

THOLOS

**FEATURE:
PASSING THE TORCH**

**DOING GOOD:
VETERANS HELPING
VETERANS**

**5 REASONS TO
EXPLORE THE
BOTANIC GARDEN**



19

BY THE NUMBERS: Things don't slow down just because it's winter. See five reasons to explore the U.S. Botanic Garden this season, including tropical flowers like this *Epicatanthe Volcano Trick Orange Fire* orchid.

In This Issue

- 1 ARCHITECT'S NOTEBOOK
- 2 BEHIND THE SCENES
The Senate Subway Branch
- 4 FEATURE
Passing the Torch
- 11 PROJECT UPDATES
Cannon Renewal
Dome Restoration
- 16 DOING GOOD
A Veteran Helping Veterans
- 19 BY THE NUMBERS
The U.S. Botanic Garden
- 20 COOL TOOLS
A tuning fork?
- 21 NEW NAME, NEW LOOK

COVER: This special fork was voted the coolest tool by AOC employees. *Photo by James Rosenthal*

FEATURE:

Michele Cohen begins her tenure as Curator and leads the Division's emphasis on education and commitment to building knowledge.



PROJECT UPDATE:

Crews pour a concrete floor as part of the Cannon Renewal Project.

DOING GOOD:

Electrician Martin Blanchet volunteers with Heroes on the Water, which helps veterans relax and rehabilitate through kayak fishing.



Inspiration by Detail

The beautiful buildings on the Capitol campus are full of thousands of decorative details. So many details in fact, that visitors and workers alike will often see something new each time they are here. This richness and depth inspire me every day.

I've always wanted to be an architect. So naturally, one of the details that really speaks to me is one that symbolizes architecture. It sits, unnoticed by most, but always catches my eye, on the north staircase of the Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Building's Great Hall. There, at the very top, is a balustrade ornamented with three marble putti representing the fine arts: Painting, Sculpture... and Architecture!

A putto (plural putti) is a male child figure, sometimes with wings, used as a decorative architectural element. Behind the Great Hall's Architecture putto is a depiction of the magnificent Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens in Greece. Whenever I see or think of the putto, I'm taken back to a time when I had the opportunity to travel the world and visit the great places that I studied in architecture school.

Both the Parthenon and the Capitol have a deep connection for me. They use slight visual cues to reinforce their stately appearance and include fine examples of the Doric order of architecture. Both buildings are also situated on what was considered the grandest spot in the city, atop an elevated area or as Washington, D.C.'s engineer and architect, Pierre Charles L'Enfant described Capitol Hill, "a pedestal waiting for a monument."

I remember walking away from my visits to the Acropolis thinking that there is so much more that could be done to preserve and invest in those important parts of our history. That sparked in me a true desire to be a steward of the great buildings in the world. The Architecture putto with its Parthenon behind it is a visual reminder for me of that time in my life, which eventually brought me to serve at the Capitol.

Next time you're walking around the buildings and grounds of the Capitol campus and are in need of some inspiration, pause a moment. Take in the details, and see where they take you. ❁



Stephen T. Ayers, FAIA, LEED AP
Architect of the Capitol



TOP: Architecture putto (center) with the Parthenon represented behind it. *Photo by James Rosenthal*
MIDDLE: The Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens; and **BOTTOM:** Me (left) in 1993 on the Acropolis with two of my colleagues at the time. *Photos courtesy of Stephen Ayers*

Senate Subway Branch

WRITTEN BY ELIZABETH YODER • PHOTOS BY CHUCK BADAL



Craig Smith prepares to change out a load wheel on the subway to the Hart and Dirksen Buildings in the Hart Maintenance Station. The subway staff performs monthly preventive maintenance checks to detect wear and replace the wheels, as needed.



Two relay switches are used to open and close the doors on the Russell Building subway cars. In the subway to the Hart and Dirksen Buildings, the same task is performed by programmable logic controllers, rather than physical switches. FR 2016

The Senate Subway Branch operates two subway systems to transport senators, staff and escorted visitors between the Capitol Building and the Senate office buildings. The systems operate from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, and continue running until at least 30 minutes after the last floor vote when the Senate is in session.

The subway to and from the Capitol Building and Russell Senate Office Building consists of two 18-passenger cars built in 1958,



TOP: In a nearby mechanical room, Eric Fitzpatrick, who has 21 years of experience with the Senate Subway Branch, looks over the frequency drives for the subway system to the Hart and Dirksen Buildings. These drives power the fully-automated linear induction motors in the tracks, which make the cars go.

MIDDLE: Erick Gage views the automated subway system to the Hart and Dirksen Buildings from a nearby control room. Staff continuously monitor the system so they can prevent many problems and respond quickly whenever they occur.

BOTTOM: Brian Crupi works on a switch control cabinet which allows operators to move a subway car to the Hart and Dirksen Buildings from one track to the other for maintenance work.



“BECAUSE OF THE STAFF’S EXPERIENCE AND WORKMANSHIP, OUR SYSTEM HAS A RELIABILITY RATE OF 99 PERCENT OR BETTER. THEY ALSO SHOW TRUE PROFESSIONALISM IN EVERYTHING THEY DO.”

which have been in continuous operation for nearly 60 years. The subway is powered by motor generators in a large silver panel at the center of the car, with an on-board operator to manually run the system.

The subway to and from the Capitol Building and Dirksen and Hart Senate Office Buildings consists of three 36-passenger cars on a looped track. The 21-year-old, fully automated system features linear induction motors which are located

in the tracks themselves, with an operator controlling the system from a nearby mechanical room.

The Senate Subway Branch includes 14 full-time employees with 138 years of combined Architect of the Capitol service. According to Eric Fitzpatrick, Electromotive Equipment Supervisor, “Because of the staff’s experience and workmanship, our system has a reliability rate of 99 percent or better. They also show true professionalism in everything they do.” ❁





Passing the Torch

THE CURATOR DIVISION'S COMMITMENT
TO BUILDING KNOWLEDGE CONTINUES
TO THRIVE UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP

WRITTEN BY ERIN COURTNEY

Cohen watches the recasting
of missing pieces from the
Grant Memorial at a foundry
in Pennsylvania.
Photo by Susanne Bledsoe



*Greek philosopher Socrates once said,
“Education is the kindling of a flame,
not the filling of a vessel.”*

The heritage assets managed by the Curator Division document the historic moments and changing attitudes of the American people. Walking through the Capitol to experience the art and architecture maintained by the Office of the Curator, looking through photographs taken and preserved by the Photography Branch, or reading historic manuscripts and architectural drawings managed by the Records Management and Archives Branch provides an unparalleled education about the work of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC), our democracy and ultimately our nation.

The Curator Division’s three branches play a critical role by serving as the memory of the U.S. Capitol, and all three are necessary to help tell America’s story. Collectively they create and preserve information on the art, artists, buildings, rooms and landscape features located across the Capitol campus. The Division is also the repository of records that tell the institutional history of the AOC, and its project-related documents are invaluable resources for the agency’s maintenance, remodeling and new construction work.

Dr. Barbara Wolanin, now Curator Emerita, recognizes that serving as the Curator for the Architect of the Capitol was a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.” Her first day with the AOC was September 15, 1985. Thirty years later, she is widely considered the preeminent authority on the art of Constantino Brumidi at the U.S. Capitol as well as a noted conservation expert.



Wolanin examines a painting of Benjamin Franklin.
Photo by Susanne Bledsoe

“I loved being on the scaffold, seeing the lines and brushstrokes that the artists made and working with the conservators,” said Wolanin.

Conservation and restoration of the murals at the Library of Congress, the Statue of Freedom, and the Brumidi Corridors are but a few of the Curator Division’s accomplishments under her leadership.

She is most proud of conserving and maintaining the murals in the Library of Congress, which had not been touched since the building opened in 1897. A century of grime

and neglect made the paintings dark and in some cases made it difficult to see the subjects of the artwork. Today, the vivid colors and details pop from the walls and ceilings above scholars and tourists walking along the mosaic tile floors of the Thomas Jefferson Building. “I loved being on the scaffold, seeing the lines and brushstrokes that the artists made and working with the conservators,” said Wolanin.

While conservation played a significant role during Wolanin’s tenure, education was also a common theme in the work of the Curator Division. Education is a lifelong passion and pursuit for this group of employees. Their daily efforts at the AOC affect generations of students and beyond.

This seems fitting for Wolanin, who left a teaching position at James Madison University to join the AOC. During her time as the Curator, Wolanin gave hundreds of speeches and presentations. She developed a fellowship program with the United States Capitol Historical Society, which to date has supported the work of more than 60 scholars. She regularly shared information with the

Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) guides and worked with the exhibition team during the development of the CVC. Wolanin also worked on a variety of publications. All the while, she continued to be open to and enjoy learning more herself.

In the 1980s, top mural conservators from Rome, Italy, who had advised on restoration efforts at the Sistine Chapel, were brought to the Capitol to support work on the Apotheosis of Washington. They were excited about the quality of Brumidi's art. Wolanin notes that she initially did not realize that Brumidi was such a good artist because so much of his original work had been repainted over the years. Thus began Wolanin's education about the Capitol artist and, ultimately, the painstaking effort to restore his works to their former beauty.

It also led to her highly regarded book, *Constantino Brumidi: Artist of the Capitol*. "What the Apotheosis of Washington is painted on is really just an inch of plaster on a metal frame," she notes. "But restoring and preserving it for future generations, while a challenge, was one of my favorite projects, as was the Statue of Freedom, of course."

Wolanin is one of the few people in history who have climbed to the top of the Dome, looked down at the feathers on top of Freedom's head, and viewed the stamped "A. Lincoln, President" which was put there in 1863. "I am proud of our conservation of the Statue of Freedom, especially in light of how difficult it is to reach her," she said.

In 2014, Wolanin began her transition toward retirement. To ensure the transfer of institutional knowledge, a successor would shadow Wolanin on the job. The AOC selected Dr. Michele Cohen after a national search.

Cohen brings an interesting mix of knowledge and experience as an art historian, administrator and professor. She holds a Ph.D. in American Art, and her scholarship includes books and articles about 19th century American sculpture, women artists, outdoor sculpture, the New Deal, and the art and architecture of the New York City public schools. Early in her career she co-authored the *Art Commission and Municipal Art Society Guide to Manhattan's Outdoor Sculpture* and more recently published *Public Art for Public Schools*, the first history of public school art and architecture in New York City.

After heading up the sculpture inventory for the Design Commission of the City of New York for 20 years, Cohen then served as the founding Director of New York City's Public Art for Public Schools program. There she was curator of an existing collection of art placed throughout 1,200 school buildings and was involved in the commissioning of new art. "I oversaw hundreds of conservation projects and made some important discoveries, including the presentation plaster models for the doors completed by Herbert Adams for the Library of Congress," said Cohen.

Moving forward, Cohen plans to juggle the duties of the Division



TOP: Cohen in front of her favorite piece of art on the Capitol campus, The Car of History Clock, designed by Benjamin Latrobe and carved by Carlo Franzoni. *Photo by Susanne Bledsoe*

BOTTOM: The Lincoln stamp located on the Statue of Freedom. *Photo by Chuck Badal*



The AOC recently began a project to restore the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial. *Photo by Susanne Bledsoe* BELOW: Wolanin and Cohen examine the Grant Memorial. *Photo by James Rosenthal*



while focusing on foundational long-term projects, such as establishing a comprehensive collection data base and digitizing records, while researching and responding to everyday inquiries. Like her predecessor, she will manage the fellowship program and also be involved in numerous conservation projects.

One such project is the restoration of the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial,

“You can sit on a bench and almost feel like you are in the action; you can hear the cavalry charging. It is like watching a movie. It’s so dramatic,” said Cohen.

which has captured her imagination. Situated west of the Capitol in Union Square at the edge of the Reflecting Pool, the memorial honors the Civil War General and two-term President. “You can sit on a bench and almost feel like you are in the action; you can hear the cavalry charging,” said Cohen. “It is like watching a movie. It’s so dramatic,” she said.

Preservation and restoration of the Grant Memorial to its former glory is one of many tasks that the Curator Division must meet

in carrying out its overall mission, which is to oversee the museum, historical, documentary, records management, archival and related educational functions of the agency. Such a varied range of activities requires close cooperation among the Division’s three components.

The Curator’s Office oversees numerous art conservation and maintenance projects, educational lecture series, and research requests. This office is also the initial point of contact for AOC staff and outside researchers who need access to the

variety of text and photographic records that the Division preserves.

The Photography Branch, led by Michael Dunn, creates and maintains the photographic documentation for the agency, providing the visual record of the buildings, people and artwork of the Capitol campus.

On a given day, Photo Branch photographers might shoot architectural elements, special events or construction projects. According to Dunn, “We might have a photographer in steel-tip boots, jeans and fall protection climbing on scaffolding in the morning and in a business suit and tie for a VIP event in the afternoon.”

This diverse collection of subjects is important in telling the complete story of life at the Capitol today and

When asked about the skills necessary to be a successful member of the Photo Branch, Dunn responded without hesitation, “Life-long learners with a sense of curiosity.”

for future generations. It also ensures that the agency has a visual record to consult. Recently, the branch used 30-year-old photographs to inform construction crews about details of an ongoing project. “A photograph taken all those years ago helps us to do our work more efficiently and save the agency money,” said Dunn.

When asked about the skills necessary to be a successful member of the Photo Branch, Dunn responded without hesitation,

“Life-long learners with a sense of curiosity.” As a new era begins under Cohen, Dunn is most excited about her freshness of vision, breadth of expertise and dedication to public art. “Michele has a commitment to public art on the broadest possible scale. She is developing relationships with a global perspective,” said Dunn.

The Records Management and Archives Branch is the agency’s paperwork guardian, maintaining



LEFT: Dunn teaches children about working as a professional photographer. *Photo by Chuck Badal* **RIGHT:** Photographs taken by Badal provide a visual record of the repair work on the U.S. Capitol Dome. *Photo by Susanne Bledsoe*



TOP: Jim Corbus and Jocelyn Travers, Records Management and Archives Branch, preserve historic architectural drawings. **BOTTOM:** Jennifer Blancato, Office of the Curator, carefully analyzes art. *Photos by Susanne Bledsoe*

an inventory of records; assisting with the management of files; and keeping historical manuscripts, contracts, drawings, studies and diagrams. Stacie Byas, Branch Chief, manages a team of four who spend a good part of their time digitizing the collection to ensure long-term access to files.

The Records Management and Archives team is a group that is rooted in history, with forward-thinking attitudes. “For us, 100 years is young. We are thinking ahead in terms of all of the various formats of records and materials. We are not just thinking about the archives in their current state; we are thinking ahead to preserving information for 3015 or 4015, for the life of the Republic to ensure that information in various formats will be useful in the future,” said Byas.

The start of Cohen’s tenure as Curator is exciting to the Records Management and Archives team. According to Byas, “She gets our work, and that isn’t always the case in some offices. Michele recognizes that public art and public space is very valuable. She leads with her passion for art and ability to share and educate others.”

The Torch of Knowledge, covered in shining gold leaf and sitting atop the Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, faces the Capitol Building where the Office of the Curator resides. The torch serves as an inspiration and a reminder of the importance of a constant search for knowledge. It is in some way a perfect allusion to Socrates’ notion of education. Of course, the Curator Division already knows that! ❀

Cannon Renewal Project 2015: A Year in Photos

WRITTEN BY KRISTEN FREDERICK • PHOTOS BY DEWITT ROSEBOROUGH

The Cannon House Office Building, the oldest congressional office building outside of the Capitol Building, is in need of a complete renewal. The century-old building is plagued with serious safety, health, environmental and operational issues. The Cannon Building has not received a comprehensive systems upgrade since the 1930s, and many of the building's systems are original – dating back to 1908 or earlier.

The renewal of the Cannon Building began in earnest in 2015. Much of the work is being completed during the evening hours and on weekends to limit disruptions to the business of the U.S. House of Representatives.

This initial phase of the project, taking place mostly in the basement and courtyard, will be complete at the end of 2016. The entire project is scheduled to take approximately 10 years, for a total of five two-year phases. For the latest updates visit www.aoc.gov/cannon. ❁



In January, the west side of the Cannon garage was closed to install the tower crane, utility piping, mechanical and electrical rooms, and to perform select demolition in the Cannon courtyard.



In April, demolition of the mechanical rooms and systems began in the Cannon courtyard. Crews were able to salvage historic limestone from these structures.



In March, the Cannon's east basement corridor was closed for five months to allow crews to begin to excavate the area and install utility infrastructure that will support the new mechanical and electrical systems.



In May, workers placed concrete in one of the rooms adjacent to the east basement corridor.



The perimeter of the Cannon courtyard was excavated an additional three feet to accommodate a future utility tunnel, as shown in this photo from June. These utilities will service the entire building and allow crews to isolate one side of the building at a time during future phases without interrupting service.



While the west basement corridor was closed, workers excavated portions of the corridor, seen here in September, to install new conduit.

Much of the work for the Cannon Renewal Project is done at night. Workers placed concrete in the Cannon courtyard in August.





A new emergency generator was delivered and installed in the Cannon garage in October.



Construction crews installed concrete and waterproofing on the west side of the Cannon courtyard, seen here in October, to accommodate an eventual green roof that will be installed during the final phase of the project. The east side of the courtyard will undergo the same process starting in the spring.



This aerial photograph, taken in November, provided a bird's-eye view of the Cannon Building and captured the 208-foot crane in action. *Photo by Chuck Badal*



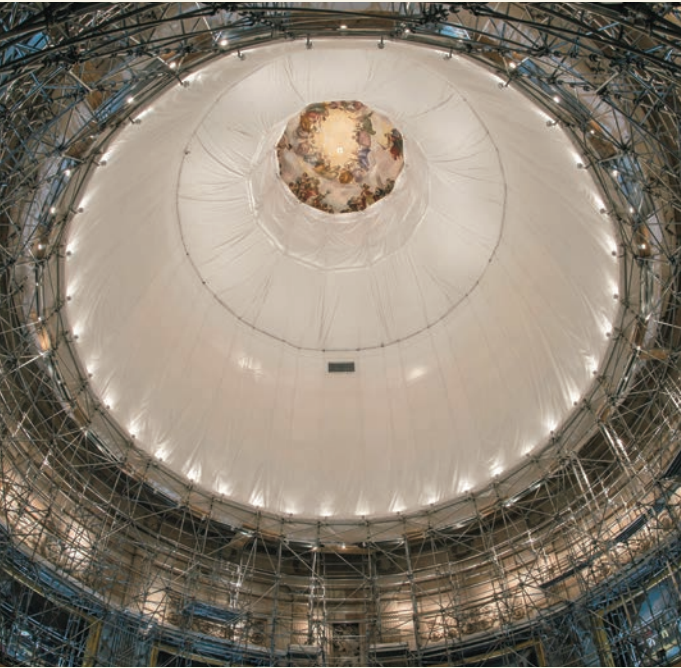
The final step to complete the west basement corridor, which was closed in late July and reopened in November, was for crews to pour the concrete floor.



In December, crews replaced one of nine transformers with the help of a temporary crane set up on First Street, SE.

Dome Restoration Project

WRITTEN BY JUSTIN KIEFFER • PHOTOS BY CHUCK BADAL



The United States Capitol Dome, symbol of American democracy and world-renowned architectural icon, was constructed of cast iron more than 150 years ago. The Dome had not undergone a complete restoration since 1959-1960 and due to age and weather was plagued by more than 1,000 cracks and deficiencies. In the fall of 2013 the Architect of the Capitol began a multi-year project to repair these deficiencies, restoring the Dome to its original, inspiring splendor.

Recent work includes the ongoing installation of the recasted and repaired balustrade and ornaments as well as the installation of the new Cupola windows. Catwalks and other safety measures were put into place in the Dome's interior.

TOP LEFT: Scaffolding installed in the Rotunda provides access to the work areas. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Workers install the newly recasted balustrade. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Paint is removed from cast iron in the Rotunda.





TOP LEFT: Workers install new Cupola windows. **TOP RIGHT:** Removal of scaffolding began at the end of 2015. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Catwalk located in the interstitial space between the two domes.



As 2015 came to a close, the process to remove the Dome's exterior scaffolding began. The majority of the scaffolding will be removed this spring as repairs and repainting are completed. The scaffolding bridge and tower will remain in place until the interior and Rotunda phases of the project are complete in the fall.

Due to the extensive exterior damage on the Capitol Dome, which covers the Rotunda, water had leaked through the cracks, damaging paint, cast iron, stone and decorative elements. The focus of the Rotunda Restoration is to remove hazardous materials (such as lead paint), restore ironwork, upgrade electrical and mechanical systems, install new lighting, and repaint it to historically appropriate colors. This effort began in July 2015 and will be complete prior to the Presidential Inauguration in January 2017. ❁

For the latest updates and photos, visit www.aoc.gov/dome.



A Veteran Helping Veterans

WRITTEN BY SHARON GANG

Martin Blanchet has served as an electrician with the AOC since 2003. *Photo by Dewitt Roseborough*

PADDLE. FISH. HEAL.
 “I like helping people, and veterans are at the top of the list of people I want to help.”

Before Electrician Martin Blanchet joined the Architect of the Capitol in 2003, he had served in the Army twice, first from 1984 to 1988 and then from 1997 to 2003. His service included two combat tours and posts in 13 countries.

About two years ago at a Fishing Flea Market in southern Maryland, he learned about a group called Heroes on the Water, which provides veterans with opportunities to go kayak fishing. Blanchet is an avid fisherman and an experienced kayaker, so he decided to volunteer with Heroes on the Water through its Maryland Chapter. Aside from the fishing, however, he decided to volunteer because he wanted to help fellow veterans. “There’s something different about veterans,” said Blanchet. “We take care of our own.”

“But it’s not just about the fishing for me. It’s about helping out veterans. I will absolutely continue doing this until they tell me I can’t come back.”

Heroes on the Water is a national organization that helps veterans from all branches of the United States military unwind using the therapeutic qualities of fishing from kayaks. Founded in 2007, this kayak fishing program gives participants a chance to decompress from the stresses associated with combat and the physical rigors of rehabilitation.

“We give them a stress-free day and an outlet to talk about what they might have been through or seen,” said Jim Cooper, Co-Coordinator of the Maryland Chapter, which was started in 2013. “Keeping inside

what is bothering you can exacerbate post-traumatic stress syndrome. People like Martin who’ve been in combat situations are kindred spirits and can help them relax and unwind while they’re on the water.”

Participants receive basic kayak fishing and paddling instruction, if they need it. The program also assists participants in adapting their newly developed skills to their new abilities. Adaptive kayaks, kayaking accessories and angling equipment are offered on an as-needed basis to accommodate a soldier’s particular needs.



Blanchet, pictured above, as he volunteers with Heroes on the Water, which helps veterans learn to kayak fish. *Photos courtesy of Martin Blanchet*



Photo courtesy of Martin Blanchet

“We are here to say thank you to anyone who has served — and that includes first responders like the U.S. Capitol Police. They are welcome too,” adds Cooper.

Blanchet is a member of the leadership team for the Maryland Chapter of Heroes on the Water. With 15 single kayaks and two doubles, or tandems, the Chapter can accommodate up to 18 people on the water. While participants paddle by themselves, Blanchet and other volunteers may help launch them into the water from the riverbank. “Anyone who gets in a kayak powers it by himself or herself. If you have no legs, you use the oars to paddle. If you have no arms, we have kayaks that you pedal with your legs and feet.” Volunteers sometimes paddle their own kayaks along with

participants to give advice on fishing or to lend an ear if they want to talk.

All of the equipment and materials are donated to Heroes on the Water. The Maryland Chapter also has a big trailer that is used to transport the kayaks to the put-in spot for that day’s fishing excursion.

Cooper says Blanchet is one of the Chapter’s most dependable volunteers. “He helps with unloading the kayaks and rigging them with fishing equipment, and then when participants arrive, he helps them put on their safety gear and gives them any assistance they need. He truly is a jack of all trades.”

Day trips are offered about once a month at different spots around southern Maryland from April or May through October or November. In addition to the fishing, the Chapter provides lunch for the veterans, who can also bring their families to fish or to watch. There is one overnight camping trip at Solomon’s Island in Maryland which might include a fish fry if the kayakers catch any fish.

Local veterans often find out about the kayak fishing opportunities through the Chapter’s Facebook page. Additionally, members of the leadership team, like Blanchet and Cooper, reach out to troops at area military medical facilities such as Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda to let them know about the program.

Says Blanchet, “I love to fish. I love the tranquility and the peacefulness of it, and I love being in nature. But it’s not just about the fishing for me. It’s about helping out veterans. I will absolutely continue doing this until they tell me I can’t come back.”

“We are here to say thank you to anyone who has served – and that includes first responders like the U.S. Capitol Police. They are welcome too,” adds Cooper. ❁

For more information about Heroes on the Water or to volunteer or make a contribution, go to www.heroesonthewater.org or visit the Maryland Chapter’s Facebook page, www.facebook.com/HeroesOnTheWaterMarylandChapter.

The U.S. Botanic Garden

WRITTEN BY DEVIN DOTSON • PHOTOS BY DEVIN DOTSON



1 See chocolate in its rawest form

When you enter the Conservatory's Garden Court, one of the first plants you might see is the popular *Theobroma cacao* tree. Not sure if you're one of its fans yet? What if we tell you it's also called the "chocolate tree"? This winter, our tree is loaded with ripe cacao pods growing right out of the tree's trunk. Each orange-yellow pod is the shape of a football and is filled with rows of cacao seeds surrounded by white fleshy pulp. In front of the tree you may find a Discovery Cart where one of our volunteer docents will take you through the steps that turn these cacao beans into the cocoa powder, butter and chocolate that is so loved. Prepare for a feast for the senses — there is lots to see, smell and feel with this cacao experience!

2 See a conservation success

The U.S. Botanic Garden (USBG) grows more than 500 rare plants and is part of multiple partnerships and programs to conserve threatened plants and teach others how they can play an active role in plant conservation. Come see our Wollemi pines (*Wollemia nobilis*) and observe an ancient species once thought to be extinct until a grove was discovered in Australia in 1994. The USBG has joined others around the world in growing a collection of these plants and many other rare and endangered species to help ensure their numbers increase and the plants never go extinct.



3 Winter birding in the National Garden — plants as winter food sources for wildlife

The Regional Garden in our National Garden features plants native to the Mid-Atlantic region of the U.S. In the winter, many plants in this garden serve as important sources of food for birds and other wildlife. Plants like the winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*) not only provide fruits for animals, but also give color to the winter landscape with their bright red, yellow and orange berries. If you take a few minutes to explore this garden, you might find the winter beauty of plants and the many birds that depend on them in this season.



collections, and today you can come face to face with three of these living pieces of history. Three plants from the Expedition live in the Conservatory: a queen sago (*Cycas circinalis*), a ferocious blue cycad (*Encephalartos horridus*) and a vessel fern (*Angiopteris evecta*).

4 Come in from the cold to a tropical oasis

Even when the weather outside is cold and frosty, The Tropics in the Conservatory are warm and alive with a diversity of plants. Go high above the ground floor and explore the tree tops in D.C.'s only jungle canopy walk. See a collection of palms from around the world, aerial roots that fall like curtains toward the ground and bright bursts of color from tropical blooms.



A Tuning Fork?

WRITTEN BY FRANKLIN BRADLEY

As the temperature cooled down this winter, we asked AOC employees to join a hot (and friendly) competition — AOC Cool Tools — and share the cool tools they use to get their jobs done.



Every employee, in every job we do, uses tools, from a crane that lifts heavy loads to the pen that signs the contract for the crane. We received several entries, and asked AOC employees to select the coolest tool. When all the votes were tallied, it was clear that the coolest tool this quarter was a fork.

But it's a special, and historic, fork.

This simple looking tool is a tuning fork. It consists of a two-pronged, U-shaped bar of steel. When it is struck against a surface or with an object, its vibrations resonate at a specific constant pitch.

Tuning forks are frequently used by musicians to adjust their instruments. So why does AOC have one — and what makes it cool?

When the Dome was being constructed in the 1850s, Supervising Engineer Montgomery C. Meigs used the tuning fork to evaluate cast iron beams made for the Capitol Dome. To test a beam, the engineer would strike it with the tuning fork and rest the fork's head on the beam. The tone produced would tell if the beam had a flaw, such as a crack or a void. Bad beams were rejected and good beams were lifted to their place in the Dome, where they remain today.

Modern industry has moved on to more sophisticated technology, but the Curator Division is happy to have this unique artifact in its collection. ❁

To see and hear this cool tool in action, visit www.aoc.gov/cool-tool.

TOP LEFT: Iron foundry of Janes, Fowler, Kirtland Company in The Bronx, New York, where iron for the Dome was cast at seven cents per pound. (photo circa 1862); and **TOP RIGHT:** Montgomery C. Meigs, U.S. Army Engineer, who oversaw construction of the cast iron Dome. Photos courtesy of AOC Photo Branch Archives

BOTTOM: Tuning fork used by Meigs to ensure that iron placed in the Dome was sound, along with copies of Meigs' writing and pieces of cast iron recovered from the Dome during the restoration project (aoc.gov/dome). Photo by James Rosenthal





New Name, New Look

WRITTEN BY ERIN NELSON

Tholos: The area that houses the lighting at the very top of the Dome and serves as a base for the Statue of Freedom.

The AOC Communications and Congressional Relations office published the first edition of the employee magazine, *Foundations & Perspectives*, in 2009. Since then we have strived to communicate stories that demonstrate your commitment to our mission — Serve, Preserve and Inspire.



As we began planning for the 15th edition of the magazine, we felt it was time for a refresh. We enlisted your help in picking a new name and received more than 70 submissions. As indicated by the cover, we chose Tholos.

Tholos is an architectural term used to describe a round structure usually ringed with columns. It was first used in ancient Greek architecture and centuries later was included in the design of the Capitol Dome. We wanted the new name to represent the historic setting of our work, and we hope it will serve as a reminder of the important role we all play to maintain these great symbols of American democracy.

The magazine has a new name and look — but we'll continue to create content that highlights the diverse ways we serve as the stewards of the iconic buildings and grounds on the Capitol campus.

Thank you for sharing your stories with us over the last six years. We hope you enjoy the latest edition of the magazine. If you would like to provide feedback or ideas for future articles, please contact us at communications@aoc.gov. ❁

For more information on the tholos of the Capitol Dome visit www.aoc.gov and search tholos.



Communications and Congressional Relations
U.S. Capitol, Room SB-16
Washington, DC 20515

The Architect of the Capitol strives to meet its mission 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to **serve** Congress and the Supreme Court, **preserve** America's Capitol, and **inspire** memorable experiences for all who visit the buildings and grounds.

Tholos is distributed by the Architect of the Capitol primarily for AOC employees. Questions regarding content and publication should be directed to AOC Communications and Congressional Relations at communications@aoc.gov, 202.228.1793, or U.S. Capitol, Room SB-16, Washington, DC 20515.

JOIN AOC ONLINE:

[Twitter.com/uscapitol](https://twitter.com/uscapitol)
[Facebook.com/architectofthecapitol](https://facebook.com/architectofthecapitol)
[Instagram.com/uscapitol](https://instagram.com/uscapitol)
[YouTube.com/aocgov](https://youtube.com/aocgov)
www.aoc.gov

Answer: South entrance of
the John Adams Building

Photo by James Rosenthal

Where is this?

