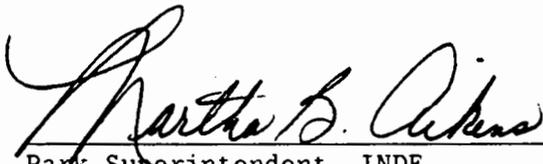


FURNISHING PLAN
FOR THE
FIRST FLOOR OF CONGRESS HALL
INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

Supplement 1

A Study of the
Historic Philip Van Cortlandt Seating Plan

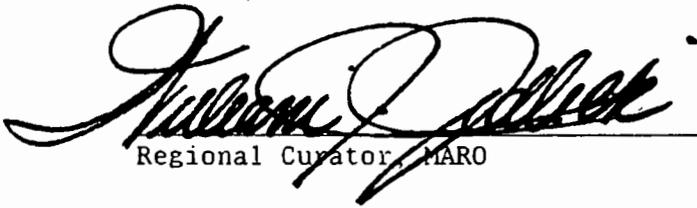
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Park Superintendent, INDE

9/22/92

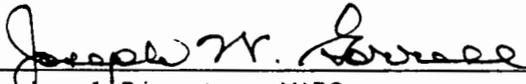
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Regional Curator, MARO

9/22/92

Date



Regional Director, MARO

9/23/92

Date

**FURNISHING PLAN
FOR THE
FIRST FLOOR OF CONGRESS HALL
INDEPENDENCE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**

Supplement 1

**A Study of the
Historic Philip Van Cortlandt Seating Plan
and its Impact on the
Refurnishing of the
House of Representatives Chamber**

**Karie Diethorn, Associate Curator
Architectural Analysis by John Bacon, FINHP Museum Intern
Independence National Historical Park
September, 1992**

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List of House Members and Their Seats on the Van Cortlandt Plan in Jacob Judd, ed., Correspondence of the Van Cortlandt Family, 1977.

The search for physical and documentary evidence of the past and its use to interpret history provide a variety of opportunities for scholars. For each historic room, documentation combines many ideas generated over time. As a result, the meaning of any furnished historic room changes in response to the reassessment of existing data, as well as to the discovery of new information. Central to this process is the idea that all historic evidence must be considered, and that the study of this evidence should propose theories about that evidence and its interrelatedness.

In this way, the National Park Service's evaluation of the restored House of Representatives chamber in Philadelphia's Congress Hall presents several conclusions about the historic evidence pertaining to the eighteenth-century appearance of the members' desks. The current House furnishings plan, prepared in 1961, recommends that the reconstructed desks form three concentric semicircles bisected by a single, central aisle (see Illustration 1).¹ This theory was based on the absence of any known original Congress Hall desks and on a small collection of surviving contemporary descriptions of the seating arrangement.

Subsequent to the implementation of the 1961 furnishing plan for the House chamber, additional evidence bearing directly on the configuration of the members' desks came to light. This material, a diagram drawn by Philip Van Cortlandt (who served in Congress from 1793 to 1809), shows the chamber as a seating chart and identifies each member's desk with his name. The members' desks in the Van Cortlandt plan, like those currently in place in the restored chamber, are arranged in three concentric rows with a central aisle separating

¹Furnishing Plan for the First Floor of Congress Hall (INDE, March 1961), Part D, Section III, pp. 15-23. Hereafter cited as 1961 Furnishing Plan.

one half of the room from the other (see Illustration 4). However, the shape of Van Cortlandt's seating arrangement and the additional division of it by side aisles differ markedly from the reconstructed arrangement now exhibited in Congress Hall.

These differences define the impact of the Van Cortlandt plan upon the National Park Service's presentation of the historic House chamber. In order to evaluate the Van Cortlandt plan's significance for the interpretation of this room, it was compared to the historic evidence used to formulate the 1961 reconstruction of the members' seating. Secondly, the relationship of Van Cortlandt's plan to the physical realities of Congress Hall, as well as the nature of its own context (i.e. date and purpose), was studied as a means of determining the plan's plausibility.

The historic evidence used in the 1961 Furnishing Plan to reconstruct the House chamber contains no clear picture of the room's appearance during the 1790s. Period accounts of the chamber loosely describe the nature of the House seating arrangement as semicircular.² Typical of the ambiguity in eyewitness accounts of the chamber is the following, written by Englishman Henry Wansey in 1794: "The seats in three rows formed semi-circles behind each other, facing the Speaker, who was in a kind of pulpit near the centre of the radii" In

² The contemporary descriptions are: "oval form" in Columbian Centinel 23 May 1793; "three parallel semielliptick rows" in Nicholas King, "Journal of Observations & Occurrences in a Voyage from England to America in the Year 1793," typescript in the Huntington Library; "3 rows of desks, rising one above the other in the form of a semi-circle" in Theophilus Bradbury to Harriet Bradbury, 26 December 1795 reprinted in Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography 8 (1884): 226; "Four rows of chairs placed in a semi-circle" in Metchie J.E. Budka, ed., Under Their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through America in 1797-1799 . . . by Julian Niemcewicz (Elizabeth, NJ: The Grassman Publishing Company, Inc., 1965), p.42 hereafter listed as Budka, Niemcewicz.

³David John Jeremy, ed., Henry Wansey and His American Journal, 1794 (Philadelphia, PA: American Philosophical Society, 1970), p. 96.

addition, unlike the Van Cortlandt plan, these rather generalized descriptions of the seating's shape lacks any mention of aisles in the members' seating.

Pictorial evidence of the House chamber's appearance, also discovered during the 1961 restoration, presents problems in its depiction of the room. Two contemporary cartoons, which illustrate the 1798 fist fight between Representatives Matthew Lyon and Roger Griswold in the House chamber, show the House desks in semicircular, continuous rows (see Illustrations 2 and 3). Used in conjunction with the contemporary accounts of the House chamber, the cartoons provided some broad direction for the 1961 restoration (e.g. the nature of the ingrain carpeting used in the room, window hangings, tiered arrangements of desks, and elevation of the Speaker's dais).⁴ However, both cartoons are highly suspect in their accuracy as some details contradict established fact (e.g. the orientation of the members' seating compared to the windows that is known through surviving architectural evidence, and the type of chairs used in the chamber, several of which have survived to the present day).

Research for the 1961 restoration also included a study of the limited evidence pertaining to the House seating in Congress' previous home, New York City's Federal Hall. Congress convened there from March of 1789 (its initial session) until the summer of 1790.⁵ Two of the desks used by Congress in Federal Hall, survive at the New-York Historical Society. In 1961, former INDE Curator Frederick Hanson prepared measured drawings of these desks and extrapolated from them plausible dimensions and a conjectural shape for the three

⁴See 1961 Furnishing Plan, Part D, Section III, pp. 1, 4, 10, 16-17, 40.

⁵Philadelphia then became the capital for the next decade while the new federal city (later, Washington) on the Potomac River was under development. Philadelphia had been selected as the interim capital because it was located halfway between the northern and southern sections of the country.

rows mentioned in 1794 by Wansey as being in Philadelphia's Congress Hall.⁶ However, it is not known how the original desks were arranged in the Federal Hall chamber, except that they formed two semicircular rows.⁷ Period descriptions of this chamber mention no aisles, and there are no known contemporary illustrations of the room.⁸

Together, the elements of written, pictorial, and artifactual evidence used to restore Congress Hall in 1961 form a loose framework upon which to reconstruct the members' seating arrangement. The discovery of the Van Cortlandt plan, however, requires a reevaluation of that 1961 reconstruction and a reinterpretation of the evidence used to develop it. That reinterpretation is based upon the image created by Van Cortlandt's careful observation and precise delineation of detail.

In his preparation of the plan, Van Cortlandt paid considerable attention

⁶1961 Furnishing Plan, Part D, Section III, pp. 17-19.

⁷"'at the north end is the President's [i.e. Speaker's] chair, with a very large table, projecting into the center of the room, around which are the seats for the 59 Representatives'" in The New-York Journal, 26 March 1789 and "'the chairs for the members are ranged semicircularly in two rows'" in Massachusetts Magazine, June 1789 both quoted in Louis Torres, "Federal Hall Revisited," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, 29 (December 1970): 329.

⁸Torres, p. 328. In addition, Gilbert Vincent states that "In Federal Hall, both the Senate and the House of Representatives were laid out with semi-circular rows of desks," see his "'Bold, Simple and Regular': French-inspired Neoclassicism in Federal Hall", Art & Auction 11 (April 1989): 124. Vincent advised the National Park Service on the content of its recent exhibit which illustrates the early history of Federal Hall. Former INDE Associate Curator Anne Verplanck also discussed the structure of the desks with Wendy Kaplan, author of the 1988 National Endowment for the Humanities grant proposed to develop the Federal Hall Project (an exhibit of objects associated with Federal Hall, not a refurnishing of the building), who had no further data to add to Vincent's conclusions.

to the technique of drawing.⁹ The recto of the paper shows a pencilled grid drawn with a straight edge prior to sketching in or measuring the lines of the plan in ink (see Illustration 4). The plan's upper left and upper right corners contain precise blocks delineated by pencil lines; in those corners, the columns of desks (where a column equals three desks placed one behind the other, e.g. "I. Smith", "Blount", and "Madison" in the upper left) are all the same size. In the lower corners and middle of the drawing, the rows of desks are curved, giving the overall seating arrangement a U shape.

In addition to the precisely drawn U-shaped rows of desks, Van Cortlandt's plan depicts side aisles, an element not included in previous descriptions of the House chamber. On the plan's left, the bottom column of desks (that marked "U. Tracy", "Harrison", and "Nicholas") is bordered by a pencil line and then by an empty column of desks not traced in ink. There follows an unmarked space of the same width and length as a column of desks, and then a pencil line indicating the outer edge of the center left section of desks. This structure is repeated on the right side of the drawing, except that Van Cortlandt extended the ink line denoting the front of the first row of desks down through the unmarked space, thereby joining the upper and center right seating sections. Most significantly, he crossed out this ink line that links the upper and center right sections, presumably to indicate that he had mistakenly closed off that end of the space. There are no pencil lines underneath this cross-out ink line, confirming that Van

⁹During his youth, Van Cortlandt trained as a surveyor with an employee on his father's estate near Croton, New York. Van Cortlandt's sepia ink drawing of the House is on laid paper that measures 18 1/16 inches wide by 14 5/16 inches long from which there is a 4 inch square fragment missing from the bottom left corner. No marks appear on the lower third of the paper, therefore it is assumed that the missing fragment has no significant value. On the reverse of the paper, Van Cortlandt wrote only "Congress Hall" and "Philadelphia". The plan is part of the Van Cortlandt family papers in the collections of the New York Public Library.

Cortlandt fully intended the area to remain blank when he first drew in the pencil grid that guided his subsequent ink lines.

The exactness of Van Cortlandt's drawing method strongly suggests that his plan was intended to be an accurate depiction of the room, and not a fanciful sketch. Therefore, its presentation of a U-shaped seating arrangement in which the left and right sections are separated from the center by unmarked, open-ended spaces that resemble side aisles must be intentional.

A U-shaped configuration with side aisles was not considered during the 1961 reconstruction because, at that time, the Van Cortlandt plan was not known and none of the surviving evidence suggested such an arrangement. National Park Service staff interpreted literally the known period references to the room and, as a result, installed a semicircular seating arrangement. Now, with the Van Cortlandt plan in mind, contemporary terms like "semi-circular", "semieliptik", and "oval" (as used to describe the House seating) project a different meaning. Though inexact, these descriptions apply well to a U-shaped plan such as that depicted by Van Cortlandt. Certainly, Wansey's 1794 account of "radii" may refer (in accordance with the true definition of radii as those lines extending from the center of a circle to its outer edge) to center and side aisles like those on the Van Cortlandt plan. Here, the two bodies of evidence complement, rather than contradict, one another as they contain varying views of the same reality.

The applicability of Van Cortlandt's plan to other eighteenth-century accounts of the House chamber is reinforced by additional historical evidence pertaining to the room. The physical characteristics of Congress Hall, itself, present a valuable source of data for checking the plausibility of Van Cortlandt's work.

When Philadelphia's Congress Hall was finished in 1790, the House chamber

sat sixty-four members (excluding the Speaker). Local cabinetmaker Thomas Affleck designed the furnishings for the House after he returned from New York, where he studied the desks previously used by the Congressmen in Federal Hall.¹⁰ By 1793, House membership (one-hundred and six, excluding the Speaker) had surpassed the capacity of the Congress Hall chamber. To meet this need, carpenters expanded the building to the south by twenty-six feet, and Affleck redesigned the House seating arrangement.¹¹ He moved the Speaker's dais from the chamber's south end to its west side, and reoriented the members' desks to face the dais.¹² The historical records of these construction projects and the surviving eighteenth-century furniture and building evidence in Congress Hall

¹⁰In 1961, Frederick Hanson studied the Affleck receipts and the surviving Federal Hall desks, but was unaware that Affleck had visited Federal Hall and examined the desks there. Since then, former INDE Associate Curator Anne Verplanck discovered the documentation for Affleck's September 1790 trip to Federal Hall and firmly established the immediate connection between the Federal Hall furniture and that made by Affleck for Congress Hall.

For documentation of Affleck's New York trip, see: Miers Fisher to Tench Coxe, 4 September 1790 ("hearing that Thomas Affleck . . . was going to New York on private Business I have advised him to view the Federal Hall & take drafts of all the Seats, Desks, & other Furniture & Accommodations, to enable him to furnish Plans with more Accuracy . . .") and Thomas Affleck to Tench Coxe, 16 September 1790 ("Engaged me to make the Furniture nearly on the same plan with that at N York City . . ."), Tench Coxe Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; see also Tench Coxe to Richard Varick [Mayor of New York], 7 September 1790 ("Affleck . . . to make a similar arrangement of seats, tables, and other accommodations for the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the Representatives & the Members of the two bodies . . ."), Pierpont Morgan Library. Complete transcripts of these letters are on file in the Museum Office of Independence Park.

¹¹Historic Structures Report on Congress Hall, Part I (INDE, May 1959), Chapter II, Section 1, p. 7.

¹²A window on the east wall of the building was replaced by a door to provide this reorientation with passage to the outdoors directly from the Speaker's dais.

provide the basis for an architectural evaluation of the Van Cortlandt plan.¹³

That sufficient floor space existed in the House chamber to accommodate the seating configuration shown in Van Cortlandt's plan is confirmed by historical documentation. Although Van Cortlandt's plan contains no linear measurements, supplemental information is available from other sources. A 1790 preliminary plan of a room for Congress by Miers Fisher (a member of the city committee assigned to furnish Congress' Philadelphia home) recommends a specific row depth, individual desk width, and central aisle width for a proposed House seating arrangement (see Illustration 5).¹⁴ The Fisher plan suggests that two feet be allotted to each member for the width of his chair. The plan also recommends three feet and three inches for the area between the rows of desks in which the members could sit and/or move around. Surviving Congress Hall arm chairs (in the Independence collection) measure two feet in width and the Federal Hall desks (at the New-York Historical Society) are fourteen inches deep. Therefore, four feet and approximately six inches were required for the depth of each row of Congress Hall desks. Based on these computations, there exists enough room in the House chamber (which is forty-seven feet wide and fifty-eight feet long excluding the eight foot bay) for all the desks, the central and the side aisles included in Van Cortlandt's drawing (provided that the width of each side aisle was no

¹³The following architectural analysis was performed by John Bacon during his 1990-1 Friends of Independence National Historical Park curatorial internship.

¹⁴ "Plan of the City Hall of Philadelphia" [September 1790], Miers Fisher Papers 1775-1814, folder labeled "Philadelphia Council 1789-1790 (In regard to Securing Philadelphia as the U.S. Capital)", Historical Society of Pennsylvania. There is another copy of this plan, in the Etting Collection, Box 19, Folder 1, HSP (thanks to INDE Acting Chief of Museum Operations Doris Fanelli for this Etting reference). Fisher drew his plan as an alternate to one, now unknown, presented by his committee to the Philadelphia City Council. For a discussion of Fisher's plan, see Lee Nelson, Historic Structures Report Part 1, Supplement 1 on Old City Hall: Architectural Data Section (INDE, May 1961), pp. 5-7.

greater than that of the central aisle).

When the scaled (in the sense that it is based on the measurements discussed above) Van Cortlandt drawing is superimposed onto the floor plan of Congress Hall, the proposed elements of the drawing can be compared with the actual features of the restored chamber. Both the drawing and the architectural evidence place the Speaker's dais on the room's west side with a central aisle leading from the dais to the east entrance. Thus, the side aisles shown on Van Cortlandt's plan run from north to south. This places the side aisles on or near the pre-1793 central aisle (when the Speaker's dais stood at the south end of the original building).

It is further evident that, although he used no compass, Van Cortlandt clearly depicted curved sections in his seating plan. The carefully marked spaces near and on the curved portion of the innermost row on the lower right side of the drawing (from the point marked as "D. Foster" to that just beyond "J^o Heath") indicate that this portion of seating formed a quarter circle (see Illustration 4). When this arced bank of desks is drawn to scale (according to the measurements specified above) and placed in the chamber's northeast quadrant (formed by the intersection of the east-west central and the north-south side aisles), it may be used as a reference point for positioning the remaining desks of the Van Cortlandt plan within Congress Hall's House chamber (see Illustration 6).

As a scaled drawing, the Van Cortlandt seating plan accommodates the architectural components of the restored chamber. The plan's U-shaped seating arrangement clears the fireplace hearths located on the chamber's east wall and

leaves sufficient space for the Speaker's dais on the west side.¹⁵ Seats for at least one-hundred and ten members fit within the area bounded by the original columns that now support the mezzanine's public gallery. These columns are particularly significant in defining the architectural feasibility of the Van Cortlandt plan.

In 1790, two pairs of columns stood in the first floor House chamber. They were located in the northern and southern ends of the chamber where they supported two east-west second floor girders. The southern pair of columns stood in the midst of the area designated for members' seating, forcing Thomas Affleck to build his desks around them (see Illustration 7). When the public gallery was added to the chamber during the 1793 Congress Hall renovation, the northern pair of columns was incorporated into it. The southern pair, however, was eliminated because the system of second floor girders had changed. This removal left gaps in the banks of desks that had surrounded the southern columns.

These gaps provide a point of comparison with the Van Cortlandt plan and help to establish the plan's accuracy as a depiction of the true conditions in the House chamber. On the plan (see Illustration 4), the line that represents the back of the outermost row of desks is broken in five places. Three of these are clearly intended as aisle openings. The other two may be the gaps left by the removal of the pair of 1790 columns. A reconstructed scenario of the renovation, then, features Thomas Affleck simply refitting the 1790 desks for use in 1793. Plausibly, he left untouched the section of 1790 desks in the northeast corner of the chamber (Illustration 7, lower right), and simply moved the section

¹⁵A contemporary reported that there was a "narrow passageway between the wall of the House and the Speaker's chair [i.e. dais]," in the Philadelphia Aurora, 23 February 1798. Within this space, at various times during the 1790s, there was also seating for the press. See contemporary accounts quoted in 1961 Furnishing Plan, Part D, Section III, p. 25.

of 1790 desks from the northwest corner (Illustration 7, upper right) counterclockwise to the southeast corner. The gaps left by the now-removed 1790 columns remained, possibly as a means of access to the back rows of the 1793 members' seats.

This theory of reuse is supported by the lack of vouchers for the building of enough new desks to seat the entire 1793 House membership (i.e. one-hundred and six, excluding the Speaker). Affleck, instead, charged for only eighty feet of mahogany desks with drawers.¹⁶ Based on the 1790 Miers Fisher plan's recommended measurement of around two feet per desk, this bill suggests that Affleck built at least forty new desks in 1793. These may be the very forty-one desks depicted by Van Cortlandt in the upper right and left corners of his drawing. On Van Cortlandt's plan, these desks appear to be assembled in straight rows, without any curved sections. In addition to new desks, Affleck constructed forty-four new arm chairs for the House in 1793. There were forty-one more members of the House in 1793 than there were in 1790.

The compatibility of the Van Cortlandt plan with the process and results of the 1793 renovation in Congress Hall (like the plan's precision of execution) lends significant credibility to the drawing itself. To augment this material evidence, the context of Van Cortlandt's plan also bears directly on its applicability to the restoration of the House chamber. Although not stated literally on the plan itself, an approximate date for the plan is evident in the

¹⁶On 15 December 1793, £100 was paid to Thomas Affleck for "80 feet mahogany desks with drawers for [Congress] @ 25/". Voucher 193, "Vouchers 1793-4", State Records Office, Pennsylvania State Archives. Affleck also charged a small price for cutting and fitting the old House furniture and for adding to a table. See Ibid, £3 for "cutting and fitting up the old furniture" and Ibid, Voucher 194, for 10 January 1794 when Affleck received a payment of £3.2.6 for "an addition of 2 feet 6 Inches to a Table for Congress @ 25/". Neither of these latter charges may be specifically attached to the arrangements reflected on the Van Cortlandt plan, nor are they inconsistent with them.

aggregate of members whose names are listed there.¹⁷

Van Cortlandt (#44 on the plan, see Illustration 8) first entered the House in March, 1793 and remained there until after Congress left Philadelphia for Washington in the summer of 1800. This seven-year period serves as the earliest potential date span for the plan. The presence of certain other members on the plan's seating chart, however, permit the determination of a narrower time frame for the drawing. During Van Cortlandt's Congressional service in Philadelphia, Frederick A.C. Muhlenberg and Jonathan Dayton alternately served as Speaker. On the plan, Muhlenberg sits as #69. As a result, the Speaker (whose name is not listed on the dais) at the time of the drawing must have been Jonathan Dayton. As a result, the plan could not have been drawn any earlier than 7 December 1795, the opening date of the first session of the Fourth Congress when Dayton was first elected during Van Cortlandt's tenure. All the members of that Congress who first took their seats during the second session of the Fourth Congress (which began on 5 December 1796) are absent from the plan. Therefore, the plan must illustrate those members present during the Fourth Congress' first session which lasted from 7 December 1795 until 1 June 1796.¹⁸

During that first session, all the Representatives were seated by 24 March 1796.¹⁹ Furthermore, because the plan includes Gabriel Duvall as #75, it was

¹⁷All information on members of the Fourth Congress was taken from the Biographical Directory of the United States Congress 1774-1989 (Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1989), pp. 57-59.

¹⁸The plan is associated with the Fourth Congress by the editor of the Van Cortlandt family papers, but no specific date (or purpose) for the plan is suggested by him. See Jacob Judd, ed., Correspondence of the Van Cortlandt Family of Van Cortlandt Manor, 1748-1800 (Tarrytown, NY: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1977), pp. 555-558.

¹⁹Joseph Gales' and William Seaton's, Annals of Congress, the Debates and Proceedings of the Congress of the United States, 1789-1824 (Washington, DC: 1834-56) records the daily business of the House, including the date that each

probably drawn before or shortly after his resignation on 28 March. In addition, Duvall's replacement Richard Sprigg, Jr. (who did not take his seat until 6 May) is not listed on the plan. A third indication that the plan probably reflects the House in late winter or early spring is Van Cortlandt's inclusion of James White as #97. White was absent from Congress from mid January to mid February, when he attended the Tennessee state constitutional convention, but afterwards returned to Philadelphia and resumed his Congressional seat.

Specific absences by members after they were sworn into the House are not recorded in the Annals of Congress for this era. Therefore, Van Cortlandt's omission of six First Session, Fourth Congress members (Fisher Ames, Jeremiah Crabb, Andrew Gregg, Alexander D. Orr, Thomas Sprigg, and Absalom Tatom) from his plan cannot be pinpointed to a day when those men alone were absent.²⁰ The only other member seated during the first session who is not listed on the plan was John Richards (1st term, Pennsylvania) who took his seat on 18 January. Possibly, Richards was seated as #83 where Van Cortlandt listed "Brent", for Richard Brent who was already listed as #62. Number 83 sat next to Samuel

member arrived and was sworn into Congress. During the first session of the Fourth Congress, the last recorded arrival was that of Alexander D. Orr on February 21st. The arrival of only two members, James Gillespie and Thomas Sprigg, is not specifically noted. However, both of these men recorded their votes during a March 24th roll call. Gales and Seaton created the Annals from contemporary newspaper accounts and other sources because no official transcripts of Congressional debates existed at the time. The manuscript "Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States" documents all floor actions (bills introduced, committee work, roll call votes), but not speeches or debates. House administrative business (e.g. member absences) as recorded in the Annals is identical to that recorded in the "Journal".

²⁰According to the Annals, Fisher Ames took his seat on 9 February 1796, Jeremiah Crabb on 8 January, Andrew Gregg on 28 December 1795, Alexander D. Orr on 24 February 1796, Thomas Sprigg before 24 March, and Absalom Tatom on 7 December 1795. Sprigg may have arrived as early as 5 January; his swearing-in could have been part of the activities recorded on that day as "After disposing of the morning business" see Annals, 4th Congress, column 210.

Sitgreaves #82 (1st term, Pennsylvania) who presented John Richards' petition requesting that the seat (won by Richards' opponent, James Morris, who then died suddenly) be confirmed as Richards'. This fact and the similarity between the names "John Richards" and "Richard Brent" probably explain the reason for Van Cortlandt's two errors in identifying seats.

Based on the service records of the House members listed on it, late winter or early spring of 1796 appears to be the probable time for the creation of the Van Cortlandt plan. But, the purpose for the plan still remains unclear.

In terms of the plan's use to Van Cortlandt, the overall arrangement of the membership included in it reflects no obvious political (Federalist/anti-Federalist) or personal (family/geographic/religious/lodging) associations among the Representatives. On this point, a visitor to the House remarked in 1797 that, "They do not sit according to states but pell-mell" Furthermore, until 1845, the members drew lots for their seat assignments at the beginning of each session.²¹ However, although the order of the seats was not readily

²¹For the 1797 observation, see Budka, Niemcewicz, p. 42. By way of contrast to the House's method of seating, William Maclay proposed in 1789 that his fellow Senators, "shall immediately take their seats in circular order, those from New Hampshire occupying the right of the [Vice President's] chair, and those of Georgia the left." "William Maclay's Proposed Senate Rules" in Kenneth R. Bowling and Helen E. Veit, eds., The Diary of William Maclay and Other Notes on Senate Debates, March 4, 1789-March 3, 1791 (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), p. 403. On the drawing of lots, see George B. Galloway, History of the House of Representatives (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961), p.48.

Despite their custom of drawing lots for seat assignments (a procedure designed to equalize the process of seating), there appears in the Van Cortlandt plan the suggestion that deference to a colleague's length of Congressional service may have played some part in the selection of members' seats. On the plan, thirteen of the nineteen 4th term (i.e. most senior) members are seated in the center and in the right sections of the first and second rows. These center seats are directly in front of the Speaker; the seats on the right, while within the Speaker's direct line of vision, are not as advantageous unless their proximity to the visitors' area outside the bar was considered important. Other senior members apparently chose their seats based on personal preference. Perhaps, for example, 4th term Representative James Madison sat on the far left

apparent to outsiders and the members' seats were randomly chosen by lot, the seating arrangement remained constant throughout each session.²² Ultimately, however, the seating pattern in the chamber changed with each election.

Without an obvious method of arrangement for the House seating, the regular turnover in membership caused by elections and substitutions due to death or resignation presented a potential source of confusion for even the most experienced Congressman. One way to keep track of the members' roster would be to sketch the room arrangement in some detail. During early 1796, apparently, Van Cortlandt found himself in need of a ready reference guide to his colleagues. His plan may represent a means for understanding the personal dynamics in the chamber at that time. The substance of the House's business, then, may hold the key to the plan's purpose.

A search through the Annals of Congress reveals the subjects of debate during the first session of the Fourth Congress. From 2 March until 29 April 1796, the House debated the appropriation of funds for the implementation of Jay's Treaty with Great Britain. These debates focused on the question of the

end of the first row because it was a natural focal point (near the Speaker) in the room that made him conspicuous when he rose to speak. The 3rd (twelve in number) and 2nd (thirty-three in number) term members are distributed throughout the chamber. Both groups are evenly split between the left and right sides of the chamber, with the majority of the former seated in the flank sections and the majority of the latter in the center. The 1st term members (thirty-four in number) are also evenly distributed, but more than half of them sit in the third row. This placement may accord with the 1st termers relative lack of status due to their unproven abilities.

²²For example, the eyewitness testimony to Matthew Lyon's fist fight with Roger Griswold on the floor of the House in early 1798 contains descriptions of the different views each Representative who testified had from his individual seat. Many witnesses named the location of their seats during the fracas as those they "usually occupied" or as "my usual seat". See "Report of Committee of Privileges on the Lyon-Griswold Affair, February 2, 1798 (INDE Catalog Number 2117); The Merchants' Daily Advertiser, 16 February 1798, p. 3; The Aurora, or, General Advertiser, 23 February 1798, pp. 2-3. Thanks to INDE Historian Anna Coxé Toogood for the references to these accounts.

House's Constitutional right to assess a treaty already ratified by the Senate and accepted by the President. This issue was the most controversial political one of that spring; in reference to it Thomas Jefferson remarked that, "All America is a tip-toe to see what the House of Representatives will decide on it."²³ At several times during the debates, supporters and detractors of the Treaty (Federalists and anti-Federalists, respectively) reached nearly equal proportions in the House.²⁴ Van Cortlandt, who favored the Treaty as "the general wish of the people of the northern and eastern states", possibly drew his plan during these debates as a means of keeping track of his colleagues and their opinions on the Treaty.²⁵

In its details, Van Cortlandt's seating plan for the House of Representatives accommodates the wide range of written, oral, artifactual, and architectural evidence associated with the Congress Hall of the 1790s. Prior to the discovery of this plan, the National Park Service concluded from the

²³Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, 21 March 1796 in Thomas Jefferson Randolph, ed., Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies, From the Papers of Thomas Jefferson (Boston: Gray and Bowen, 1830), 3:323.

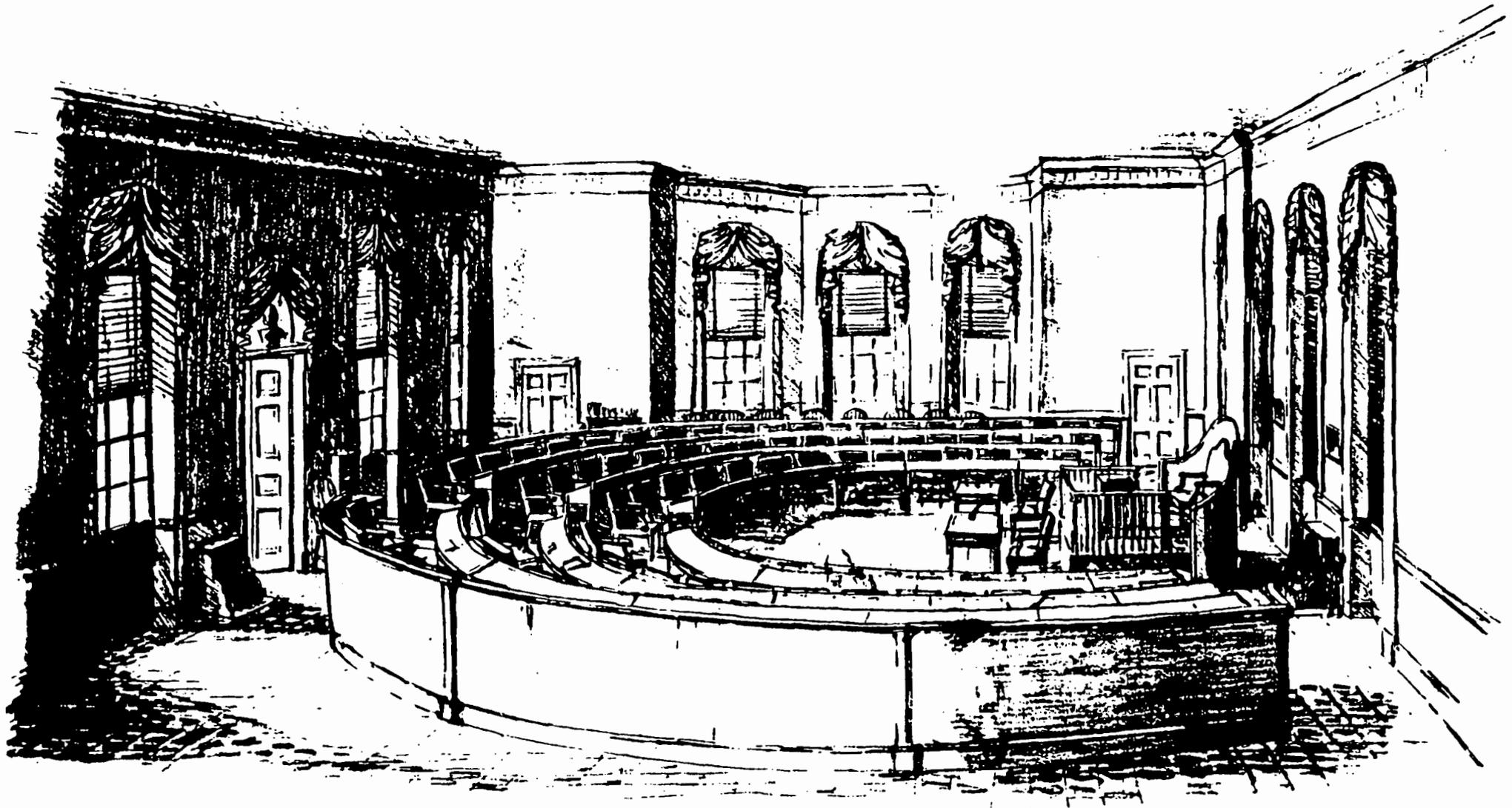
²⁴At one point, Chairman of the Committee of the Whole House Frederick A.C. Muhlenberg broke a forty-nine to forty-nine tie by the Committee in favor of granting the appropriation. A close vote of fifty-one in favor and forty-nine against finally passed the House at the end of April. Roll call votes pertaining to the Treaty were taken on: 24 March (Annals of Congress, columns 759-60), 31 March (columns 768-9), 6 April (column 771), 7 April (columns 782-3), 14 April (columns 974-5), and 29 April (columns 1280, 1289, 1291-2). Other roll call votes recorded during this session pertained to seamen's rights (28 March), a federal loan to the city of Washington (29 March), and naval armaments (3 April).

²⁵Philip Van Cortlandt "to the Citizens of the District, Consisting of West-Chester and Richmond Counties", 20 May 1796. Jacob Judd, ed., Correspondence of the Van Cortlandt Family of Van Cortlandt Manor, 1748-1800 (Tarrytown, NY: Sleepy Hollow Restorations, 1977), p. 569. Van Cortlandt put forth his opinion of the Treaty in this broadside when he campaigned for reelection to the House.

available historical evidence that the seating arrangement in the House of Representatives chamber formed a semicircular block. The reinterpretation of this evidence in the context of the Van Cortlandt plan, however, presents a much more detailed picture of the chamber: one in which a U-shaped seating configuration was clearly divided by side and central aisles. Although such features initially appear to contradict the shape suggested by the other eighteenth-century documentary and material evidence, they actually serve as a refinement of the broad generalizations posed by that other contemporary evidence.

Furthermore, elements of the Van Cortlandt plan suggest aspects of the House not thoroughly addressed by the current installation. The application of the Van Cortlandt plan to a specific time in House history, that of the 1796 debates regarding appropriations for Jay's Treaty, illustrates the close relationship between events and their settings. The process of discussion, argument, and consensus that took place at that pivotal time appears in the Van Cortlandt plan's three-dimensional context as the proponents of each side in the debate take their places in the chamber. As such, the significance of Philip Van Cortlandt's seating plan for the House of Representatives has acquired new meaning over time. Once a probable mnemonic device to assist its creator during a complex political debate, the plan now represents a detailed source of information for the physical restoration of the House chamber in Congress Hall. Ultimately, that revised restoration provides a deeper understanding of the events which occurred there.

Illustration 1 "Perspective View, Restored House Chamber- First Floor Congress Hall" by Frederick Hanson, 1961. Furnishing Plan for the First Floor of Congress Hall, (Independence National Historical Park, March 1961).



PERSPECTIVE VIEW RESTORED HOUSE CHAMBER- FIRST FLOOR CONGRESS HALL • FREDERICK B. HANSON 1961



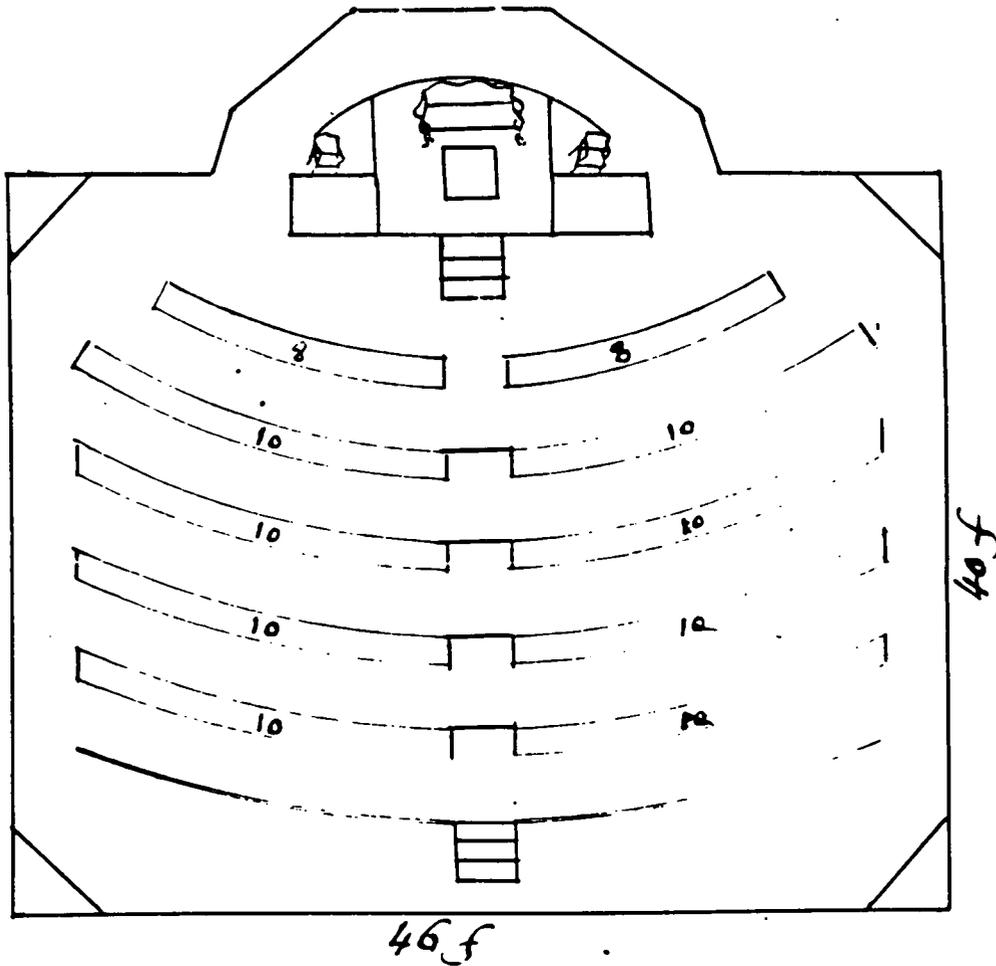
Illustration 2 "Congressional Pugilists . . . Congress Hall in Philada. Feb. 15. 1798" in William Cobbett, House of Wisdom in a Bustle, 1798. Independence National Historical Park, catalog number 6078.

CUDGELING as by late ACT in CONGRESS, USA of 1798.



Illustration 3 "Cudgeling as by late Act in Congress, USA"
1798.

can of the room as it may
 be laid out to contain 96 Chairs for the Repre-
 sentatives of the United States, or in case of need
 by putting the Chairs nearer together 106 - as
 2 f. are allowed for each Chair whereas 20 Inches
 is sufficient.)



NB - A Chimney is proposed for each Corner & sufficient
 space is left to sit round them

A Passage $3\frac{1}{2}$ f wide is left on the sides & behind
 the Speakers Chair to communicate with the Offices in
 the Philosophical Hall by a Door thro the Middle of the
 Bow -

A Passage is left of 3 f between the Desks, from
 the North Door to the Chair -

A Passage of 3 f. 3 In. between each Row of Desks
 for the Members to sit & pass round each other with-
 out disturbances -

Illustration 5 "Plan of the City Hall of Philadelphia as it may be
 laid out . . . for the Representatives of the United States", 1790

DRAWING A
J. BACON - INHP - 9/90
SCALE - 1/4" = 1'0"
Original Drawing)

Illustration 6 Scaled Drawing of the Van Corlandt Plan
Within the Outlines of the 1793 House Chamber, Congress Hall
by John Bacon, 1990. Independence National Historical Park

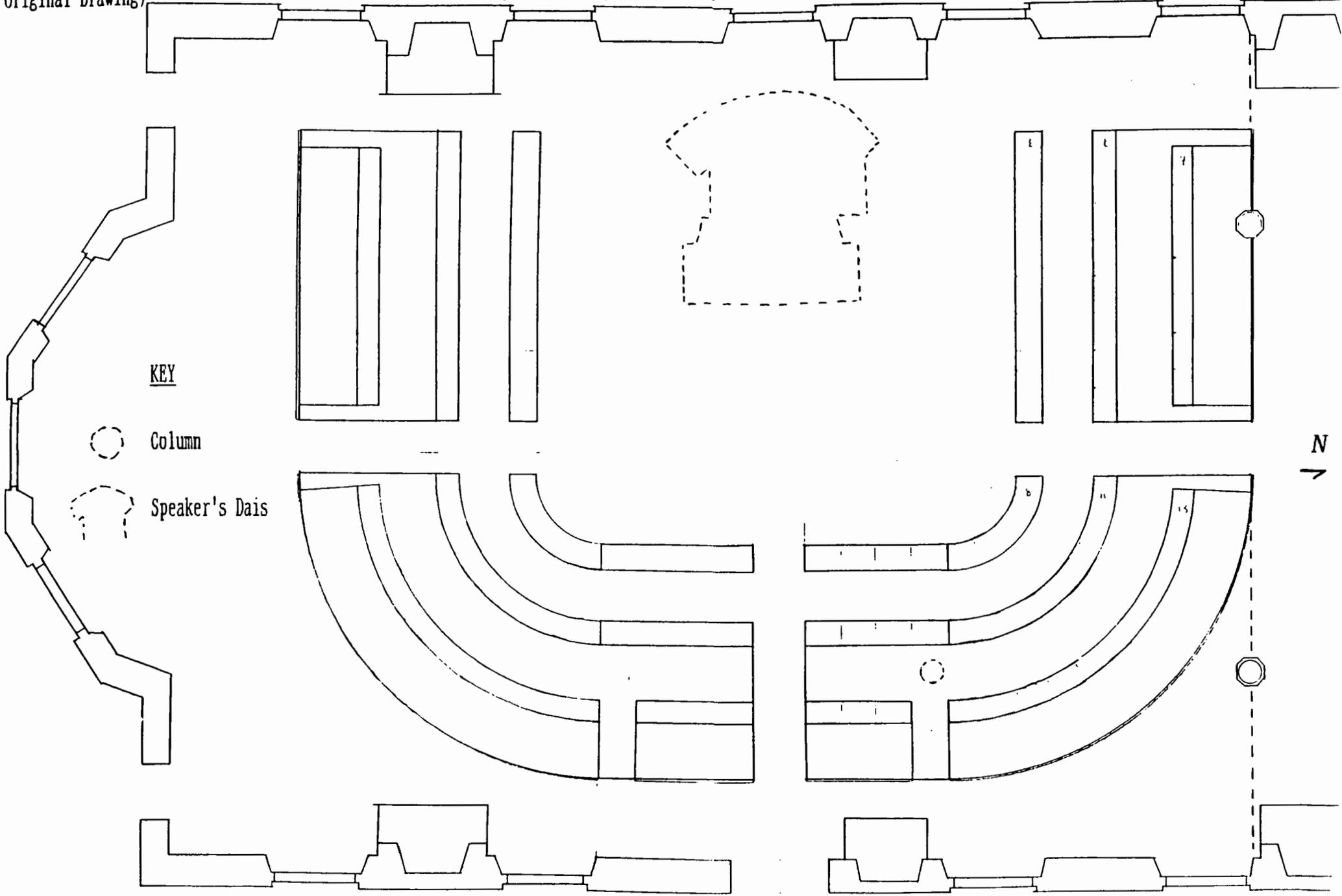
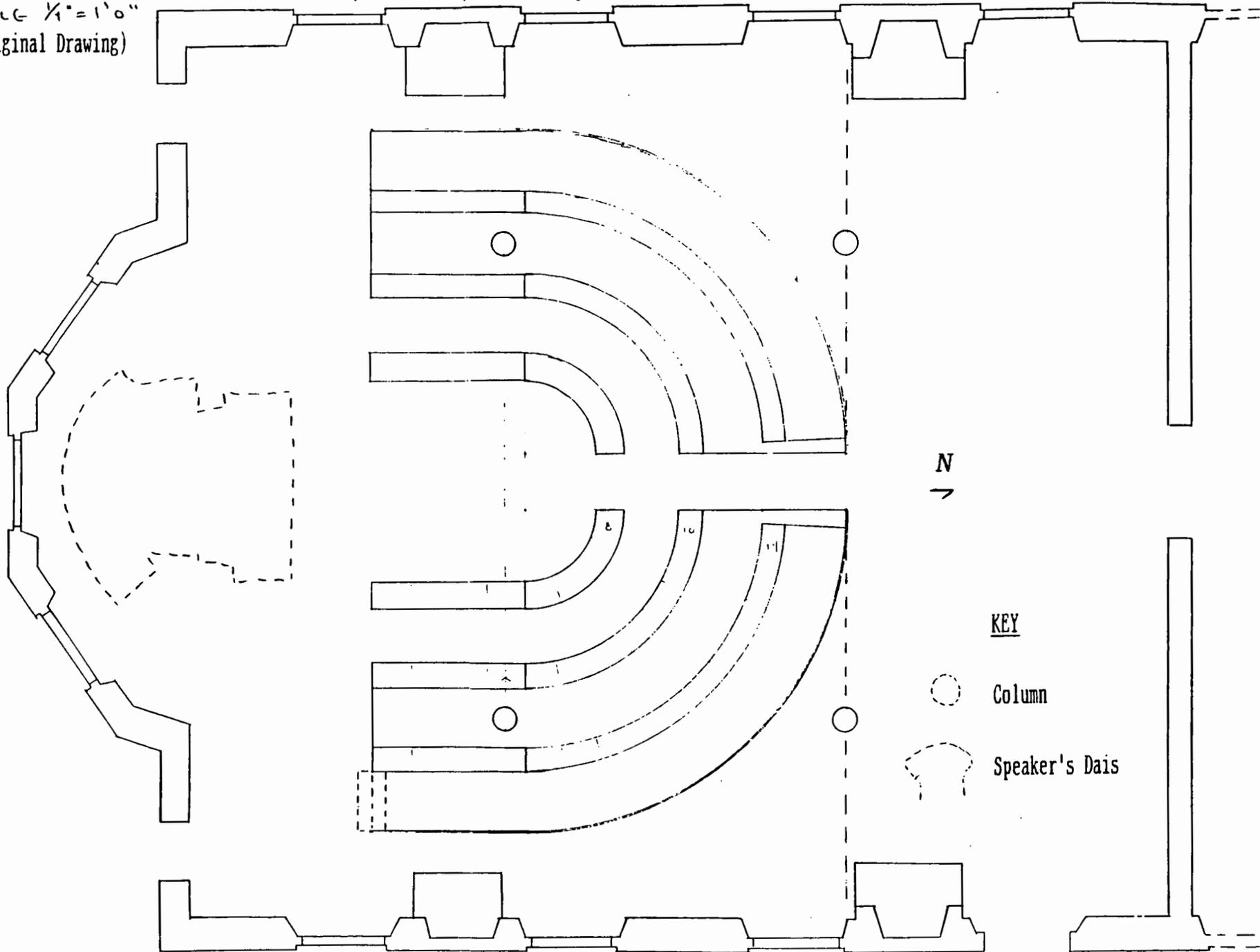


Illustration 7 Scaled Drawing of the Pre-Van Corltandt Plan
Within the Outlines of the 1790 House Chamber, Congress Hall
by John Bacon, 1990. Independence National Historical Park

DRAWING C (H.L. to A)
J. BACON - INHP - 7/90
SCALE 1/4" = 1'0"
(Original Drawing)



SEATING ARRANGEMENT OF
MEMBERS OF FOURTH U. S. CONGRESS, 1795

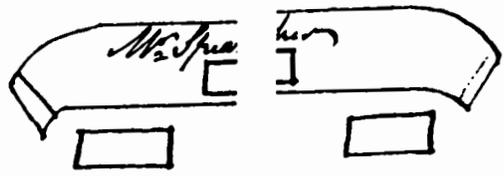
- | | |
|---|--|
| (1.) ISAAC SMITH, <i>New Jersey</i> | (27.) ROBERT RUTHERFORD,
<i>Virginia</i> |
| (2.) AARON KITCHELL, <i>New Jersey</i> | (28.) THOMAS CLAIBORNE,
<i>Virginia</i> |
| (3.) MARK THOMSON, <i>New Jersey</i> | (29.) DANIEL BUCK, <i>Vermont</i> |
| (4.) THOMAS HENDERSON,
<i>New Jersey</i> | (30.) JEREMIAH SMITH,
<i>New Hampshire</i> |
| (5.) JAMES HILLHOUSE,
<i>Connecticut</i> | (31.) THEODORE BAILEY,
<i>New York</i> |
| (6.) SAMUEL LYMAN,
<i>Massachusetts</i> | (32.) JOHN WILLIAMS, <i>New York</i> |
| (7.) URIAH TRACY, <i>Connecticut</i> | (33.) JOHN SWANWICK,
<i>Pennsylvania</i> |
| (8.) JOHN S. SHERBURNE, <i>New
Hampshire</i> | (34.) ANDREW MOORE, <i>Virginia</i> |
| (9.) EZEKIEL GILBERT, <i>New York</i> | (35.) NICHOLAS GILMAN,
<i>New Hampshire</i> |
| (10.) HENRY GLEN, <i>New York</i> | (36.) GEORGE DENT, <i>Maryland</i> |
| (11.) WILLIAM COOPER, <i>New York</i> | (37.) JAMES MADISON, <i>Virginia</i> |
| (12.) JOHN E. VAN ALLEN,
<i>New York</i> | (38.) NATHANIEL MACON,
<i>North Carolina</i> |
| (13.) RICHARD THOMAS,
<i>Pennsylvania</i> | (39.) ZEPHANIAH SWIFT,
<i>Connecticut</i> |
| (14.) WILLIAM LYMAN,
<i>Massachusetts</i> | (40.) DEMPSEY BURGESS,
<i>North Carolina</i> |
| (15.) NATHANIEL FREEMAN, JR.,
<i>Massachusetts</i> | (41.) NATHAN BRYAN,
<i>North Carolina</i> |
| (16.) JOSEPH B. VARNUM,
<i>Massachusetts</i> | (42.) MATTHEW LOCKE,
<i>North Carolina</i> |
| (17.) EDWARD LIVINGSTON,
<i>New York</i> | (43.) JOHN NICHOLAS, <i>Virginia</i> |
| (18.) GEORGE JACKSON, <i>Virginia</i> | (44.) PHILIP VAN CORTLANDT,
<i>New York</i> |
| (19.) THOMAS BLOUNT,
<i>North Carolina</i> | (45.) JONATHAN HAVENS,
<i>New York</i> |
| (20.) JOSIAH PARKER, <i>Virginia</i> | (46.) JOHN CLOPTON, <i>Virginia</i> |
| (21.) ANTHONY NEW, <i>Virginia</i> | (47.) SAMUEL CABELL, <i>Virginia</i> |
| (22.) WILLIAM B. GROVE,
<i>North Carolina</i> | (48.) CHRISTOPHER GREENUP,
<i>Kentucky</i> |
| (23.) JESSE FRANKLIN,
<i>North Carolina</i> | (49.) THEOPHILUS BRADBURY,
<i>Massachusetts</i> |
| (24.) ABRAHAM BALDWIN, <i>Georgia</i> | (50.) HENRY DEARBORN,
<i>Massachusetts</i> |
| (25.) CARTER B. HARRISON,
<i>Virginia</i> | (51.) GEORGE THACHER,
<i>Massachusetts</i> |
| (26.) FRANCIS PRESTON, <i>Virginia</i> | |

Seating Arrangement

- | | |
|--|--|
| (52.) WILLIAM HINDMAN, <i>Maryland</i> | (80.) WILLIAM VANS MURRAY,
<i>Maryland</i> |
| (53.) NATHANIEL SMITH, <i>Connecticut</i> | (81.) SAMUEL SMITH, <i>Maryland</i> |
| (54.) JOHN REED, <i>Massachusetts</i> | (82.) SAMUEL SITGREAVES,
<i>Pennsylvania</i> |
| (55.) PELEG WADSWORTH,
<i>Massachusetts</i> | (83.) <i>see below</i> |
| (56.) JAMES GILLESPIE,
<i>North Carolina</i> | (84.) WILLIAM L. SMITH,
<i>South Carolina</i> |
| (57.) WILLIAM FINDLEY, <i>Pennsylvania</i> | (85.) BENJAMIN GOODHUE,
<i>Massachusetts</i> |
| (58.) GEORGE HANCOCK, <i>Virginia</i> | (86.) LEMUEL BENTON,
<i>South Carolina</i> |
| (59.) ABRAHAM VENABLE, <i>Virginia</i> | (87.) JAMES HOLLAND,
<i>North Carolina</i> |
| (60.) JOHN HEATH, <i>Virginia</i> | (88.) SAMUEL EARLE, <i>South Carolina</i> |
| (61.) JOHN PAGE, <i>Virginia</i> | (89.) JOHN MILLEDGE, <i>Georgia</i> |
| (62.) RICHARD BRENT, <i>Virginia</i> | (90.) WADE HAMPTON,
<i>South Carolina</i> |
| (63.) DWIGHT FOSTER, <i>Massachusetts</i> | (91.) ISSAC COLES, <i>Virginia</i> |
| (64.) JOHN HATHORN, <i>New York</i> | (92.) RICHARD WINN, <i>South Carolina</i> |
| (65.) GEORGE LEONARD,
<i>Massachusetts</i> | (93.) JOHN PATTEN, <i>Delaware</i> |
| (66.) ABIEL FOSTER, <i>New Hampshire</i> | (94.) DAVID BAIRD, <i>Pennsylvania</i> |
| (67.) THEODORE SEDWICK,
<i>Massachusetts</i> | (95.) SAMUEL MACLAY, <i>Pennsylvania</i> |
| (68.) DANIEL HIESTER, <i>Pennsylvania</i> | (96.) ALBERT GALLATIN,
<i>Pennsylvania</i> |
| (69.) FREDERICK MUHLENBERG,
<i>Pennsylvania</i> | (97.) JAMES WHITE,
<i>Territory South of the Ohio</i> |
| (70.) CHAUNCEY GOODRICH,
<i>Connecticut</i> | (98.) GABRIEL CHRISTIE, <i>Maryland</i> |
| (71.) FRANCIS MALBONE,
<i>Rhode Island</i> | (99.) ROBERT C. HARPER,
<i>South Carolina</i> |
| (72.) ROGER GRISWOLD, <i>Connecticut</i> | JONATHAN DAYTON, <i>New Jersey</i> :
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE |
| (73.) JOSHUA COIT, <i>Connecticut</i> | |
| (74.) BENJAMIN BOURN, <i>Rhode Island</i> | Philip omitted: |
| (75.) GABRIEL DUVALL, <i>Maryland</i> | FISHER AMES, <i>Massachusetts</i> |
| (76.) WILLIAM B. GILES, <i>Virginia</i> | ALEXANDER D. ORR, <i>Kentucky</i> |
| (77.) ISRAEL SMITH, <i>Vermont</i> | JEREMIAH CRABB, <i>Maryland</i> |
| (78.) THOMAS HARTLEY,
<i>Pennsylvania</i> | THOMAS SPRIGG, <i>Maryland</i> |
| (79.) JOHN W. KITTEA, <i>Pennsylvania</i> | ABSALOM TATOM,
<i>North Carolina</i> |
| | ANDREW GREGG, <i>Pennsylvania</i> |

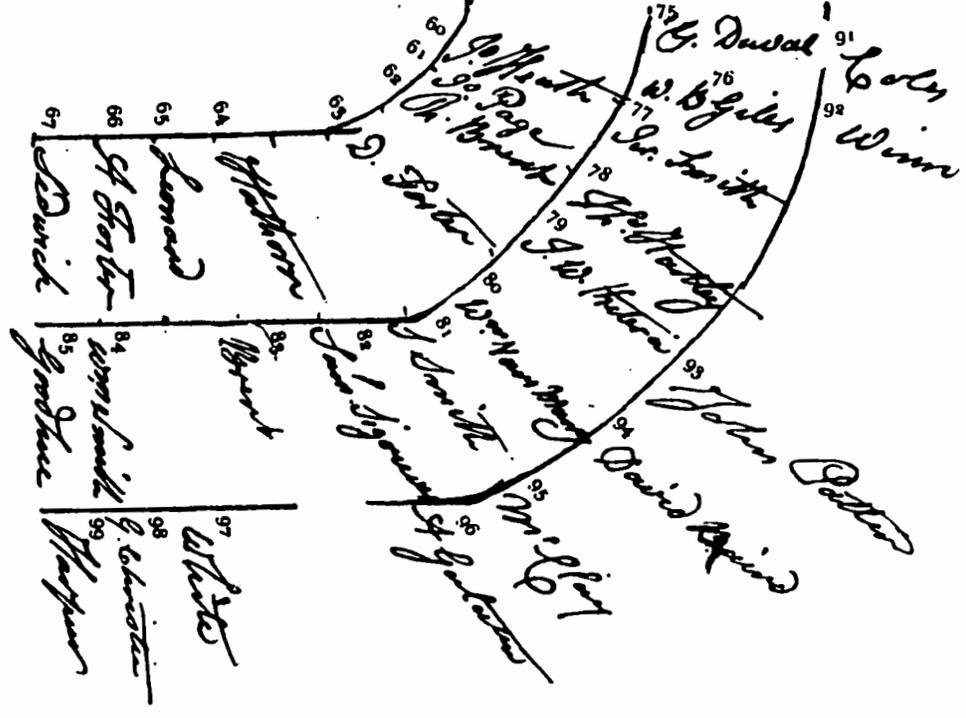
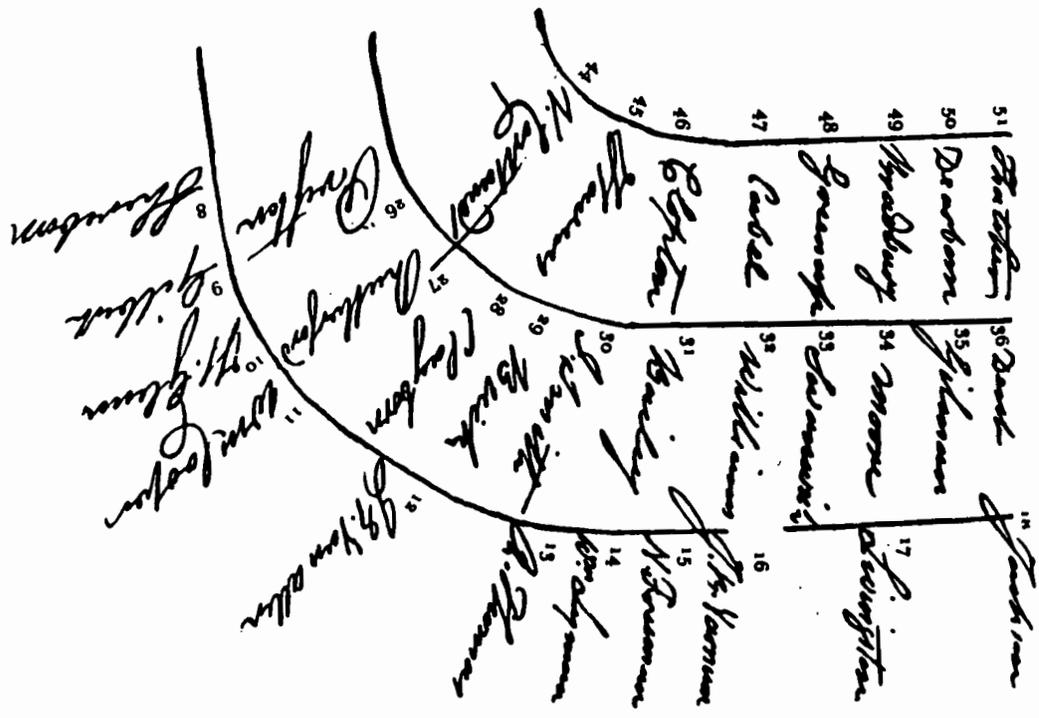
#83 "Brent" is unidentified. Richard Brent (#62) was the only man of this name in this session of Congress.

Philip Van Cortlandt's Sketch



1	J. Smith	19	Blount	37	Madam
2	A. Mitchell	20	Parker	38	Mason
3	M. Thompson	21	New	39	Swift
4	Th. Henderson	22	Grove	40	Burges
5	J. Hillhouse	23	Franklin	41	Borian
6	J. Seymour	24	Waldwin	42	Lock
7	W. Tracy	25	Mariposa	43	Nichols

52	W. Hindman	68	Wheeler		
53	Nathl Smith	69	Muchlingby	86	Lami Ben
54	J. Reed	70	Goodrich	87	John Holl.
55	P. Wadsworth	71	Malbone	88	Samuel L.
56	J. Galphin	72	Yorward	89	J. Milledy
57	Wm. Trindley	73	J. Coit		Wm. Thoms
58	Hamish	74	H. B. Brown		John



Numbers have been added for identification purposes.

