

The Victorian Society in America Washington Metropolitan Chapter

Invites you to a tour of

The Historic Patent Office Building

The Patent Office Building, begun in 1836 and completed in 1868, is one of the oldest public buildings constructed by the new nation in its capital city. This landmark was praised by Walt Whitman as the "noblest of Washington buildings" and is considered to be one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the United States.

The building was used as temporary barracks in the early days of the Civil War and served as a hospital and morgue after the battles of Manassas (Bull Run), Antietam, and Fredericksburg. On March 6, 1865 President Abraham Lincoln held his inaugural ball on the third floor of the building.

After transfer to the Smithsonian in 1958 it was transformed into a home for the Smithsonian American Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery. In 2000 the building was closed for a much needed state-of-the-art renovation. Over the next six years, complete new electrical, communications, security, plumbing, and lighting systems were installed. Floors that had originally been of marble or wood were replicated as closely to the originals as possible. Because it had badly deteriorated, the magnificent encaustic tile floor of the third-floor Great Hall was removed and replaced with an exact copy by a firm in England. More than 550 decaying wood windows were replicated for thermal efficiency, even using hand-blown glass from Poland to simulate the irregularities of old panes.

The courtyard has been enclosed with a glass canopy by Sir Norman Foster of London. The contemporary design has been described as resembling a "flying carpet."

The tour, led by Charles Robertson, will examine these changes as well as the development of the building and the historic events that occurred there.



Charles J. Robertson, is the author of *Temple of Invention: History of a National Landmark*, an illustrated book about the historic Patent Office Building, and curator of the exhibit of the same name which remains on view through January 21, 2008. He is also curator of a permanent exhibit titled "Renovating a Landmark: From Patent Office to Reynolds Center" that opens November 18. Mr. Robertson is Deputy Director Emeritus at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and a Vice-President of the Victorian Society in America.

When: Saturday, December 1, 2007 2:00 pm.

Where: F Street at 8th Street (South entrance).

**Cost: Members only: \$5 Space limited
Reservations by November 21, please.**

Enclosed is my check payable to: **VSA - Washington Metropolitan Chapter.**

Patent Office Building _____ VSA Members @ \$5 = _____

Name _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Telephone: _____ evening _____ day. Email: _____

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