CRS Report for Congress

Architects of the Capitol: Selected Biographical Information

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Summary

Prior to 1989, the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) was appointed by the President for an unlimited term without any direct action by the Senate. A provision in the FY1990 Legislative Branch Appropriations Act (P.L. 101-163) altered this selection procedure, requiring the President to nominate the AOC for a 10-year term, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate. Presently, a search is underway for a new Architect to replace Alan Hantman, FAIA, who left office on February 4, 2007. For additional information, please refer to CRS Report RL32820, *Architect of the Capitol: Appointment, Duties, and Operations,* by Mildred Amer.

With the enactment of P.L. 101-163, 103 Stat. 1068, the AOC is now required to be appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for a 10-year term. Previous Architects were appointed by the President, without mandated congressional participation, for an unspecified term. The 1989 act also created a bicameral congressional advisory commission to recommend to the President at least three candidates for the AOC post.[1]

The retirement of Alan Hantman, FAIA, the AOC from 1997-2007, set in motion the search for his replacement. Press accounts have indicated that the search process has begun, but no formal announcements have been made.[2] Published accounts have also indicated individuals in and out of Congress have urged that only a licensed architect

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[1] The advisory commission is composed of the Speaker of the House, the President pro tempore of the Senate, and the majority and minority leaders of both houses, as well as the chairs and ranking members of the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration, Committee on House Administration, and House and Senate Committees on Appropriations. The Appropriations Committee members were added to the commission in 1995 by P.L. 104-19, 109 Stat. 220.

[2] John McArdle, "Finalist for AOC's Top Job Delivered to President Bush," *Roll Call*, Aug. 13, 2007, pp. 3, 35.

should serve in the position, or someone who is not only a licensed architect but also has a strong construction management background.[3]

The ten previous Architects came from varied backgrounds.[4] Some had formal architectural training, others did not. According to the American Institute of Architects (AIA), prior to 1857, anyone who wished to call himself or herself an architect could do so.[5] No schools of architecture or architectural licensing laws existed to shape the profession. For example, William Thornton, Benjamin Latrobe, and Charles Bulfinch served as Architects of the Capitol during an era when the profession of "architect" was undefined. Modern observers would most likely consider them to have been architects.

Accordingly, this report describes the backgrounds of the 10 previous Architects of the Capitol, seven of whom would appear to have been considered to be architects.

William Thornton (1793), the first so-called Architect of the Capitol, was trained as a physician, but rarely practiced his profession. He was a self-taught architect, who studied drawing and mechanics.[6] He won the competition for the design of the U.S. Capitol in 1793.

Benjamin Latrobe (1803-1811, 1815-1817) studied engineering and later worked in the London office of an architect before coming to the United States, where he was considered the country's first professional architect and engineer.[7]

Charles Bulfinch (1818-1829) was among the first American-born architects and was self-trained through books and a European tour arranged by Thomas Jefferson.[8]

Thomas Walter (1851-1865) studied masonry, mathematics, physical science, and the fine arts before studying in the office of Philadelphia architect William Strickland.

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[3] John McArdle, "AIA Critical of Architect Search Process," *Roll Call*, May 15, 2007, pp. 3, 22; Reps. Earl Blumenauer and Phil English, "Architect Should be Selected for AOC Position" (editorial), *Roll Call*, June 5, 2007, p. 4; and John McArdle, "More Problems Prompt Effort to Revamp AOC," *Roll Call*, Aug. 2, 2007, pp. 3, 24.

[4] The term Architect of the Capitol also refers to some of the early occupants of the office who were also known as Commissioner, Surveyor of Public Buildings, or Superintendent of the Capitol. For more information, see William Allen, *History of the United States Capitol* (Washington: GPO, 2001), pp. 27, 50-51, 398, and 400-401.

[5] American Institute of Architects, "History of the American Institute of Architects," [http://www.aia.org/about2_template.cfm?pagename=about_history], visited May 31, 2007.

[6] Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/architects/thornton.cfm], visited May 28, 2007, and Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* pp. 20-27.

[7] Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/architects/latrobe.cfm].

[8] Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* p. 126, and Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/architects/bulfinch.cfm].

Walter began practicing architecture in 1830 and was one of the founders of the American Institute of Architects in 1857.[9]

Edward Clark (1865-1902) was a student of and an assistant to his predecessor, Thomas Walter, and studied freehand, engineering, and mechanical drawing. Clark, "one of the most prominent members of his profession," was a fellow at the AIA.[10] In his book, *History of the Unites States Capitol*, historian William C. Allen described Clark as "being more comfortable attending to administrative details than solving design challenges, which were left to hired consultants."[11]

Elliott Woods (1902-1923) was not an architect by training, but he had worked in the office of his predecessor for 17 years and had worked as the architect on several public buildings in Washington.[12] Known for his work in X-ray, radio, and telegraphy, Woods was an honorary member of the AIA.[13] This distinction, earned because of his many successful architectural projects,[14] ended the "ill will that once existed between the superintendent [architect] and the Institute," which had tried to influence the appointment of someone other than Woods to the architect position when it was vacant in 1902.[15]

David Lynn (1923-1954) was also an honorary member of AIA. He had worked in the office of the Architect of the Capitol for 20 years and had begun his career as a laborer. He worked his way to the top in various other jobs such as a cleaning staff foreman, watchman, and civil engineer before becoming the assistant to his predecessor, Elliott Woods.[16]

J. George Stewart (1954-1970) was a civil engineer and a former Member of the House from Delaware. He was a professional engineer and the president of a general construction company.[17]

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[9] Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/architects/walter.cfm].

[10] "Edward Clark Dead," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 7, 1902, p. 10, and "Chapter Notes, *The American Institute of Architects Quarterly Bulletin*, vol. 3, April 1902, pp 17-18. Only those individuals who are professional architects can be fellows and members of the AIA.

[11] Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* p. 338.

[12] Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/architects/woods.cfm].

[13] Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* p. 398, and U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Printing, *The Capitol*, H. Doc. 96-374, 96th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: GPO, 1981), p. 58.

[14] In a May 25, 2007, telephone conversation, Michelle Jones, a resource manager at the AIA, explained that the honorary title is given in recognition of the architectural accomplishments of individuals who are not architects.

[15] Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* pp. 376-377, 398. At that time, the Architect of the Capitol was known at the Superintendent of the Capitol until the old title, Architect of the Capitol, was restored in 1921.

[16] Ibid, p. 399.

[17] Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/

George White (1971-1995) holds degrees in electrical engineering, business, and law. He is a registered architect and engineer as well as a Fellow of the AIA.[18]

Alan Hantman (1997-2007) has degrees in architecture and urban planning, and is also a Fellow of the AIA.[19] His name was on a list of "suitable" candidates provided by the AIA to replace George White when White retired in 1995.[20]

In summary, seven of the 10 men, prior to their appointment as Architect of the Capitol, would appear to have been either considered an architect prior to the formal definition of the field as a profession, or formally trained as architects once the profession was defined. Two others among the 10 men — Woods and Lynn — were honorary members of the American Institute of Architects. The "honorary" distinction would appear to indicate a judgment by the AIA that the two were not initially trained as architects. Another of the ten men — Stewart — appears to have been trained as a civil engineer.

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[17] (...continued)
achitects/stewart.cfm].

[18] Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/architects/white.cfm], and Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* p. 440.

[19] Architect of the Capitol, "The Architects of the Capitol Since 1793," [http://www.aoc.gov/aoc/architects/hantman.cfm], visited May 29, 2007, and Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* p. 460.

[20] Allen, *History of the United States Capitol,* p. 460.