

THE LYNDON BAINES  
JOHNSON ROOM



UNITED  
STATES  
SENATE



# THE LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON ROOM



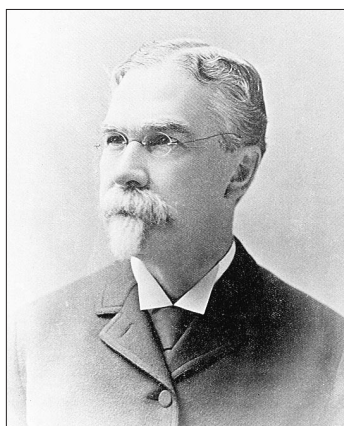
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## Historical Highlights

The Lyndon Baines Johnson Room (S-211) is located in the north-east corner of the United States Capitol, part of the 1851–1859 Senate extension designed by Thomas U. Walter. The House and Senate extensions more than doubled the amount of space in the Capitol and helped address the needs of a growing country. Also included in the north addition were the new Senate Chamber, the President’s Room, the Senate Reception Room, as well as numerous committee rooms.

Although S-211 was originally intended for the Senate Library, the first recorded tenant was the Senate Post Office, which occupied the room until 1884. The following year, the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, chaired by Senator John J. Ingalls (R-Kansas), was assigned the space. The committee continued to use the room through 1958.

An important piece of history occurred in the room at the turn of this century, during the chairmanship of Ingalls’ successor, Senator James McMillan (R-Michigan). Realizing that development



*James McMillan*



*Room S-211, Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, ca. 1900*

in Washington had become haphazard, McMillan persuaded his colleagues to establish the Senate Park Commission in 1901. This commission, whose members included some of the most prominent architects and artists of the day, developed a strategy to bring the Federal City into closer harmony with Pierre Charles L'Enfant's original vision. The commission's work had a profound effect on the modern development of Washington, as well as on the "city beautiful" movement throughout the country.

When unveiled in 1902, the "McMillan Plan" justified its sponsor's efforts. It proposed a well-organized design for the city, centered

around green parks, recreation areas, and grand public edifices. It halted the indiscriminate construction of a railroad terminal on the Mall, and proposed that the area be planted in grass and lined with museums and government buildings. Union Station, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Cannon and Russell congressional office buildings all owe their existence to the McMillan Plan. The plan was so successful that many cities used it as a model for their own urban renewal projects.

Early in 1959 Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson moved his leadership office from the third floor of the Senate wing to rooms S-211 and S-212. Johnson kept these rooms when he became vice president in 1961 and remained there until he ascended to the presidency in 1963. Former staff members recall that of all the offices assigned to Johnson during his 1961–1963 tenure, room S-211 was by far his favorite.



*Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Baines Johnson in S-211, the Majority Leader's suite, March 15, 1960*

The Majority Leader's office took over the room in 1965, and since that time it has been used for meetings, press conferences, committee meetings, party caucuses, and congressional receptions. In 1987, S-211 was assigned to the Secretary of the Senate.

Beginning in 1987 the LBJ Room (as it had come to be known) underwent redecoration in order to recreate a 19th century appearance. The walls were repainted and marbledized, new curtains installed, traditional cast-iron urns purchased, and period window cornices and an overmantle mirror were moved to the room from other areas of the Senate.



*The Lyndon Baines Johnson Room*

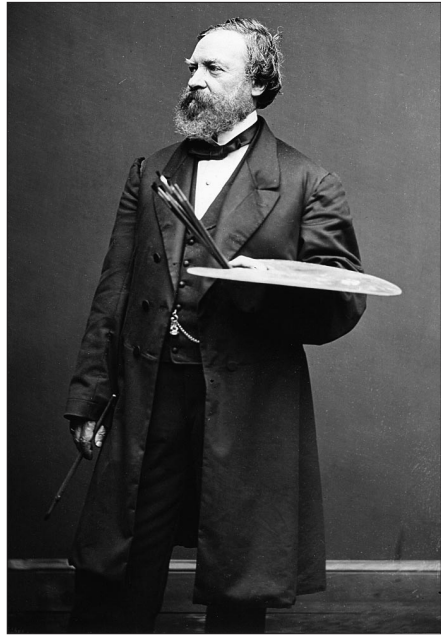
## Art Highlights

Early plans called for the Lyndon B. Johnson Room to accommodate the Senate Library, and in 1857 Italian artist Constantino Brumidi designed an elaborate fresco ceiling to reflect appropriate themes—allegorical representations he entitled *History*, *Geography*, *Print*, and *Philosophy*. Brumidi finished the lunette of *History* and one corner group in the room, but was then assigned work elsewhere in the extension. He did not return to the room until several years later. By that time, the space had become the Senate Post Office, and its anticipated use as a library was never realized. Consequently, Brumidi changed his original subjects, replacing the figures of *Print* and *Philosophy* with allegorical scenes of *Physics* and *Telegraph*. He completed the ceiling in 1867.



Original design for ceiling of Senate Library by Constantino Brumidi, ca. 1857

Born and trained in Rome, Constantino Brumidi left his native city after being imprisoned for his role in the Revolution of 1848. Arriving in the United States in 1852, he sought to employ his considerable talents in decorating public buildings. U.S. Army Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, then serving as superintendent of the project to enlarge the Capitol, hired Brumidi in 1855 to decorate the new Capitol extensions.



*Constantino Brumidi, photograph taken by Mathew Brady, ca. 1860*

During the next 25 years Brumidi continued as the primary decorator of the interior of the Senate wing and the great Rotunda. For this accomplishment, Brumidi has been called the “Michelangelo of the United States Capitol.” He often painted in true fresco, with the pigment painted directly on wet plaster. The chemical change that takes place as the plaster dries makes the pigment an integral part of the plaster. The result is a stable, permanent mural that, like the frescos of Pompeii, can last for millennia.

The figure representing *History* sits draped in colorful robes with a laurel wreath on her head. Quill pen in hand, she records the story of the Revolutionary War, which can be seen raging in the background. To *History*'s right lie the tools of her trade: an inkpot and quills, a box of scrolls, a framed picture, and a printing press. She rests her book against the wings of Father Time, a figure with origins in Greek and Roman mythology, who sits to her left with an hour-glass and scythe. Although Father Time is only the assistant in





Fresco of History by Constantino Brumidi

this case, in other instances he is depicted recording the feats of heroes in a book much like *History's*. Behind him a chipped stone pedestal suggests the passage of time.

The lunette entitled *Telegraph* is Brumidi's symbolic treatment of the transatlantic cable, the first electric communications link between Europe and America. Completed in 1866, the cable was laid on the ocean floor between Ireland and Newfoundland, and was considered the major technological marvel of its day. In Brumidi's fresco, Europa approaches America across the water. Europa rides a bull, Jupiter in disguise, and clasps America's hand in friendship and communication. America wears a phrygian, or liberty, cap wreathed in the oak leaves of strength. She carries a caduceus (symbol of commerce) and is accompanied by an eagle bearing an olive branch of peace. A cornucopia, symbolizing plenty, rests to one side, while a cherub carries the cable linking the two continents.



*Fresco of Telegraph by Constantino Brumidi*

Before beginning his frescoes, Brumidi usually created small-scale color sketches in oil. Following approval, he began the actual painting using the preparatory sketch as a reference, changing only minor details.



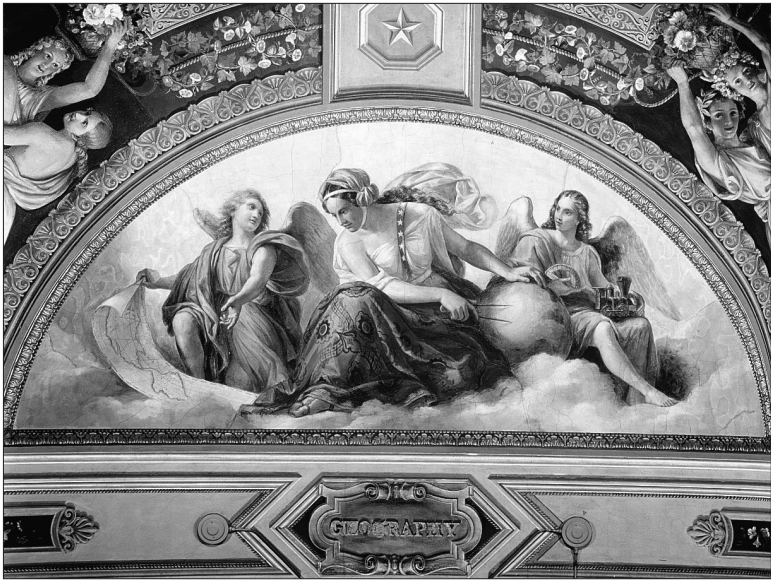
*Oil sketch for Telegraph, ca. 1862*



Fresco of *Physics* by Constantino Brumidi

*Physics* pays tribute to science and its many practical applications, particularly in regard to the development of new forms of transportation. A locomotive and a steamboat, both in motion, figure prominently in this scene. Wearing a cape bordered with stars, *Physics* rests one arm on a pedestal while a young boy in a sailor suit gestures toward a chart laid out before them. A plane table, which is used to determine survey lines, stands at their feet. To the right sits a blacksmith, meant to represent Vulcan, god of the forge, with an anvil, a hammer, and a pair of newly wrought iron wheels beside him.

Unlike *History*, *Telegraph*, and *Physics*, which are staged on the earth's surface, *Geography* looks out over the world from a perch high above the clouds, where she can view the continents in their totality. She wears a brocaded skirt and flowing headdress and measures distances on her globe with a pair of dividers. *Geography* is flanked by two winged helpers, one carrying a small train engine and a protractor and the other gesturing towards a map of the New World.



Fresco of Geography by Constantino Brumidi

Along with the four lunettes, Brumidi employed the *Three Graces* as corner motifs. The walls are painted in the trompe l'oeil style to give the impression of carved reliefs and panels. A narrow frieze with a cornucopia theme bands the room.



Corner figure groups by Constantino Brumidi



## Decorative Arts

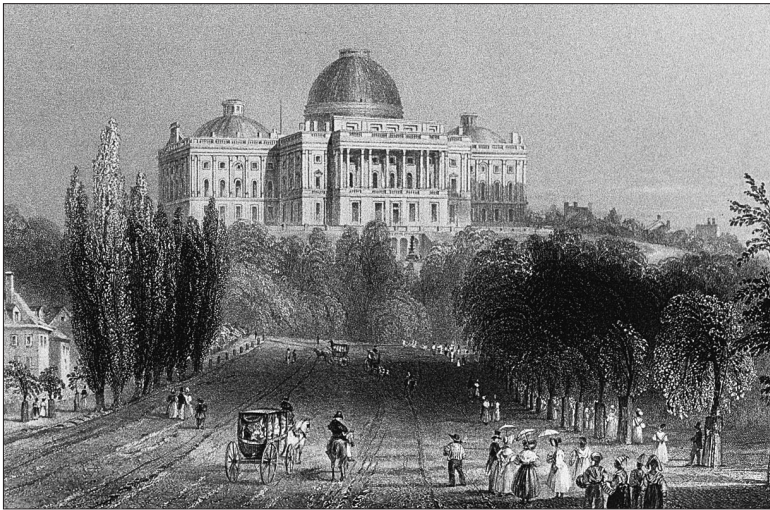
In addition to the fresco murals, original details of the room include the marble mantel, designed by Thomas U. Walter, and the Minton floor tiles. These encaustic tiles were manufactured at Stoke-upon-Trent in Staffordshire, England by Minton, Hollins and Company. The colors in encaustic tile (unlike those in ordinary tile, which are simply painted glazes) come from colored clays imbedded in the tile itself. They were designed specifically for the Capitol and were

installed throughout the building from 1856 to 1859. Minton tiles are also located in the Houses of Parliament in England and at the Smithsonian Arts and Industries building on the National Mall. The carved, gilded mirror and window valences date to the late 19th century.

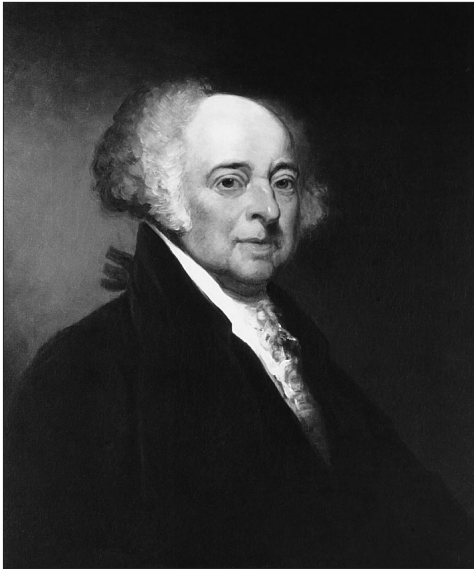
The room's elaborate crystal chandelier has been the subject of much interest, as well as a polite tug-of-war between the executive and legislative branches. The chandelier is believed to have been purchased for the White House during President Grant's administration. It was removed by Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 and sent to the Capitol where, for many years, it hung in S-211. Lyndon Johnson had it moved to the Senate connecting corridor in 1958. Several years later, the fixture was loaned to the White House for placement in the Treaty Room. Amid much publicity—and with some White House reluctance—the chandelier was returned to the Capitol in 1977 and reinstalled in S-211.

## Nineteenth-Century Engravings

On the east wall of the room are four hand-colored engravings of Washington from the 1830s. One is by H. Brown, while the other three images are from *American Scenery*, illustrated by British artist William H. Bartlett. Bartlett came to the United States on two separate occasions between 1836 and 1838, travelling along the east coast and recording his impressions. In all, Bartlett sketched 115 scenes from nature—primarily romantic views that emphasized the untamed American landscape. His engravings of the Capitol are less typical of his work, as they depict the man-made environment. Here, by subtly exaggerating the height of the Capitol dome, Bartlett showed how the building truly dominated the Washington skyline. Numerous printmakers later copied Bartlett’s views of the early Capitol.



“View of the Capitol at Washington,” William H. Bartlett, 1837



## Fine Arts

JOHN ADAMS  
(1735–1826)

by Eliphalet Frazer  
Andrews (1835–1915)

The first vice president and second president of the United States, John Adams was born in Braintree, Massachusetts. A strong supporter of American independence, Adams was elected as a Massachusetts delegate to the First Continental

Congress in 1774. He accepted various appointments in Europe between 1778 and 1788, including Minister to England. After serving as vice president under George Washington, Adams was himself elected president in 1796.

Division of opinion within his cabinet over United States-French relations characterized Adams' presidency. Vice President Thomas Jefferson and his supporters sympathized with France, while the opposition, led by Alexander Hamilton, favored military action against the French. Adams undertook a successful peace commission, avoided war, and preserved United States neutrality, but at a personal cost. Alienated from much of his own party, Adams lost his reelection bid against Thomas Jefferson in the election of 1800.

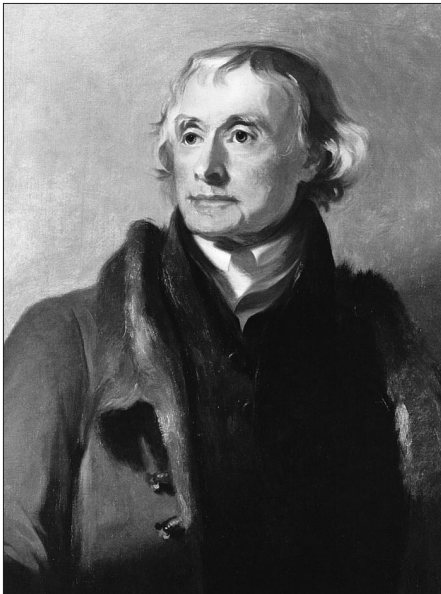
The Senate's oil portrait of John Adams by Eliphalet F. Andrews is a reversed-image copy of the 1860 George P.A. Healy work now owned by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. Healy's painting, in turn, was based on Gilbert Stuart's 1815 life portrait that hung for many years at the Adams homestead in Quincy, Massachusetts. The Stuart picture is now in the collec-

tion of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. The Andrews version was purchased for the Capitol directly from the artist around 1881. Andrews was a successful portraitist in the late nineteenth century who supplied several government agencies with images of famous Americans. Born in Ohio, he trained at the Dusseldorf Academy in Germany and with Leon Bonnat in Paris. In Washington, he initiated the art instruction program at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in 1877, and served as the art school's director from 1887 until 1902. Andrews' portraits of six presidents and of Martha Washington are found in the White House collection.

THOMAS JEFFERSON (1743–1826)

by Thomas Sully (1783–1872)

Thomas Jefferson, second vice president and third president of the United States, was born in Goochland County, Virginia. Educated at the College of William and Mary, Jefferson served in the House of Burgesses from 1769 until 1775. A member of the Continental Congress, he was on the committee charged with drafting a decla-



ration of independence. Although assisted by John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and others, Jefferson is considered the principal author of the document.

After his work in Philadelphia, Jefferson returned to Virginia to serve in the state legislature and then as governor. Jefferson was George Washington's first secretary of state, and he ran for the presidency himself in 1796. Because he fin-

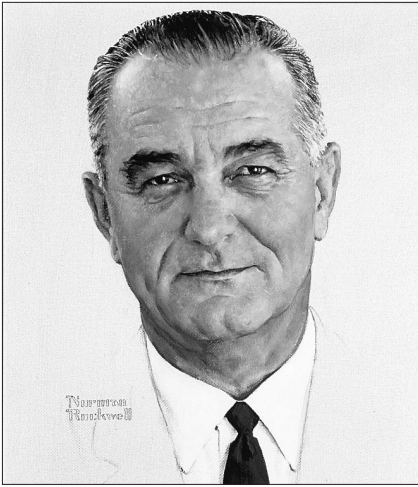


ished second to John Adams, by the election rules of the day Jefferson automatically became vice president. In 1800 he ran against Aaron Burr for the presidency; they both received the same number of electoral votes, and the House of Representatives broke the tie by choosing Jefferson.

During his first administration, Thomas Jefferson doubled the size of the United States' territory through the Louisiana Purchase. Reelected triumphantly in 1804, Jefferson's second term was marked by a commitment to peaceful diplomacy and economic pressure to maintain American rights. He retired to his rural Virginia home, Monticello, in 1809. There he championed higher education, founded the University of Virginia, and pursued wide-ranging interests in the arts and sciences. Jefferson is considered one of the most versatile men of his age, one much respected for his significant contributions to political statesmanship and philosophy.

In 1821 American artist Thomas Sully traveled to Monticello to capture a likeness of Jefferson for the United States Military Academy at West Point. There, he made a half-length study of the former president, although he did not finish the painting until 1830.

This half-length view is considered the finest portrayal of Jefferson in his later years, and Sully made several copies of it. Historians believe that the first such copy, made in 1856, is the one now exhibited in the U.S. Capitol. The work was purchased by Congress from the artist's grandson in 1873 for \$200. Sully's likenesses of Jefferson became standard, and many later artists and engravers replicated them.



LYNDON B. JOHNSON  
(1908–1973)

by Norman Rockwell  
(1894–1978)

Born on a farm near Stonewall, Texas, Lyndon Baines Johnson was a representative and senator from his home state before becoming vice president and president of the United States. Previous to entering politics, Johnson was a high school teacher,

an aide to a member of Congress, and state director of the National Youth Administration of Texas.

In 1937 Johnson won a special election held to fill a vacancy in the U.S. House of Representatives, and was subsequently reelected five times, serving in the House until his 1948 election to the Senate.

Johnson's legislative skills were recognized almost immediately, and he became Democratic whip in 1951 and his party leader in 1953. Although he lost his bid for the nomination as Democratic candidate for president in 1960, he accepted John F. Kennedy's offer to run as vice president. Elected vice president on November 8, 1960, Johnson became chairman of the National Aeronautics and Space Council and the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities.

On November 22, 1963 Johnson assumed the presidency following the assassination of John Kennedy. Committed to carrying forth the late president's programs, Johnson actively supported passage of a sweeping civil rights act in Congress. He outlined an extensive program of economic and social welfare legislation, designed to fight poverty and to create what he called "The Great Society." Elected president in his own right in 1964, Johnson pushed more major legislation through Congress than had been passed at any time since the

New Deal. Domestic achievements, however, were soon overshadowed in the public mind by America's role in the Vietnam War. Johnson did not seek reelection in 1968, and he retired to his ranch near Austin, Texas, where he died on January 22, 1973.

Today, Norman Rockwell is best known for his portrayals of Americana on the covers of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Throughout his long career, however, Rockwell also supplied artwork for a number of other periodicals. In 1964 he painted this portrait of Johnson for *Look* magazine. After sketching the president in the White House, Rockwell finished the portrait in his Stockbridge, Massachusetts studio. In 1967 Johnson rejected his official White House portrait by artist Peter Hurd, and offered a reproduction of the Rockwell portrait to show Hurd what he considered a good likeness. Although Norman Rockwell was lightly regarded by art critics (who labeled him an illustrator, not an artist), his popular following remained immense throughout his life. In 1977 President Gerald R. Ford presented Rockwell with the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest peacetime award.

This painting is on loan from the Lyndon B. Johnson Library and Museum in Austin, Texas.

## Room Assignments: 1859 to Present

Room #	Date	Occupant
none	1859–1874	Post Office
31	1874–1885	Post Office
31	1885–1906	Committee on the District of Columbia
38	1906–1947	Committee on the District of Columbia
38	1947–1948	Committee on the District of Columbia (suite included S–212)
P–38	1948–1958	Committee on the District of Columbia (suite included S–212)
P–38	1959–1961	Majority Leader (Lyndon B. Johnson) (suite included S–212)

*Lyndon B. Johnson elected to the vice presidency in November 1960.*

P–38	1961–1965	Office of the Vice President (suite included S–212)
S–211	1965–1987	Majority Leader (suite included S–208, S–209, & S–210)

*Designation of S–211 as the “Lyndon Baines Johnson Room”  
S. Res. 80, 97th Congress, 1st Session, 1981.*

S–211	1987–Present	Secretary of the Senate (administers use of the room)
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Photographs courtesy of:

Architect of the Capitol: 2, 7, 8 (top), 9, 10

Library of Congress: 5, 6

Lyndon B. Johnson Library: 16

Mr. Frank Muto: 3

U.S. Senate Historical Office: 1

