



## House Committee on Homeland Security Room

Room 311, Cannon House Office Building

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The Cannon House Office Building was built in 1904–1908 to provide each member of the House of Representatives with an office. It was designed in the Beaux Arts style by Thomas Hastings, a partner in the prominent New York firm of Carrère & Hastings. Prior to working on Capitol Hill, Carrère & Hastings had earned a national reputation by designing the New York Public Library; the Ponce DeLeon Hotel in St. Augustine, Florida; and the Jefferson Hotel in Richmond, Virginia. In creating the Cannon Building and its near-twin for the Senate (now called the Russell Senate Office Building), Carrère & Hastings drew inspiration from the *Garde-Meubles* on the Place de Concord and the Louvre in Paris for the buildings' distinctive 300-foot-long Doric colonnades. Other elements of the design also show the influence of their training at the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris.

While most of the interior of the Cannon Building was devoted to working offices, there are notable examples of high-style design in the public spaces. The rotunda, with its Corinthian peristyle and coffered dome, and the magnificent Caucus Room are elaborate Beaux Arts designs. Somewhat less ornate are the committee rooms, such as room 311. This room is a two-story rectangular space divided into three bays by large piers supporting elliptical arches. Between the arches are groin vaults that are hung from the structural frame and are not, therefore, true masonry vaults like those in the Capitol. The architects desired to convey an impression similar to the interior architecture of the Capitol without incurring the expense and time necessary to build a true masonry vaulted structure.

Classical decorations were used to highlight the coffers in the arches and the entablatures of the piers. Coffers were enriched with plaster rosettes and outlined with leaf moldings. The silver and crystal chandeliers, which hang from plaster medallions, are original to the room, as are the tiered crystal sconces.

The curved-top valences behind the main chair and over each window are also original and were



Room 311 in 2004

This photograph shows the room after the 2003 renovation and redecoration project.



Ways and Means Committee Meeting, 1918

The portrait on the wall depicts Representative Sereno Payne of New York, who was chairman from 1899 to 1911.

designed especially for this committee room. The center crest is composed of an eagle grasping a bundle of arrows in each foot. Each eagle is surmounted by a halo of thirteen metal stars. Leaf, blade, acanthus and flower motifs complete the ornamentation. The large valence behind the rostrum is supported on four poles and stands in front of the door to the adjacent room. This unusual design was adopted to keep drafts from the backs of committee members.

The rostrum is an especially fine piece and consists of flame mahogany panels set below an upper border carved in the Greek key motif. The center panel, with raised crest, has a carved eagle grasping arrows and a branch, and halo of thirteen stars mirroring the motif of the valences. The eagle holds in his beak a ribbon with the words "E Pluribus Unum" and has a shield against his body. The ends of the rostrum sweep downward into gracefully curved scrolls with carved foliage, eagle head, and cartouche. The rostrum sits on a dark

green and white veined Vermont marble base. The rostrum was extended in 1977 to accommodate a growing number of committee members.

Room 311 underwent an extensive redecoration and electronics upgrading in 2003. The leaf moldings that outline the plaster rosettes in the coffers were gilded, and the three bands of ornament on the entablatures were gold-leafed. The chandeliers were cleaned and the medallions from which they hang were highlighted with paint and gold leaf. The drapery design behind the central chair and the treatment of the three windows were inspired by the original drapery as seen in archival photographs. All three valences were cleaned and re-gilded as needed by fine arts conservators. The rostrum was refinished and wired for modern electronic equipment. The chair rail was grained to imitate mahogany, and the walls were repainted using a color scheme selected to complement the room's architecture and new Axminster carpet.





*Peace* in the Naval Affairs Committee Room

This photograph shows Walter L. Dean's painting before its placement in room 311.

Recent upgrades also included a fire-suppression system and smoke detectors.

The redecoration and renovation was a joint effort of the Architect of the Capitol's House Superintendent, Curator, Architectural Historian, and Interior Designer, together with the House Chief Administrative Officer's House Furniture Support Services.

The present room 311 was used by the Ways and Means Committee from the time the building was first opened in 1908 until 1933, when the Committee moved to the new House Office building (now known as the Longworth House Office Building). Now used by the Committee on Homeland Se-

curity, room 311 housed several committees from 1933 until 2005, among them the Committees on Armed Services, Internal Security, Post Office and Civil Service, and Small Business.

### *Peace*

*Peace*, also called *The White Squadron in Boston Harbor* or *Squadron of the Evolution*, was painted by Walter Lofthouse Dean in 1893. The oil-on-canvas painting measures approximately six feet three inches high by nine feet wide. It is prominently signed at the lower left, "Walter L. Dean." The painting depicts a number of warships with furled sails; one dominates the composition with others closer to the horizon. Heavy impasto is used to depict water and a cloud-filled sky. The gilded frame is decorated with burnished ribbons and oak leaves and an inner core of the leaf-and-dart pattern. The painting and frame were conserved in 2003 by the House Curator.

The setting of the painting is Boston Harbor, and the ships are shown performing some of the exercises and maneuvers that they conducted along the eastern seaboard during May through October 1891. *Chicago*, the largest ship, is in the foreground; behind her are the cruisers *Atlanta* and *Boston*, the newly commissioned cruiser *Newark*, and the gunboat *Yorktown*. Also shown are the torpedo ship *Chusing*, the famous racing yacht *America*, and, in the distance, the old sloop-of-war *Wabash* in dry dock. In the background are the Massachusetts State House dome, Bunker Hill Monument, and a section of the East Boston waterfront.

The recently built ships shown in the painting were the nucleus of the "New American Navy." In the years immediately after the Civil War, the nation's once-mighty fleet had been dismantled and reduced to one sixth of its wartime strength, as the government spent less money on the upkeep of wooden ships and concentrated more on strengthening the economy. Although the development of the U.S.S. *Monitor* during the Civil War had fired the imaginations of naval architects,

the United States Government was content to let foreign countries, such as England, France, and Russia, experiment and test steel construction and find ways to improve the speed and ordnance of the new ships. By 1881 the United States had only 31 seaworthy ships and ranked twelfth in quality among the fleets of the world.

A sufficiently powerful incentive to reinvigorate the nation's navy came at last from the private sector. After settling the American frontier, businessmen found lucrative markets overseas, increasing American exports by 200 percent, and lobbied for a strong naval presence to protect American interests. President Rutherford B. Hayes pleaded with Congress for a larger navy.

Finally, on March 3, 1883, Congress passed the Naval Act of 1883, which appropriated \$1.3 million for the construction of three twin-screw, steel-hulled, steam-powered, protected cruisers (U.S.S. *Atlanta*, *Boston*, and *Chicago*) and the dispatch vessel or gunboat *Dolphin*. This work required that American steel mills develop new abilities, for they had no experience in rolling large sheets of steel and had never forged the metal for heavy guns.

To show off America's new fleet, Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Tracy organized the "Squadron of Evolution" on September 30, 1889. Its goals were to demonstrate the rapid maneuvering of the ships from a line to a column and to test and refine tactical concepts. It would capture the imagination of the world as the famed "White Squadron" because, during this time of peace, the ships were painted white down to their hull lines.

The three cruisers and the gunboat *Yorktown* sailed to Europe in December 1889, stopping at Lisbon and ports in Spain, Morocco, France, Italy, Greece, and Malta before paying a friendship visit to the Republic of Brazil and returning to New York on July 25, 1890. Secretary Tracy noted in his Annual Report of 1891 that the Squadron of Evolution was a "useful experience" in training

the navy's commanding, navigation, and watch officers in skillfully and safely maneuvering vessels in formation and in restricted waters. In addition, engineers received training in regulating and maintaining economical coal consumption.

Dean's painting was widely exhibited, including a stint at the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893, before coming to the Capitol in 1900. The artist died in 1912, but not until 1928 did the Joint Committee on the Library authorize its purchase from his heirs for \$5,000. Appropriately, the painting was placed in the room of the House Committee on Naval Affairs, which in 1900 occupied the room now known as H-219. The committee moved in 1901 to H-227 and H-228; in December 1919, it moved to the Cannon House Office Building. The painting remained with the committee over subsequent relocations; it finally arrived in present-day room 311, where it has remained.

Walter Lofthouse Dean was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, in 1854. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before entering the Boston Art School. He then became an art instructor at Indiana's Purdue University but missed the ocean and after three years returned to Boston. In 1882, he went to Paris and studied with Lefebvre, Boulanger, and Oudinot. He traveled and spent much time on the water, painting in Brittany, Holland, France, Italy, and England. Upon returning to Boston, he established studios in that city and in Gloucester to paint fishing and harbor scenes, sometimes from his boat. He grew to be regarded as one of the leading American marine painters. He exhibited regularly with the Boston Art Club Show and the National Academy of Design. Among the awards he received was a medal at the St. Louis World Exposition in 1904. He died at his home in 1912.

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