuary Hall merely prove that antifeminist ideology is far from gone and that the fight for gender equity is far from over.

### ***Ronald Reagan***

Ronald Reagan is often referred to as the modern father of conservatism in the United States. At the forefront of the rise of the New Right, a system of ultra-conservative political values situated in the context of economic capitalism and expanding civil rights for people of color, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community in the post-war era,<sup>114</sup> Reagan implemented strong rhetorical tactics to connect with the nation and solidify himself as a strong leader. Throughout his political career, Reagan's stance on certain issues evolved. Though he identified as a staunch Republican, his stance on social issues was much less conservative in the early decade of his political career, specifically issues surrounding women. Reagan was more cavalier than his conservative constituents on the topic of feminism and gender equality. In April 1972 during a political press conference, Reagan described his stance on the Equal Rights Amendment, legislation that aimed to protect women from discrimination on the basis of sex, saying:

In my opinion, the simple declaration that 'Equality of rights under the law shall not be abridged by the United States on account of sex' is morally unassailable. Whether or not its adoption might lead to abuses, real or

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<sup>114</sup> Desmond S. King, "New Right Ideology, Welfare State Form, and Citizenship: A Comment on Conservative Capitalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 no. 4 (October 1988): pp. 792-799, 792.

imagined, it is beside the point. All the broad principles and guarantees of the original Constitution carried the same potential abuse.<sup>115</sup>

Though he was still as self-defined conservative Republican, Reagan's initial stance on the Equal Rights Amendment seemed rather equitable and supportive of gender equality, feminism, and women's rights. However, as Reagan's power grew, his ideology began to change. While some historians claim Reagan was easily influenced by Evangelical leaders like Jerry Falwell,<sup>116</sup> it is apparent that Reagan's understanding of certain social issues shifted further to the right, and his new platform was much more antifeminist. On November 20, 1975, Reagan gave another press conference when he was asked about his stance on women and the Equal Rights Amendment. Reagan responded:

I originally started out, it sounded like a very simple thing, and why not? I have to say that as we progressed, and as I found myself with a position where I have to know more about it than that, like many others, I do not believe that a simple amendment, the Equal Rights Amendment, is the answer to the problem. I think that it opens a Pandora's Box and could in fact militate against the very things that women were asking for. I believe the answer is by statute that the Constitutional amendment, once in the Constitution, can be by strict interpretation, used to deny women many of the advantages they now have.<sup>117</sup>

When pressed to further elaborate on his understanding of those advantages, Reagan responded:

Well, I think you open up the question of special provisions in say factory work, industrial work, for employees that take cognizance of the fact that there are physical differences between men and women; I think you open up the whole role of individuals in time of emergency being able to

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<sup>115</sup> Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, "Reagan-Women," in Jon Nessen Papers, Box 39, January 28, 1976, 1.

<sup>116</sup> David John Marley, "Ronald Reagan and the Splintering of the Christian Right," *Journal of Church and State*, 48 no. 4 (Autumn 2006): pp. 851-868, 852.

<sup>117</sup> Ronald Reagan, speech at press conference, November 20, 1975, in Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Box 39, Ron Nessen Papers, "Reagan-Women", 2.

challenge their own call to duty on the basis that now it was their Constitutional rights that were being denied because others were not being called, and I don't care how some women may feel about it, but I would hate to see a nation that's going to rely on women in the combat forces.<sup>118</sup>

Throughout his career, Reagan continued to double down on his opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment. In a 1980 presidential debate against Jimmy Carter, Reagan explained his stance again, saying:

I would like to call the attention of the people of the fact that—that's so-called simple amendment could be used by mischievous men to destroy discriminations that properly belong by law to women respecting the physical differences between the sexes, labor laws that protect them against doing things that would be physically harmful to them; those would all be challenged by men. And the same would be true with regard to combat service in the military and so forth.<sup>119</sup>

The language of the Equal Rights Amendment does not mention military service or labor laws. Reagan's interpretation of the Amendment is laced with sexism and patriarchal assumptions about gendered differences, exemplifying his antifeminist behavior.

Reagan's legacy of antifeminism goes beyond his rhetoric. During his presidency, he publicly aligned himself with Phyllis Schlafly, anti-ERA activist and self-proclaimed antifeminist. Schlafly and her group, Eagle Forum ran national campaigns against the Equal Rights Amendment, her campaign, STOP ERA, worked to stall ratification efforts and change public opinion on feminism to reflect a more conservative gendered binary between men and women. In a famous article Schlafly wrote in the September 1986 issue of the Phyllis Schlafly Report entitled, 'A Short History of the E.R.A,' Schlafly said, "In

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<sup>118</sup> Ronald Reagan, speech at press conference, November 20, 1975, in Gerald Ford Presidential Library, Box 39, Ron Nessen Papers, "Reagan-Women", 2.

<sup>119</sup> Ronald Reagan, presidential debate, CSPAN, 1980, on Eagle Forum, Accessed March 4, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nts1hZ-f1js>.

the short term, clever advertising and packaging can sell a worthless product; but, in the long term, American people cannot be fooled. ERA's biggest defect was that it has nothing to offer American Women."<sup>120</sup> Throughout her career, Schlafly advocated for the separation of men and women, and she worked tirelessly to depict feminists as man-hating, country-hating villains who wanted to weaken the United States. Schlafly routinely gave her support for Ronald Reagan, and in 1976, she endorsed him for president.<sup>121</sup>

Reagan worked with Schlafly, and in 1984, he delivered a speech to her ultra-conservative organizing group, Eagle Forum, in support of her antifeminist activism. In his speech, Reagan said:

I owe a special debt of thanks to Phyllis and to all of you for your support of this administration's policies... Finally, I am grateful for the members of Eagle Forum, for your stalwart stand for the sanctity of human life and for the right of children to address their Creator even in public schools and buildings. Under the leadership of Phyllis Schlafly, Eagle Forum has set a high standard for volunteer participation in the political and legislative process, and in communicating ideas through the media.<sup>122</sup>

It is no secret that as Reagan's power grew nationally, his platform and ideology became more radically conservative. His alliance with known antifeminist activist Phyllis Schlafly and his growing opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment solidifies him as an antifeminist ally. As a household name, Reagan's antifeminist ideology was unquestionable and undeniable. The evidence of his antifeminist sentiments was

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<sup>120</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "A Short History of the E.R.A.," *The Phyllis Schlafly Report*, (September 1986), eagleforum.org.

<sup>121</sup> Phyllis Schlafly, "Phyllis Schlafly speech Endorsing Ronald Reagan, Eagle Forum, (1976), accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0pAre-6-pA>.

<sup>122</sup> Ronald Reagan, speech, "President Ronald Reagan's Message to Phyllis Schlafly and Eagle Forum," 1984, Accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rON6dgi1W3A>.

televised, recorded, and catalogued. But that did not stop legislators and lobbyists from placing him on a pedestal. By the time his political career ended, Reagan was at the center of the New Right. In the 90s and early 2000s, Reagan's legacy became the focal point of the Republican Party—because of this, conservative politicians recommended that his statue be presented in Statuary Hall in 2008.

The California Legislature began the process of adding Reagan's statue to Statuary Hall in 2005, when State Senator Dennis Hollingsworth introduced SJR 3. The legislation read:

Whereas, California has a citizen, Ronald Wilson Reagan, who is exceptionally worthy of national commemoration. He stands alone in California history as a beloved actor, President of the Screen Actors Guild, two-term Governor of California, and two-term President of the United States; and whereas affectionately known as the 'Great Communicator,' Ronald Wilson Reagan served as the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and was the first Governor of California to be elected President of the United States.<sup>123</sup>

The legislation quickly passed the state legislature and was moved to Congress for approval. In the bill, there was only praise for Reagan as the 'Great Communicator.'

California representative Ken Calvert spoke on the House floor in favor of approving the statue of Reagan. April 23, 2009, Calvert addressed the floor, saying:

As we find ourselves today struggling with hardships and conflict, President Reagan was also confronted with a troubled economy and uncertain times, not just as the governor of California, but later as President of the United States. In both cases, his characteristic optimism and can-do attitude helped meet those challenges. Mr. Speaker, there was many accomplishments for me to name here, but it's clear that President Reagan was a Californian, an American, and a patriot. California is proud to have such a leader as both governor of our state and president of our nation who brought so much

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<sup>123</sup> California State Senate, SJR 3 Res. 143, February 22, 2005.

greatness to the world. Today I encourage all of my colleagues to support the resolution and bring the statue of President Ronald Reagan to the capitol so that visitors from all over the world can honor the man who declared America's destiny is to be a shining city on the hill for all mankind to see.<sup>124</sup>

While it is admirable that Representative Calvert felt so emboldened to share his feelings about Reagan, his blatant disregard for the damage Reagan and his legacy had done to women over the past fifty years shows that for himself and other legislators, Reagan's blatant sexism was not a dealbreaker in the commemorative selection process. Even though Reagan had made erroneous comments about gender equality, Congressman Calvert felt it was not too unfavorable. After the statue of Reagan was congressionally approved, Calvert furthered his commentary. He gave a press conference on June 1, 2009, three days before Reagan's statue would be presented to Statuary Hall. In his speech, Calvert said:

In my sixteen years in the House, initiating the effort to bring the statue of President Reagan to our nation's capital has been the greatest privilege. President Reagan showed America that even through dark times there was always a brighter day ahead. He always had faith in the American spirit, and he will be remembered as one of America's greatest presidents.<sup>125</sup>

It was not only Republican legislators who allowed Reagan's antifeminist rhetoric to become admissible during this process. Prior to the unveiling ceremony, Nadeam Elshami, a spokesperson for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi explained that celebrating Reagan was not a time for 'finger-pointing.' Elshami explained to political correspondent Erika Lovely that "the event is to celebrate the life and contributions of President Reagan,

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<sup>124</sup> Ken Calvert, speech, United States House of Representatives, April 29, 2009, c-span, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqRn2hdvzio>.

<sup>125</sup> Ken Calvert, press release, "Statue of President Ronald Reagan to be Unveiled in the Capitol June 3<sup>rd</sup>," June 1, 2009, <https://calvert.house.gov/media/press-releases/statue-president-ronald-reagan-be-unveiled-capitol-june-3rd>.



who never questioned the commitments or beliefs of those who chose to serve their country in Congress. President Reagan understood that it is possible to disagree without being disagreeable.”<sup>126</sup> During the unveiling ceremony on June 3, 2009, Republican and Democratic legislators spoke in favor of Reagan, his legacy, and the statue with disregard for his antifeminist rhetoric. Republican House leader John Boehner opened the unveiling ceremony by praising Reagan’s vision for American exceptionalism. He praised Reagan for leading the nation out of the “nightmare years of the 1970s.”<sup>127</sup> Boehner commended Reagan for his “relentless commitment to freedom and insistence on American victory”<sup>128</sup> both domestically and abroad during his presidency. He concluded his speech by asserting, “Ronald Reagan’s legacy is intact, and I’m confident it will be for generations to come.”<sup>129</sup>

Boehner’s praise of Reagan is not far from the conservative status quo. What is more interesting, though, is how liberal legislators also gave immense praise for Reagan, even though their politics differed so greatly. At the unveiling ceremony, Senate Majority Leader, Democrat Harry Reid delivered his speech in honor of Reagan as well. In his speech, Reid said, “this [Statuary Hall] is a fitting place to honor President Reagan.”<sup>130</sup> Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi also gave praise to Reagan in her speech. Pelosi said:

President Reagan emphasized bipartisanship, and stability was important in all of our debates. Ever a gentleman, he never questioned the motives of a person... But with the unveiling of this statue today we know that all who

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<sup>126</sup> Erika Lovely and Jonathan Martin, “Congress Honors Reagan with Statue,” Politico, June 3, 2009, <https://www.politico.com/story/2009/06/congress-honors-reagan-with-statue-023261>.

<sup>127</sup> John Boehner, speech, United States Capitol, June 3, 2009, CSPAN, Accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?286798-1/ronald-reagan-statue-unveiling>.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Harry Reid, speech, United States Capitol, June 3, 2009, CSPAN, Accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?286798-1/ronald-reagan-statue-unveiling>.

come after us, all visitors of this capital will know the respect, the esteem, and the admiration Californians, Congress, and the American people have for President Ronald Reagan.<sup>131</sup>

Democratic leaders like Reid and Pelosi gave speeches in honor of Reagan with no regard for the damaging legacy Reagan had on women in the United States. While it can be assumed that as Senate and House leaders they were obliged to speak at the ceremony, but their distinct cherry-picking of Reagan's legacy to only share the good points of his presidency and governorship shows that again, for Democrats, sexism is an excusable offense when choosing individuals for commemoration in Statuary Hall.

Like other monuments discussed in previous chapters, the context surrounding the time in which Reagan's monument was selected and unveiled is important. While it can be assumed that generally, the decision to unveil Reagan's monument six months after the inauguration of President Barack Obama, the nation's first African American president and champion of liberal values, was intentionally designed, but when looking more deeply at Reagan's monument through the lens of feminist action and gender equality, a more nuanced and sinister motive is revealed.

In 2003, Senator Rick Santorum introduced S.3, known as the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. This Act criminalized the act of killing a child during delivery, an act Santorum called a "partial-birth abortion." Additionally, the Act allowed the father of the fetus as well as the fetus's maternal grandparents to sue the mother and her doctors if she obtained an abortion."<sup>132</sup> This Act was a direct nod to the Pro-Life movement. Met with

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<sup>131</sup> Nancy Pelosi, speech, United States Capitol, June 3, 2009, CSPAN, Accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.c-span.org/video/?286798-1/ronald-reagan-statue-unveiling>.

<sup>132</sup> Rick Santorum, United States Senate, S.3, "The Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act," 108<sup>th</sup> Congress, February 14, 2003.

serious backlash, the Act was upheld by the Supreme Court in 2006,<sup>133</sup> right around the time Representative Calvert began lobbying to create a monument to Reagan in Statuary Hall.

In his career as president, Reagan was staunchly pro-life. In 1981, Reagan appointed Dr. C. Everett Koop to the position of Surgeon General. Koop was an anti-abortion advocate and agreed wholeheartedly with Reagan's pro-life agenda. In 1982, Reagan called for a full Congressional discussion of proposals designed to ban abortions nationally. In support of the restrictive Hatch Act designed to criminalize all abortion, Reagan gave a speech to the National Right to Life Committee, calling abortion a "national tragedy" and "an assault on the sacredness of human life."<sup>134</sup>

The fact that a monument honoring Reagan, a staunch pro-life supporter, was nominated and accepted at the same time that backlash to the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act was being debated in Congress and the Supreme Court is not a coincidence. As pro-choice activists were seemingly losing the battle to keep abortion safe and legal, erecting a monument to one of the most famous anti-feminist and anti-abortion politicians in Statuary Hall, the highest honor in the United States capital, was an act of antifeminism and overt messaging. Reagan's monument signified a commemorative assault on American women, and it implied that pro-life leaders who dismissed women's rights were worthy of a monument in Statuary Hall.

### ***Barry Goldwater***

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<sup>133</sup> Julie Rovner, "'Partial-Birth Abortion:' Separating Fact from Spin," National Public Radio, February 21, 2006, Accessed March 14, 2023, npr.org.

<sup>134</sup> Arthur Frederick Ide, *Reagan and Woman* (Dallas: Texas Independent Press, 1984), 28-30.

If Reagan were the only documented antifeminist honored in Statuary Hall, one could argue that his commemoration was a one-off or one-time outlier example. However, in 2015, another documented antifeminist was cemented in Statuary Hall, revealing a pattern of selective commemoration and disregard for sexism in public commemorative space. Barry Goldwater, Republican leader from Arizona, was honored in Statuary Hall as well. What is interesting about Goldwater's case study is that the efforts to commemorate him began in 2001, seven years before Reagan's monument was unveiled. The determination of Arizona legislators and later, congressional leaders to place Goldwater in Statuary Hall shows that not only was his sexism excusable, but also that Goldwater was seen as the absolute best candidate for commemoration in Statuary Hall for nearly two decades prior to his commemoration. Between 2001 and 2015, legislators advocated for Goldwater, even as cultural gender norms and the status quo shifted away from his ideology.

A staunch Republican and champion of New Right values, Goldwater was famous for his anti-civil rights policies and his insistence on the division of persons that formed the foundation of the modern conservative party. Those outside of his party accused Goldwater of being a conservative extremist, and those within the Republican ranks encouraged him to take a more moderate stance. Goldwater, though, doubled down on his ideology, causing the Republican party to split between moderates and radicals.<sup>135</sup> Goldwater's rhetoric opened the door for more extremist ideology to become accessible and mainstream in the media. Goldwater's influence on the modern Republican party is

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<sup>135</sup> Michael Bowen, "Getting to Goldwater: Robert A. Taft, William F. Knowland, and the Rightward Drift of the Republican Party," In *Barry Goldwater and the Remaking of the American Political Landscape*, ed. Elizabeth Tandy Shermer (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013), 87.

still felt today as more extremist conservative ideology surrounding race and gender is circulated amongst contemporary Republican legislators, lobbyists, and followers.

Goldwater never shied away from sharing his polarizing opinions. In his autobiography, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, Goldwater boldly claims he will not apologize for his ideology. He wrote, “I have been much concerned that so many people today with Conservative instincts feel compelled to apologize for them.”<sup>136</sup> He furthers his own ideology by emphasizing the need for accepting differences between individuals, saying, “Only a philosophy that takes into account the essential differences between men, and, accordingly, makes provision for developing the different potentialities of each man can claim to be in accord with Nature.”<sup>137</sup>

Goldwater’s public critique of gender equality began in 1964, when he publicly opposed the 1964 Civil Rights Act as a senator. In a speech to the senate floor defending his decision, Goldwater explained that his issue with the Act surrounded its inclusion of sex discrimination parameters outlined in Title VII:

I realize fully that the Federal Government has a responsibility in the field of civil rights. I supported the civil rights bills which were enacted in 1957 and 1960, and my public utterances during the debates on those measures and since reveal clearly the areas in which I felt that Federal responsibility lies and Federal legislation on this subject can be both effective and appropriate. Many of those areas are encompassed in this bill, and, to that extent, I favor it. I wish to make myself perfectly clear. The two portions of this bill to which I have constantly and consistently voiced objections, and which are of such overriding de-significance that they are determinative of my vote on the entire measure, are those which would embark the Federal Government on a regulatory course of action with

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<sup>136</sup> Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 1.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

regard to private enterprise in the area of so-called “public accommodations” in the area of employment.<sup>138</sup>

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act included provisions to combat discrimination on the basis of sex as well as race, color, religion, and national origin.<sup>139</sup> The Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960 that which Goldwater publicly supported discussed desegregation, voting rights, and racial equality. The key differences between the 1957, 1960, and 1964 Acts were the expansion of who was protected under the law—namely women. When discrimination on the basis of sex (and religion) was included in the 1964 legislation, Goldwater refused to support it.

Beyond Goldwater’s dislike for federal protections on the basis of sex, he was also known for making overtly sexist remarks while on the campaign trail. Goldwater was criticized by feminists during his political career for making antifeminist and misogynistic remarks in public while on the campaign trail. On August 13, 1974, while campaigning as a Vice Presidential candidate, Goldwater made comments that sparked protest from the Arizona Women’s Political Caucus as well as the Nevadans for Equal Rights Amendment group. When asked about the idea of a woman running as a vice presidential candidate, Goldwater replied, “I have nothing against a woman, just so she can cook and get home on time.”<sup>140</sup> Goldwater’s history of sexism and adherence to federally protected gender equality is clear, though for his contemporary supporters, like Reagan, it seems as though his misogyny is excusable.

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<sup>138</sup> Barry Goldwater, speech, in “Text of Goldwater Speech on Rights,” New York Times, June 19, 1964, Accessed March 14, 2023.

<sup>139</sup> United States Congress, Civil Rights Act of 1964, H.R. 7152, 88<sup>th</sup> Congress, July 2, 1964.

<sup>140</sup> “Goldwater is Opposed by Arizona Feminists,” New York Times, August 14, 1974, 16.

The crusade to place a monument honoring Goldwater in Statuary Hall began in 2001 in the Arizona House of Representatives. H.J.R. 2001 read:

Whereas, legislation enacted by Congress in 2000 authorized any state to request the Joint Committee on the Library of Congress to approve the replacement of a statue the state has provided for display in Statuary Hall under certain conditions; It is appropriate at this time to consider honoring at this time to consider honoring a distinguished Arizonan who has played a significant role in our state's history since statehood by placing his statutory in Statuary Hall, namely Senator Barry Goldwater... Whereas, Goldwater entered politics in 1949 when he was elected as a Phoenix city councilman... In 1964 Senator Goldwater was the Republican nominee for president. Although defeated in that race, Goldwater became an icon for conservatism, starting a movement which many believe led to the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980... Whereas, Barry Goldwater was a quintessential westerner and a man of great personal charm. His reputation for personal integrity was unblemished...Whereas, the legacy of Senator Barry Goldwater since his death in 1998 has been a source of inspiration to many, and the placement of a statue in his likeness in Statuary Hall would be a well-deserved and lasting testament to Barry Goldwater's tremendous impact on both our state and nation.<sup>141</sup>

When the decision to place a monument to Goldwater in Statuary Hall reached Congress in 2015, several congressmen shared their support for Goldwater and the monument itself. On February 10, 2015, Senator Jeff Flake of Arizona described Goldwater in a speech to the Senate Floor, saying: "Barry Goldwater was plainspoken. He was stubborn. He was patriotic. He was independent. In short, Goldwater embodied the very spirit of Arizona."<sup>142</sup> The next day in the House of Representatives, Congressman Joe Wilson Sr. shared his support for the Goldwater monument, saying: "I

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<sup>141</sup> Arizona House of Representatives, A Joint Resolution Urging the United States Congress to Authorize the Placement in Statuary Hall of a Statue of Senator Barry Goldwater and Authorizing the Arizona Historical Advisory Commission for Placement in Statuary Hall, H.J.R. 2001, 48<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 2008, 2.

<sup>142</sup> Jeff Flake, speech, United States Senate, Washington, D.C., February 10, 2015.

am pleased that Congress today will honor a great American patriot, Barry Goldwater, with a statue in the National Statuary Hall of the US Capitol.”<sup>143</sup>

Just like the supporters of Reagan’s monument, supporters of Goldwater have excused his documented misogyny and history of voting against federal protections for women. Both Flake and Wilson Sr. emphasized Goldwater’s patriotism. For both men, Goldwater’s patriotic sentiments made him worthy of commemoration. This implies that if one is patriotic, Congress can look the other way regarding an individual’s other faults or failures. Legislators who supported Goldwater’s monument have perpetuated the idea that if one is patriotic enough, they have immunity in the eyes of history. Those who control the monuments within Statuary Hall have set the precedent that patriotism and loyalty to the State deserves the highest honor, regardless of anything else.

### *Spatial Constructions of Misogyny: The Power of Placement*

Like in previous chapters, it is important to analyze where these monuments honoring Reagan and Goldwater are placed in the Capitol Building. Reagan’s monument is located in the Capitol Rotunda, receiving ample attention from Capitol visitors daily. His monument is on full display in one of the most beautiful rooms in the Capitol, signifying his importance over the other monuments located in the basement or in the Capitol Visitor Center.

Like Reagan, Goldwater’s monument is displayed in the most sacred part of the Capitol. Goldwater’s monument is located in the National Statuary Hall, the space seemingly reserved for the most important monuments in the collection. These two men,

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<sup>143</sup> Joe Wilson, Sr., speech, United States House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., February 11, 2015.



already given the highest honor by having a statue of them in Statuary Hall's collection are placed on an even higher symbolic pedestal by being located in the main rotunda and the Hall itself. The symbolism behind placing Reagan and Goldwater's monuments on full display while most monuments honoring women were cast aside in the Visitor Center is indicative of commemorative privilege as well. The placement of these two monuments in their specific location sends another antifeminist message; men are more worthy of being honored in a prestigious location than women.

### *Statuary Hall and Antifeminist Sentiments*

The unveiling of monuments honoring documented antifeminists is problematic for two reasons. First, both Reagan and Goldwater have both created and participated in institutional oppression of women when rebuilding the Republican Party in the post-war decades. Reagan's rejection of the Equal Rights Amendment and his support for the pro-life agenda as well as Goldwater's insistence that federal protections for women under the Civil Rights Act was a governmental overstep reveal patterns of sexism indicative of strict gender norms. As the GOP rebuilt itself after the 2008 elections, many conservative leaders referenced the framework created by Reagan and Goldwater to build their own contemporary campaigns. Misogyny was foundational to the resurgence of the GOP in the twenty-first century. By placing both men on a literal and symbolic pedestal, legislators have shown women in the United States that those who perpetuate their oppression are still heroes in the national story. For these legislators, misogyny is forgivable and can be overlooked when selecting individuals to be honored in Statuary Hall.

Secondly, the inclusion of monuments honoring Reagan and Goldwater reveal another idea: those honored in Statuary Hall only have to be heroes to American men, not American women. Both Reagan and Goldwater launched several attacks on the freedoms of American women but insisted on preserving the individual liberties of men. Each man promoted adherence to the gendered status quo and continually attempted to strip the rights of women. For many women in the late twentieth century and today, Reagan and Goldwater were not their heroes. Reagan and Goldwater, above all else, served the interests of American men. Just as the monuments to women in Statuary Hall are meant to inspire an ideal identity and proper behavior for women, the monuments honoring men are meant to do the same thing for men. If Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater are meant to model proper behavior for contemporary men in the United States, antifeminism and sexism can be seen as ideal values to hold.

These two monuments are additionally important because they represent contemporary culture. Both monuments were placed in Statuary Hall in the twenty-first century. This shows that the antifeminist sentiments within Statuary Hall are not only a historical issue. State-constructed antifeminism is not a problem of the distant past, but also a cultural issue facing Statuary Hall and the rest of the United States. Sexism is still excusable in the eyes of many legislators. Because of this, antifeminists like Reagan and Goldwater will continue to be given a ‘free pass’ in commemorative spaces like Statuary Hall and the tone of the space will still instill messages of sexism. If the ideal patriotic man is like Ronald Reagan and Barry Goldwater, American women will still be forced to face oppression, both in Statuary Hall and in society.

*Conclusion: More Work to be Done*

When I traveled to Washington, D.C. in July of 2022, I had intended to see the unveiling of Statuary Hall's two newest monuments. For the first time, Statuary Hall would honor a Black individual, as Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, an educator and civil rights activist, would replace Edmond Kirby Smith, a Confederate sympathizer, for the state of Florida. Coincidentally, the state of Kansas also unveiled a new monument honoring aviator Amelia Earhart to replace senator John James Ingalls. The two replacement monuments would bring the total of women honored in the Hall to eleven. In 2022, two states were actively working to replace some monuments, giving hope that positive changes could be made to the Hall. When I was leaving my tour of the Capitol Grounds, I overheard some visiting middle school students joking about the ridiculous-looking statue of George Washington they had just seen at the Smithsonian Institute of American History. Curious about what they were talking about, I went to the Smithsonian to see the monument for myself.



Figure 8: Figure 10: First known Monument depicting George Washington located at Smithsonian Institute of American History, July 28, 2022. Photo by author.

In 1832, a monument honoring President George Washington was commissioned by Congress to honor the centennial anniversary of his birth. Sculptor Horatio Greenough was chosen to sculpt the statue. Greenough, much like L'Enfant and the other designers of Washington, D.C., and the spaces within it, took influence from the grandeur framers of democracy in Rome. He modeled the monument in Greco-Roman style, depicting Washington in Roman garb, bare chested and wearing traditional Roman robes.<sup>144</sup> In this neo-classical monument, Washington resembles a Greek God or Roman Emperor. Officially installed in the Capitol Rotunda in 1841, the monument was reviled by the public and was expelled from the Capitol grounds two years later.

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<sup>144</sup> Harry Rand, *Horatio Greenough and the Form Majestic: The Biography of the Nation's First Washington Monument* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Scholarly Press, 2020), 60.

Despite being a piece of true artistry, Greenough's monument fell short. Not because of how it looked, but because of what it meant. Through the monument, Greenough attempted to set the precedent to construct one of the earliest national narratives. Washington himself took inspiration from Greek and Roman society when constructing the framework for democracy in the United States.<sup>145</sup> Most of the structures in Washington, D.C. and the Capitol grounds were built in neo-classical style. It seemed only appropriate to construct the first monument honoring Washington in that same fashion. However, the national narrative had moved on from Greece and Rome. One hundred years after Washington's birth, the nation and its new leaders were creating a new narrative for the country that was dominantly American. In 1841, Americans did not see themselves as models of Greek and Roman democracy, they saw themselves as models of American democracy. Their identities were no longer dominantly influenced by the Greeks and Romans like Washington's was. An authentically American identity and national story was being constructed by the public and its leaders, and Greenough's neo-classical monument honoring Washington's legacy did not fit the new national narrative.

Had Greenough's monument honoring Washington been allowed to remain in the Capitol rotunda, the national narrative could have evolved differently. Had Americans continually seen this monument and believed that their identity was meant to remain dominantly neo-classically inspired, the national story could have shifted. Monuments have always been used to model behavior for the public. Had the monument not been

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<sup>145</sup> Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 50.

moved to an alternative location, neo-classical republicanism could have likely still been a source of heavy influence in the construction of the national narrative and American identity for decades, or even centuries, to come.

The question the public faced with Greenough's monument is the same question facing legislators in control of Statuary Hall today; do the monuments fit the national narrative they are aiming to construct? Do the monuments in Statuary Hall reflect the proper, authentic story of the United States? More importantly, do those monuments help to construct an American identity that is reflective of all Americans? When looking at the monuments honoring women in the Hall, the answer is an unequivocal 'no.' One would assume that the ideal American woman is loyal to the State and is patriotic above all else. Her beauty is emphasized more than her accomplishments. She adheres to the status quo, and she only 'rocks the boat' an appropriate amount. Even then, even if she embodies all of those characteristics, there is a good chance she will not receive the full honor of having her monument placed in the rotunda. She will likely be cast aside as a prop in the Capitol Visitor Center or be banished to the basement of the building. All while men who have publicly and routinely disregarded her equality and autonomy are heralded as national heroes and are centrally placed in the sacred spaces inside the Capitol, the spaces reserved for the best of the best.

The legislators and lobbyists that have used the monuments in Statuary Hall to construct an identity of idealized patriotic womanhood have enabled the space to misrepresent women's roles in the national narrative. By reconstructing the narratives surrounding the lives of women already honored to construct an acceptable activist, manipulating the spaces in which monuments are seen in the Capitol, and celebrating

men who have perpetuated a culture of gender inequality, lawmakers have emphasized a national narrative that is inherently antifeminist.

The monuments produced for Statuary Hall have always been politicized. Beginning with the unveiling of Confederate monuments during the era of Jim Crow and continuing through the twenty-first century with the inclusion of pro-life activist men during times that reproductive rights had been challenged nationally. The messaging behind each monument discussed is indicative of a larger political agenda that has been supported by the confinements of gender roles. Each woman honored with a monument in Statuary Hall was honored for a specific political reason, just as each woman *not* honored was left out for another political reason. In its current state, Statuary Hall is a site of State-constructed antifeminism, and American women deserve better than that.

There is a chance for legislators to correct the narrative constructed through Statuary Hall. In February 2023, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Congressman Bennie Thompson, and Senator Cory Booker reintroduced bicameral bill to remove all Confederate monuments in the Capitol Building, including Statuary Hall. The Confederate Monument Removal Act would remove all statues of people who voluntarily served in the Confederate States of America from National Statuary Hall's Collection within 120 days of the bill being signed.<sup>146</sup> Any state that has a monument removed under this legislation will be allowed to immediately replace the monument. If the legislation passes, eight current monuments in Statuary Hall's collection would be removed, and those states would be able to submit a monument for replacement. Through this

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<sup>146</sup> United States Senate, Confederate Monument Removal Act, S. 366, 117<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2021.

legislation, there is an opportunity for legislators to reconstruct the national narrative again. Not only will Confederate supporters and sympathizers be removed from a space as sacred as the Capitol Building, but there is also a chance to diversify the collection and include more monuments honoring women. The Confederate Monument Removal Act, if passed, will be beneficial to restore the sanctity of Statuary Hall and the Capitol Building, but it begs the question—what should be done with the monuments that are removed? That question can never be concretely answered, but historians and scholars have continued to debate what steps should be taken to create more equitable commemorative public space.

There is an opportunity to honor women for their authentic legacy rather than manufacturing a memory about them that diminishes the strength and power of their activism. One nonprofit is aiming to influence legislators to include more women in Statuary Hall in light of the potential Confederate Monument Removal Act. Equal Visibility Everywhere, a nonprofit organization dedicated to achieving gender parity in the symbols and icons of the United States, is aiming to highlight women's history and achievements through public history sites and symbols.<sup>147</sup> Equal Visibility Everywhere created the “Put a Woman in Statuary Hall” project to correct the gender misrepresentation within the Hall. While the organization does not specifically discuss the narrative misrepresentation of the women already honored in the Hall, it does highlight the spatial and commemorative privileges regarding the location of many of the

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<sup>147</sup> “Our Mission: Updating the Face of America,” Equal Visibility Everywhere, accessed April 12, 2023, <https://equalvisibilityeverywhere.org>.



monuments within the Capitol Building.<sup>148</sup> Equal Visibility Everywhere has launched a campaign in 2023 to influence legislators and lobbyists to submit and vote upon monuments honoring Harriet Tubman, Juliet Gordon Lowe, and Alice Paul to be placed in the Hall.<sup>149</sup> 2023 has the potential to be the year that the national narrative becomes inclusive to folks with intersectional identities, and women could finally be represented in a way that supports the actuality of their role in the national story. Legislators have the opportunity to reconnect Statuary Hall with its origin; they have the power to restore the sacred space to reflect its original purpose—to reunify the fractured nation by honoring individuals illustrious for their historic renown who are deserving of the highest commemorative honor. Only time will tell if the vision for Statuary Hall constructed over 150 years ago will be restored once again.

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<sup>148</sup> “Adding Women In: The National Statuary Hall Collection,” Equal Visibility Everywhere, Accessed April 12, 2023, <https://equalvisibilityeverywhere.org/statuary-hall/>.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

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### *Introduction*

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## ***Chapter One***

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