

Spring 2009

# Anthemion

North Carolina State Capitol Foundation

## NORTH CAROLINA'S STATE CAPITOL: UNLOCKING ITS ARCHITECTURAL

D N A

By Calder Loth,  
Senior Architectural Historian,  
Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources

Like many of our historic buildings, North Carolina's Capitol is expressed with a distinctive vocabulary: in this case that of the classical architecture of ancient Greece. So we might ask, how did the Capitol's architect, Alexander Jackson Davis, learn this vocabulary and acquire the ability to apply it to his designs? Davis never visited Greece. As a young architect, however, he was fortunate to be employed by Ithiel Town, a prominent architect of his day and possessor of an extensive architectural library. Among Town's many tomes was James Stuart's and Nicholas Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*, a monumental three-volume work lavishly illustrated with plans, sections, details, and reconstruction drawings of ancient Greek ruins. With the first volume issued in 1762 and additional volumes in 1789 and 1792, this pioneering work became the primary source for the Greek Revival style throughout the Western world. A telling entry in Davis's diary notes: "1828: March 15 First Study of Stuarts Athens, from which I date Professional Practice."<sup>1</sup>

Continued on page 4

*The columns in the west hallway were designed to look like those in the Tower of the Winds in Athens.*  
Photo by John Hall



*Edward T. Davis*

The North Carolina State Capitol is widely regarded by architectural historians internationally as a highly important work of art. The building stands as a physical representation of the amazing reforms which North Carolina's leaders accomplished in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The building is one of the nation's most important masterworks designed by architect Alexander Jackson Davis and refined by supervising architect David Paton. Astonishingly, the Capitol does not currently have an interpretive

center. That omission is being corrected.

In the last session of the General Assembly, \$1.6 million was allocated for the planning documents associated with a massive project located on the current surface parking lot bounded by Wilmington, Jones, Blount and Salisbury Streets. This project will include much needed underground parking for visitors and state employees, a park at surface level and a Visitors' Center! A portion of the Visitors' Center will be dedicated to the interpretation of the Capitol. All friends of the Capitol are in debt to Keith Hardison, director of the Division of State Historic Sites, for including this much needed interpretive space in this exciting project for downtown Raleigh. While money is tight during the current economic crisis, it is good to know that this project will be "shovel ready" in the future.

The State Capitol Foundation Board members continue to work hard on the committees which have been formed and refined over the summer. The Marketing Committee, headed by Kim Shope will unveil an exciting new look as the Capitol's logo and branding materials get a much needed update this spring. The Finance Committee is working hard to refine our budget and suggesting new procedures to maximize our endowment. The Education Committee and Legislative Committee are also making great progress with beneficial new programs and procedures. Finally, the Property and Planning Committee, headed by Board member Kay Cashion, is advancing proposals for a master plan to preserve and maintain this most important landmark.

The talented staff of the Capitol continue to produce exceptional exhibits and draw impressive crowds with lectures and educational programs. The current construction on Union Square which replaces the sidewalks with accessible facilities has not reduced our visitation. I urge you to attend a lecture, schedule a tour, spend a glorious spring day on Union Square and enjoy this amazing resource. We are grateful for your support!

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## *Anthemion*

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*Anthemion* is published quarterly by The State Capitol Foundation to provide information about and build support for North Carolina's State Capitol. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please contact *Anthemion* editor & designer Terra Schramm at 919-715-3962 or via e-mail: terra.schramm@ncdcr.gov

For more information about the State Capitol, visit our Web site at [www.ncstatecapitol.org](http://www.ncstatecapitol.org), or call 919-733-4994.





## Secretary of Cultural Resources Emphasizes Cooperation



### N.C Department of Cultural Resources

Beverly Eaves Perdue, Governor

Linda A. Carlisle, Secretary

Dear Friend of History:

This is a challenging and exciting time for the Department of Cultural Resources and I am honored to have the new opportunity to work with Governor Bev Perdue, who values and respects the importance of Cultural Resources.

We are fortunate to have strong supporters like you who appreciate that knowledge of the past is fundamental to understanding who we are and where we are going. You know almost better than anyone how vital arts, culture, and history are to the well-being, quality of life and economic health of our state. It is gratifying that the past year 19 million people participated in Cultural Resources programs – from the State Library, Archives and History, Museums, Historic Sites, the North Carolina Symphony and the North Carolina Arts Council.

There are challenging financial issues facing North Carolina...and Cultural Resources. We need to be thoughtful as we navigate our way. This economy *will* turn around, and when it does our cultural community needs to be healthy and robust, with fresh ideas and new ways to reach children, adults, residents and visitors. And now, more than ever, we will depend on the private sector, and friends like you, for help.

We have a great story to tell about the positive impact of the creative industry on the vitality and growth of our state. More than 159,000 people in the creative sector earn wages of \$3.9 billion, contributing financially to their communities. The creative industry accounts for 4% of the state's workforce – more than in the biotech industry — and helps recruit and retain business, and grow jobs.

Strengthening K-12 history education is one of Cultural Resources' foremost goals. We cannot afford to lose this focus or allow our important work to be depleted, but instead raise the cry to stay strong as North Carolina works through these tough times.

Working together, we can make Cultural Resources stronger than ever. Let's insure that our story is one that our governor can be proud to tell, our legislators can value, and our citizens can appreciate. I am proud to be a part of Cultural Resources, and I hope to make you proud as well.

Sincerely,

Linda A. Carlisle, Secretary

**Architectural DNA** *Continued from cover*

Although the Capitol’s cross-shaped plan and central dome consciously echoed its burned predecessor, Davis relied on *Antiquities of Athens* for nearly all of his design’s details. Several of his exact sources are documented in an 1838 legislative report submitted by David Paton, the supervising architect.<sup>2</sup> For the exterior, Paton says: “The columns and entablature are Grecian Doric, and copied from the Temple of Minerva commonly called the Parthenon.”(fig. 1) Of the dome’s cresting Paton wrote: “its dome is decorated at top with a similar ornament to that of the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates...” (fig. 2) This small elegant monument still stands near the Acropolis.

For the Capitol’s corridors Paton states: “The vestibules are decorated with columns and antae, similar to those of the Ionic Temple on the Ilissus, (fig. 3) near the Acropolis in Athens.” Davis used the entablature of this same temple for the Capitol’s exterior window lintels. Regrettably, the temple has since disappeared and the Ilissus River is now buried in a culvert. The olive leaf wreathes in the vestibules’ friezes, on the other hand, are copied from another lost Athenian structure, the Choragic Monument of Thrasylus (fig. 4), which fortunately was recorded by Stuart and Revett before it too was destroyed. Moreover, this monument’s pilaster capitals provided the model for the Capitol’s exterior pilasters.

The pilasters lining the Capitol’s rotunda walls are adapted from those on the Erechtheion (fig. 5), the elegant asymmetrical temple next to the Parthenon. The Ionic columns in the Senate Chamber (fig. 6) are copied from the portico columns of that same temple.

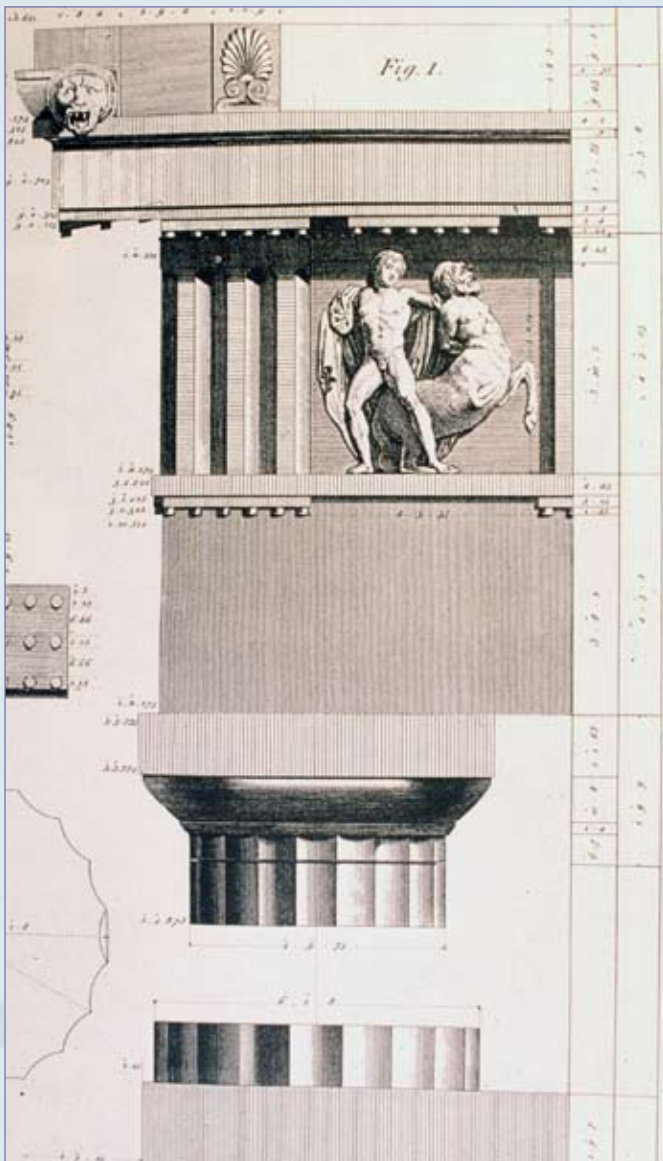


Figure 1: Doric of the Parthenon

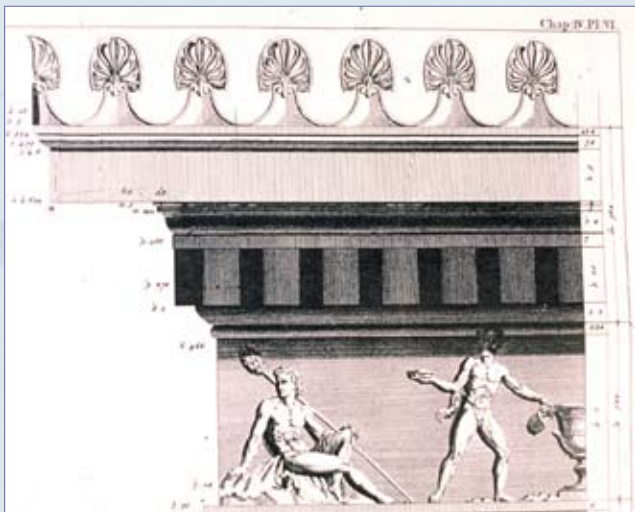


Figure 2: Cresting detail, Choragic Monument of Lysicrates

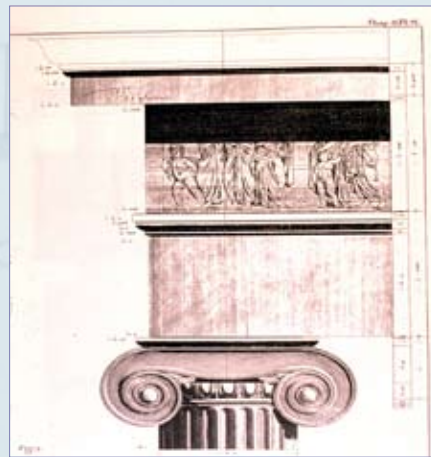


Figure 3: Ionic of the Temple on the Ilissus

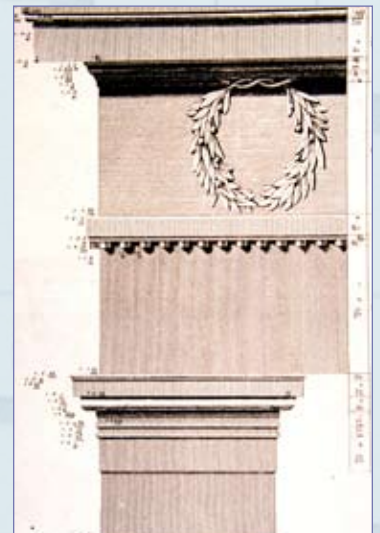


Figure 4: Choragic Monument of Thrasylus





The Erechtheion’s capitals, with the drapery-like swags of their volutes and their bands of anthemions, are considered to be the most beautiful versions of the Greek Ionic. The entablature of the Erechtheion’s famous Caryatid porch (fig. 7), a feature carefully documented by Stuart and Revett, provided the model for the entablatures lining the tops of the gallery walls in this same chamber.

Lastly, David Paton noted: “Lobbies and Hall of Representatives have their columns and antae of the Octagon Tower of Andronicus Cyrrhestes.” Better known as the Tower of the Winds, this small structure also stands near the Acropolis. Its distinctive capitals are distinguished by a single row of acanthus leaves beneath a row of palm sheaves (fig. 8). While not unique to the tower of the Winds, this type of capital was made famous by Stuart and Revett’s published drawing.

Many of these Greek details, particularly the Ionic capitals of the Erechtheion and the Tower of the Winds’ capitals can be found on front porches, churches, and public buildings in most any city in the country. However, few American buildings employ such beautifully crafted and informed versions of these ancient features as North Carolina’s Capitol. We can thank James Stuart and Nicholas Revett for first making them known to us and Alexander Jackson Davis for giving them a vibrant presence in the heart of Raleigh.

1 Quoted in *Alexander Jackson Davis, American Architect 1803-1892*, Amelia Peck, editor, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992, p.18.

2 I am grateful to Raymond Beck, former Capitol Historian, for supplying me with the text of Paton’s description, excerpts from which are herein quoted.

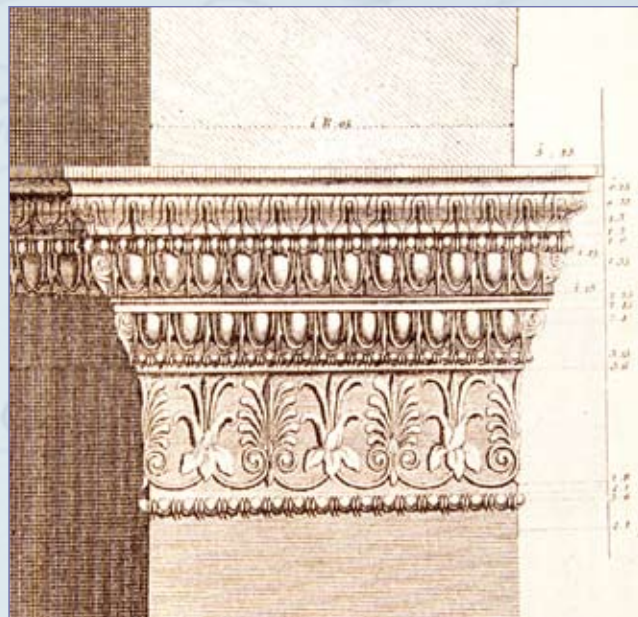


Figure 5: Erechtheion pilaster capital



Figure 6: Erechtheion Ionic capital

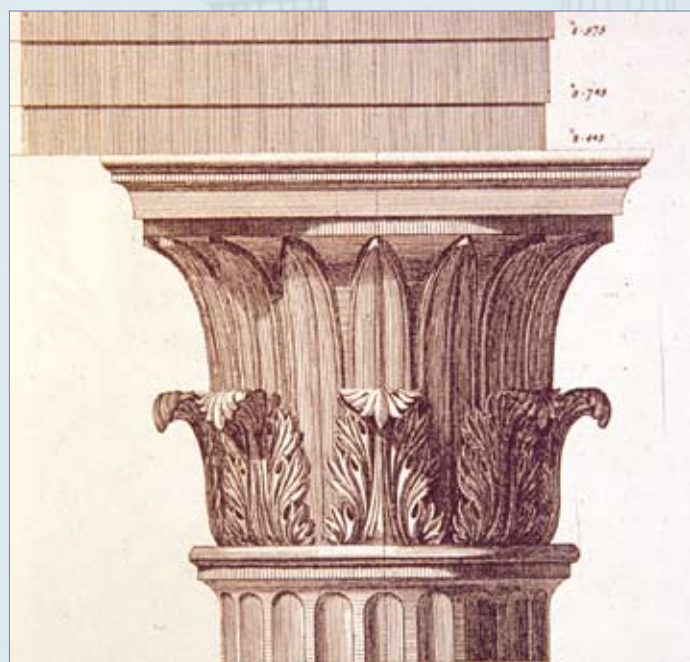


Figure 8: Tower of the Winds capital

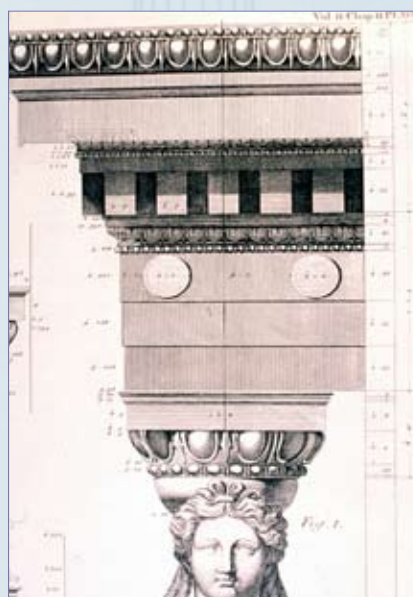


Figure 7: Erechtheion porch entablature

All illustrations from Stuart and Revett’s *Antiquities of Athens*





## George Washington Gets His Day in the Spotlight

By Deanna Kerrigan, Site Administrator

Here at the Capitol, no one can accuse us of not knowing what to get the President who has everything—everything except his time in the spotlight, that is.

Some of you may remember that years ago the Capitol purchased some high quality spotlights for Thomas Sully's 1818 *Lansdowne* portrait. The lights sat in storage for more than five years while our George resided in the muffled reflection of the House Chamber's chandelier. How fair is that, we ask? Well, we believed George had been patient long enough.

So, just in time for Presidents' Day and Washington's birthday in February, the Capitol staff and (most importantly) the Facilities electricians bestowed on George the gift of illumination. So come by and check out our fresh, smart-looking George. He really is quite fetching in his new light.

And we all need a bit of sparkle now and then, don't we?



Photos by Terra Schramm

^ Without direct illumination, the glare from the chandelier obscured the lower half of the portrait. This photo shows how visitors saw the portrait before the lights were installed in February.

> Now with four spotlights on Washington, visitors can see the all of the painting's details, including the pattern of the carpet, the items on the table, and the rainbow in the upper right corner.



## *From the Site Administrator:* Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag and Smile, Smile, Smile!



Deanna J. Kerrigan

It was somewhat prophetic that we began an exhibition on North Carolina in the Great Depression on the cusp of an economic crisis that has most of us reeling. While we are certainly not in the dire straights the Depression brought, many of us publicly and privately have been re-evaluating our own priorities.

One of my favorite aspects of our exhibit, *Fun Times in Hard Times: How We Played in the Great Depression* is its focus on how people came together to share conversation, recreation and a good laugh. We're all familiar with the dour WPA photos of men and women lined up for bread, camped out in tent cities, or cradling sickly children. But what those photos don't capture are the shared meals between families, children making fun from their imaginations and the strong communal spirit that is so primal in us human

beings. The exhibit focuses not on the dire and destitute, but on the human need to enjoy each other, have fun and create joyous moments even in humble circumstances. We are not solitary animals. We pull together in times of trouble. We like to laugh and see those we care about happy. We care for and about each other. We are curious about our world. And we are glad for our friends.

To that end, we are certainly glad for the support, friendship and communal spirit shared by State Capitol Foundation board and members across the state. We have experienced some minor challenges recently, but between the Capitol staff and Foundation board, we have found creative solutions that make efficient use of state and private funds without reducing services to the public. More challenges lie ahead, for sure, and we look forward to meeting them head on, with equal parts fiscal responsibility, creativity and good humor. And while we do, we are certainly glad we have the community of Foundation members to share our joys with, no matter how great or how humble.

## Calendar of Events

### *Capitol Keepsakes: Souvenirs from North Carolina's State House* exhibit

**April 24- October 4, 2009**

This exhibit will feature several of the mementos depicting the State Capitol since its completion in the 1830s. It will include postcards, print materials, ceramics and other bric-a-brac visitors have taken with them over the years. *April is Raleigh History Month!*

### An Afternoon at the Capitol: State House Souvenirs

**May 2, 1-3 p.m.**

Souvenirs have always helped people remember a special trip or event. Drop in to this program and make a unique Capitol souvenir to take home with you. Be sure to view our exhibit, *Capitol Keepsakes* while you're here.

### Independence Day Celebration

**July 4, 11 a.m.- 3 p.m.**

Enjoy a family-oriented Independence Day celebration with a patriotic concert and picnic. Wander over to the Capitol's "Old Fashioned 4th" area and see how North Carolinians celebrated the 4th long ago. Musical performances, food and historic demonstrators round out this patriotic day of fun.

### *Fun Times in Hard Times: How We Played in the Great Depression* exhibit

**On display through July 27, 2009**

The Great Depression affected the lives of Americans everywhere and North Carolinians were no exception. Despite unemployment, failing banks, financial uncertainty and other setbacks, families and children across the state found creative ways to keep their minds off their troubles and their spirits high.

# Become a Pillar of Society: Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian

## State Capitol Society Membership Form

Membership benefits include a handsome cast-metal State Capitol pin, yearly membership card, subscription to *Anthemion* quarterly newsletter, reduced rates for annual history excursions, reduced admission to Capitol social events, invitations to public programs, & special tours by request for your organization or company.

### Levels of Membership

- Senior/ Student Membership \$10
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- Family Membership \$40
- Rotunda Membership \$100
- Doric Membership \$500
- Ionic Membership \$1,000
- Corinthian Membership \$2,500  
(corporate 2 years, individual 3 years)
- Crown Membership \$5,000  
(corporate 3 years, individual 5 years)

I am a  New Member  Renewing Member

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