PART 1

Other Speaker:   Camera speed.

Speaker 1:   Let's start with your name, say it and spell it and how you'd like to be identified in the documentary?


Speaker 1:   And how would you like to be identified?

William Allen:   Um, Bill.

Speaker 1:   In terms of your title –


Speaker 1:   Okay. Uh, in 1847, Jefferson Davis joined the Senate and he was appointed to a three-man committee on public buildings. Talk to us about how Mr. Davis was appointed to that committee.

William Allen:   How was he appointed to the committee?
Speaker 1: What was the, the, uh, the background behind him joining that committee. Why did he join the committee?

William Allen: Cut. I have no idea.

Speaker 1: Okay, that's fine. Um –

William Allen: He was on the committee, I speculate in that article [perhaps “The Capitol Extensions and the New Dome” in Constantino Brumidi (1997); see also Allen’s history of the Capitol (2001)] about, uh, why he is interested in building but that, that's speculation.

Speaker 1: Okay.

William Allen: And there's too much fact to, to indulge in speculation.

Speaker 1: As part of being a member of the Committee on Public Buildings, one of Jefferson Davis's roles was the reconstruction of the Capitol, the renovation of the Capitol. While it is speculation, give us a sense as to why Mr. Davis was so interested in architecture of the Capitol.

William Allen: I believe that Davis, when he was appointed to the Senate Committee on Public Buildings, he took a, a lead in the effort to enlarge the Capitol and showed an unusual interest in the architectural development of the Capitol, certainly more than the chairman of that committee had, and his fellow committee member, uh, he was the one of the three who displayed an interest in architecture, and I have felt that it was perhaps that Davis was, uh, being from the Natchez area, having grown up as, as a, as a young man and then into adulthood in that environment where the, uh, the love of historic, love of architecture, the love of building well, building great, building for the ages, designing well was of great importance to that society. And I think that may have instilled into him a love of architecture that was not present in his fellow committee members.
Speaker 1: Was the –

Other Speaker: Hold please.

Other Speaker: Hold please. **** frame. ****. Speed.

Speaker 1: Had the committee already been con, been considering the renovation of the Capitol before he joined it or was he the one that really pushed through this desire to renovate the Capitol?

William Allen: There had been plans floating around since, uh, the 1830s on improvements to the Capitol, particularly as it related to the House of Representatives. Their chamber was unfit for debate because the room was famous for the echoes that were created by orators. And there were various proposals floating around, really since the day the room was occupied in, in 1819, on how to conquer the defects in the room. Some of these solutions included added on, adding on to the Capitol and enlarging it. This idea gained, um, credence once the country had grown after the Mexican War and the Capitol was outgrowing its, its space. Committees needed more space, the library needed more space, representatives in the House needed more space, senators needed more space in their chamber. So the idea of enlarging the Capitol really took root in the 1840s, about the time that Davis arrived at the Capitol. He did not instigate the proposal but he certainly championed it.

Other Speaker: ****

Other Speaker: **** Go ahead ****.

Speaker 1: Was Jefferson Davis the driving force behind the renovation of the Capitol or had there already been a move to engage in such activity?
William Allen: When Davis arrived the Capitol, there had been some ideas floating around over the years to make improvements to the building and to make enlargements to it to solve various space issues such as –

Other Speaker: Hold, hold it ****

Other Speaker: **** question ****

Speaker 1: I understand.

Other Speaker: Okay, and go ahead.

Speaker 1: Was Jefferson Davis the driving force behind the renovation of the Capitol or had he, uh, entered the Capitol at a time when there was already a move towards that direction?

William Allen: When Davis arrived in Washington there was a number of proposals on the table which had been floating around for a number of years on how to enlarge the building to better suit the needs of Congress. These ideas had some support but mainly they had been put on the back burner until the need became more crucial. Davis arrived at, at a very, very important time, when the Capitol was really beginning to suffer from severe space shortages. Uh, the House of Representatives was growing through the admission of representatives from new states, the same was happening in the Senate. Committees of both houses of Congress were outgrowing their very limited committee space. The Library of Congress was also outgrowing its room. So it became clear in the 1840s that the Capitol needed to be enlarged. There were some however who thought that it was premature, we needed to see if the country would continue, uh, united. For instance, there were some skeptics who believed that until the, uh, slavery issue was, was solved or at least put to rest that there was no need to, to enlarge the Capitol at that time.

Speaker 1: By the end of the 1840s, it became clear that slavery, like you suggested, was becoming a larger issue and in 1850 the big debate was over the Compromise of 1850 and yet,
uh, Jefferson Davis somehow was able to keep the renovation on the front burner. Explain to us about his adept maneuvers on that front.

William Allen: Well, in 1850, the, the Congress was occupied with a series of bills that are collectively today known as the Compromise of 1850 and this was Henry Clay's, uh, last best effort to reach an accommodation that would please both the North and the South and promise that the Union would go on whole and united. What is not remembered, uh, nearly as well, at the very same time Jefferson Davis was in the background securing legislation for the enlargement of the Capitol. Uh, he is considered to be the father of the Capitol extension because he wrote the legislation, which was passed just a day or two after the last of Clay's bill was, was passed. Jefferson Davis's bill for the enlargement of the Capitol was signed by the president, providing $100,000.00 for the enlargement of the Capitol.

Speaker 1: Explain for us what that legislation authorized in terms of how the Capitol is going to be enlarged.

William Allen: There was disagreement among senators and representatives in the House on how the Capitol should be enlarged. Each body had their own separate Committee on Public Buildings and each body had explored various ways that the Capitol could be enlarged. And I think it's probably not surprising to learn that the House came up with one strategy, uh, that it liked for enlarging the Capitol, while the Senate came up with another, quite different strategy on enlarging the building. Davis could not get the House to go along with the way that he wished to see the Capitol enlarged, so in a compromise measure when he wrote the legislation for the enlargement of the Capitol, in conference he and the conferees from the House of Representatives came up with this splitting the difference and they appropriated money for the enlargement, $100,000.00, but they left it to the president to decide on which method of enlargement he would prefer and he was also granted the authority to appoint the architect to undertake the enlargement.

Speaker 1: Which method did Jefferson Davis prefer?
William Allen: Davis and the, his fellow, uh, senators liked the idea of enlarging the Capitol by adding large wings to the north and south ends of the building.

Speaker 1: And which method did President Fillmore prefer?

William Allen: President Fillmore ultimately selected the Senate version on enlargement as the way that the building would be enlarged, by adding wings.

Speaker 1: Did Jefferson Davis's adept skills as being a senator allow for his ultimate, uh, plan to be adopted? Obviously, like you said, President Fillmore signed on to adding wings, that's what Jefferson Davis wanted. How was he able to get his, his plan ultimately adopted?

William Allen: Well, President Fillmore should, uh, be credited with striking a compromise of his own, 'cause while he did choose the way that Jefferson [Davis] and fellow senators wished the Capitol to be enlarged, i.e., by adding wings, he appointed the architect favored by the House of Representatives to design the wings and to oversee construction. That man was named Thomas U. Walter. So the House got something it wanted and the Senate and Jefferson Davis got something that it wanted.

Speaker 1: How close was Jefferson Davis to President Fillmore during this era?

William Allen: I don't know that they were very close at all. I think they were obviously, uh, they had known each other in the Senate when Fillmore was a presiding officer, uh, prior to President Taylor's death but I, I don't know that they were close in any other regard.

Speaker 1: What I'm trying to, uh, get a sense of is whether Davis was able to work behind the scenes with President Fillmore to get his version adopted. If the answer is no, that's fine.

William Allen: The, uh, actually what happens in this episode is that after the legislation is passed, and we know that the Capitol is going to be enlarged, the Senate, on its own, even though it would not make a lot of difference, the Senate announces a competition for the
enlargement of the Capitol and in their competition announcement they ran in newspapers all up and down the East Coast and out west as, as, as a matter of fact, they say that the architects will present to the Senate an enlargement either by wings or by adding on to the east front of the Capitol. They also suggest that maybe reproducing the Capitol in the east garden would be another way to, to gratify Congress's need for, for more space. The legislation, however, which had just been passed, gave the president the authority to select the matter by which the Capitol would be enlarged, and not the Senate. The Senate had given up that, that authority. So this competition, that resulted in a number of designs being submitted to the Senate Committee on Public Buildings, really just got the ball rolling. It was not definitive, although I suspect some architects thought it was going to lead to a, to the Senate giving the prize, but it was not theirs to give. It was the, the president. And the president took over later in 1851, taking his, uh, authority under the law very seriously. He interviewed architects during cabinet meetings and it doesn't appear that Jefferson Davis or any other members from the House or Senate committees were at these cabinet meetings. They were, however, part of a very small Washington scene, knew what had gone on, advised their favorites. I'm sure there's a lot of politicking involved.

Speaker 1: Jefferson Davis left the Senate in early 1850s to run unsuccessfully for governor but ultimately in 1853 he was appointed secretary of war by Franklin Pierce. Um, during that early era, Jefferson Davis somehow was able to get the authority for the Capitol extension project taken from the Interior Department and brought into the Secretary of War, War's Department. Talk to us about that.

William Allen: The, um, supervision of the Capitol extension was entrusted to the architect that was selected by President Fillmore, a man by the name of Thomas U. Walter in Philadelphia, distinguished architect with a good deal of experience despite a relatively young age. He began construction of the Capitol extension, uh, in 1851, in the summer, um, employing about 800 hands building the two wings. Uh, like so many other large construction projects occurring in Washington before and since, controversy soon grew up around the construction. There were disappointed contractors who accused the architect of, uh, accepting bad materials or bad workmanship when in reality they were just out for revenge for not getting contracts. There were workmen who were fired for incompetency or, or not showing up or drunkenness or
whatever, and they would of course write letters to their representatives and senators, filled with unsubstantiated charges against the architect. What this led up to by the time Jefferson Davis reappears in Washington was the conclusion of an investigation into the Capitol extension project that resulted in a censure of the, of the architect for not paying close enough attention to the business aspects of his job. This gave Davis the perfect opportunity to suggest to the new president that perhaps the, uh, the, the Army Corps of Engineers would be a better agency of the government to oversee construction, rather than the agency heretofore, which was the Department of the Interior. The Army Corps of Engineers was, after all, the government's premier bureau when it came to construction matters. So the combination of Davis's own personal interest in the Capitol extension--he was, after all, the father of the Capitol extension--and this unfortunate bad publicity, most of which I think was undeserved, that had surrounded the architect, prompted President Pierce to remove the Capitol extension from the Department of the Interior and place it directly under Jefferson Davis and the Department of War.

Speaker 1: Did it help that Jefferson Davis had such a close friendship with the new president around this time?

William Allen: He certainly, I think Davis' friendship with the president, um, was helpful in getting whatever Davis wanted, but I think also Davis was the most forceful member of, of Davis, of, um, Franklin Pierce's cabinet, and he was the person who I think was very persuasive and Frank Pierce was more than happy to acquiesce to Davis's wishes.

Speaker 1: A new architect came in, his name Montgomery Meigs, is that how you say it?

William Allen: Meigs, supervising engineer.

Speaker 1: Supervising engineer came in and offered some plans and those plans were approved by Davis and then given to President Pierce. How was Davis able to get President Pierce to approve those plans?
The first immediate effect that Davis' superintendency of the Capitol extension is when the plans for those two wings were altered, the very, very beginning part of the administration of Frank Pierce. And this primarily concerned the location of the House chamber in the south wing and the Senate chamber in the north wing. Originally, the architect had planned to place these chambers at the western end of the wings where they would be lighted and ventilated through windows and the senators or the congressmen could enjoy garden views of the Mall. The beginning of the Pierce administration, when the works were transferred to the Army Corps of Engineers, and soon after Jefferson Davis appointed Captain Montgomery Meigs of the Army Corps of Engineers to undertake the day-to-day supervision of the Capitol extension, very shortly thereafter, Meigs came up with this idea that the chambers ought to be located in the center of each of the wings, where they would be insulated from outside noises by committee rooms and corridors and the senators in the north wing and the members of the House of Representatives in the south wing could in their wonderful isolation concentrate on the work at hand, on the legislative business of the nation, undetracted from whatever might be outside the Capitol, they could concentrate on the people's business. And with the architect they worked out the revisions to the design and I think Jefferson Davis, certainly judging by his later defense of this change, probably had something to do with it, although the documents do not, do not tell us in so many words, it certainly makes sense because Davis was passionate about the, the rightness of this, of this move, moving the chambers to the center of the wings.

And is that move considered to have been a wise move?

The move was defended by Davis eloquently in the chamber when he returned to the Senate after his term as secretary of war. He defended passionately against critics who pointed out the fact that the, the Senate chamber had no windows, they couldn't see where the air was coming from, they didn't like the idea that fresh air was being literally pumped into the room through steam-powered fans, they couldn't see the fans, they didn't know where the air was coming from. Uh, sometimes it was smelly, sometimes it was dusty, and complaints were legion from Davis's time all the way to the 1920s, when finally the complaints were silenced after the rooms were air conditioned.
Speaker 1: Uh, in your article you mention there was some drawings and stuff. Is that something that we can have access to?

William Allen: They're in our records center over in the Ford Building [office of the Architect of the Capitol].

Speaker 1: Okay. So if you can note that ****. Um –

William Allen: You'll probably be shown photographs of them.

Speaker 1: That's fine.

William Allen: Which I, I can give you photographs of them.

Speaker 1: Oh, you have photographs? Oh, that'd be –

William Allen: Yeah, they've all been photographed.

Speaker 1: Oh, terrific. Um, not surprisingly around this time, there was apparently some disagreeable behavior coming from the House of Representatives. How was Jefferson Davis able to handle the bickering going on in the Congress when he was now out of the Congress and in the secretary of war's office?

William Allen: Which bickering are you – there's so much bickering, I mean –

Speaker 1: Well, Mr. Stanton, I mean, wasn't Richard Stanton kind of at a certain level, was he more allied with Jefferson Davis's views or was he more of a, an, a, an enemy during that time?
William Allen: Uh, Richard Stanton, a congressman from Kentucky, uh, who had been the chairman of the House Committee on Public Buildings at the same time Davis was a member of the Senate Committee on Public Buildings, uh, grew to, uh, dislike the management of the Capitol extension when it was transferred to the War Department. He disliked it for a number of reasons, but principally because his friendship with the architect, Thomas U. Walter, had grown and his respect for the architect had been undiminished by the scandals, uh, in the late Fillmore administration. He did not like the idea of military supervising a civilian construction project. He said, this is not a fort, this is not a military encampment. The Army Corps of Engineers is trained to devise fortifications and other such matters. They are not trained in civilian construction projects. And he wished the military to be relieved of their duties here and the control returned to the architect. Of course, this very much went against Jefferson Davis's view of the situation and they became over this matter to be political enemies, although they maintained the same party affiliation. They were both Democrats.

Speaker 1: How did Jefferson Davis handle these attacks on this issue?

William Allen: Well, generally, he ignored them. The attacks came, uh, on, on speeches on the floor of the House and he didn't, uh, particularly pay attention to them. When the attacks took the form of requests from Congress, a formal request from Congress to the president for reports, then of course Davis snapped into action, got Montgomery Meigs on board, and they would report back the facts of whatever was being, uh, requested of them.

Speaker 1: Ultimately these attacks went nowhere, uh, Jefferson Davis's vision progressed nicely. How was he able to fight off these attacks?

William Allen: Well, most of the attack, uh, the attacks against the management of the Capitol extension project were rebuffed simply by showing the facts of the case, that it was, despite the fact that it was an enormous construction project, uh, that would always of course by its sheer scale invite controversy and invite some sort of shenanigans from contractors or disgruntled workmen. Um, Meigs and Davis were able to show through their very careful, meticulous records that any kind of malfeasance was unfounded, and the attacks generally were
thwarted in that way. Now, there were other kinds of attacks against the, the, the artwork for instance in the Capitol extension, which was very controversial. Uh, that was not so successfully, uh, rebuffed and, and Congress did put a prohibition about spending money on further artworks although anything that had been already started could be finished.

Other Speaker: Hold on one second. Mr. Allen, would you like, uh, some water?

William Allen: I'd like to have a bourbon but I guess water will –

[pause in tape]

Other Speaker: **** and go ahead ****.

Speaker 1: Please describe the relationship between Jefferson Davis and Mr. Meigs.

William Allen: Well, Davis appointed Meigs, uh, shortly after Davis assumed the, uh, position of Secretary of War and he appointed Meigs a couple days after the works at the Capitol came under his, his authority. And they were both graduates of West Point. Meigs was a little younger, he was 36 years old when he came to the job that Jefferson Davis appointed him to. He was a captain in the, in a Army Corps of Engineers, so there was an obvious difference in rank. But from what I can find, there was nothing but the utmost respect of both Davis for Meigs and Meigs for Davis. Certainly Meigs relied on Jefferson Davis for political support during rough times when he was being attacked. Davis was unfailing in his support of Meigs, both when he was Secretary of War and later when he returned to the Senate. He supported Meigs, uh, to the last in the Senate. And we get glimpses of their relationship and I see a, a, not a father-son relationship but a relationship of an artist and patron for when, uh, the, when Meigs who was also in charge of the Washington Aqueduct project learned that water was first being introduced into the then partially completed aqueduct, uh, and that would, the water would be reaching Capitol Hill in a few minutes, he sent for Jefferson Davis and they met in the Senate chamber, the new Senate chamber and walked over to the library portico, the west central portico and together they watched Potomac water playing in a new fountain at the foot of Capitol Hill. And the, the, the sense in the description of that, uh, that day that we find in Meigs' journal gives me the impression that, that Meigs was, was, was very interested in pleasing Davis personally as
well as professionally and it's sort of the way a, a, an artist would want to please his patron for whom he knows, you know, all, all of his, his good works flow from the patronage of, of this great man.

Speaker 1: How did Mr. Davis and Mr. Meigs' relationship, uh, progress once the War Between the States broke out?

William Allen: Once the Civil War broke out, and once the, the, Davis', um, career took, um, its turn and Montgomery Meigs of course remained in the Union Army and then being appointed, uh, Quartermaster General of the Union Army by, by President Lincoln, um, Meigs was embittered by many of his previous relationships with southerners who he felt betrayed the, the nation and he took revenge if you will in, in rather interesting ways because for instance Jefferson Davis' name had been inscribed in the Kevin John Bridge which was a major part of the Washington Aqueduct, a major engineering feat, quite famous, uh, for many years and after the Civil War broke out, Meigs had Davis' name removed from the Washington Aqueduct. Um, sort of out of, of petty spite. There were also, uh, more minor assistant engineers, uh, who had worked for Meigs who joined the Confederate cause and their names too were stricken from any kind of public display.

Speaker 1: Was Mr. Davis aware that Mr. Meigs was engaging in this activity?

William Allen: I don't think so. I don't know.

Speaker 1: Did he become aware after the Civil War that he engaged in this activity?

William Allen: Again, I, I don't know.

Speaker 1: Okay. Uh, why don't we stop tape because I want to go to

PART 2
Other Speaker: Davis, Davis is interested in engineering. We talked about Cabin John Bridge and he was –

Other Speaker: **** and go ahead ****.

Speaker 1: Are there projects other than the capitol that Mr. Davis and Mr. Meigs worked on together?

William Allen: There was an amazing amount of construction activity going on, um, under Davis's supervision in the Pierce administration. Uh, there was, of course, the Capitol extension project, uh, but there was also the Washington Aqueduct project, which was also being supervised by Montgomery Meigs under Davis. Meigs was the, uh, the engineer who designed this elaborate and very ambitious project to bring water from the upper Potomac River to the City of Washington, not only for, um, uh, drinking water, but also for fire protection, but there was, uh, the enlargement of the Patent Office, which was a monumental, uh, building that was being doubled in size, designed by [Thomas U.] Walter, but being supervised by Meigs. There was the enlargement of the, uh, of the city Post Office building, also designed by the architect and supervised by the engineer, all under the supervision of the secretary of war.

Speaker 1: Back to the Capitol: Meigs presented two designs [for the statue atop the dome] to Mr. Davis and Mr. Davis apparently approved of the second design, but he had some concerns about the liberty cap. Could you talk to us about the controversy surrounding the liberty cap?

William Allen: Soon after Congress appropriated money for the removal of the old wooden dome and its replacement by a cast iron dome of considerable elaborateness, and, and the new dome was to be crowned by a statue. Now, when the architect, Walter, made his preliminary design for the Capitol dome, he indicated the presence of a statue at its very top, but he did not have a notion or an idea of what the Capitol's new dome, the statue on the new dome, would look like, he didn't know who it would represent, whether it would be a portrait statue or an allegorical statue. He simply indicated that yes, there would be a statue at the very top. Um, soon after the appropriation passed, Montgomery Meigs wrote his favorite sculptor, who was an
American working in Rome, by the name of Thomas Crawford. He wrote Crawford and asked Crawford to come up with an idea for a statue for the top of the new dome, and in that letter he says that he has thought of maybe Mercury or maybe, uh, uh, some other allegorical figure, but he knew one thing, he didn't want another George Washington. He was quite sure that the capitol had enough George Washingtons, so the artist himself wrote back and he said that he thought the figure should represent freedom, triumphant in war and peace, which was a subject that I think appeals quite naturally to a military man like Meigs. The, um, statue was commissioned, the artist was given permission to go ahead, and the first design that came was of something that was not acceptable because it did not have the right kind of base that would actually fit on top of the dome that was then being, uh, designed in, in a, in a, in a firm manner and in Walter's drafting room actually coming up with the details. So it came back when, the artist came back with a second design, and the second design had a pedestal that would actually fit on the new dome design, a very nice transitional element that Meigs had requested, that was fine, but the, the figure had a, um, a flowing robe, as one might expect in an allegorical figure, and it had a liberty cap, which is a floppy cap worn by freed slaves in ancient Rome as a badge of their freedom, and Meigs took the photograph of the model. The model actually was made, uh, the small model was made in clay by the artist in his studio in Rome. The clay model was then photographed and the photograph mailed to America, so Meigs had a photograph of the, of the, of the model. He also had a photograph of the first one, which he himself had rejected. He took both of these photographs to the secretary of war and left 'em with him, and the secretary of war sort of mulled over the designs and he wrote Captain Meigs a letter back and said that he liked the second design. He thought the second design had grace and beauty, but he did not like the fact that she wore a liberty cap. He said that American freedom cannot be symbolized by the badge of a freed slave because Americans in his view had never been enslaved.

Speaker 1: How did Mr. Meigs react to that viewpoint?

William Allen: Meigs was obedient. He does not tell us whether he agreed with the secretary of war or disagreed with the secretary of war. The secretary of war had made his decision and instructed Meigs to send the photograph back to the artist with a note to change the headgear.
Speaker 1: And what was that change?

William Allen: The artist also was obedient and the artist cheerfully replied with, uh, a letter saying that he had changed the headdress from the liberty cap to an eagle's head and feathers, something that would remind us of our Native Indian tribes of the west, and he thought the, the design would therefore look more American.

Speaker 1: And how did Jefferson Davis like that design?

William Allen: He was well pleased with that design. He thought that this eagle's head and the feathers which rested on a helmet was much more –

Speaker 1: **** if you could include Mr. Davis’s name in that answer. Yeah, he just included it.

William Allen: Okay, um, the design that was sent to the secretary of war, Jefferson Davis, was approved by Davis. He liked the eagle's head, he liked the feathers, and he liked the fact that they were part of a helmet, which was much more natural for a, uh, figure representing war, in his view.

Speaker 1: Now, Mr. Davis had been active early in his career in various battles with Indians. He had formed a close relationship, ironically, with, uh, Black Hawk. Did it seem peculiar that he would use an Indian as a symbol of freedom when he was involved in several skirmishes with Indians?

William Allen: Well, let's, let's be clear. The figure is not an Indian. The, the figure is an allegorical representation of freedom, a classical figure. Um, her attributes include this Indian's headdress but that does not make the figure an Indian. It's an allegorical figure.
Speaker 1: What about the use of an Indian, an Indian headdress, um, was that at all a, a source of contention?

William Allen: Not at all. Not in Davis’s mind. He approved it.

Speaker 1: Um, did information, uh, ever get released to Mr. Davis’s contemporaries –

William Allen: Mm mm. [clears throat]

Speaker 1: – that he had vetoed the initial liberty cap because of his concerns about, um, representations of freed slaves.

William Allen: I'm not sure, and it's a very interesting question, but I am not sure how well known in contemporary Washington this story was. Uh, it doesn't seem to have made it into the papers. It doesn't seem to have stirred up any controversy. Uh, perhaps there was just too much other controversies going on that this was not, uh, front-page news. Um, but it, it seems to have been handled between the three principal people involved--Jefferson Davis, Montgomery Meigs, and Thomas Crawford.

Speaker 1: Speculating, of course, if it had been released to the press and information got out about Mr. Davis’s veto of liberty cap, would it have resulted in another North/South battle in the, uh, in the Congress?

William Allen: I don't know whether a battle would've been fought over something purely symbolic when there were so many other things that had more immediate consequences. Uh, Jefferson Davis was usually deferred to, certainly, in, by many people in the House and Senate, in matter relating to art because he was considered to be a man of very, very good taste and this would've been considered to be a matter of taste and I think they would've deferred to the secretary of war.
Speaker 1: Uh, after the Pierce administration ended, Mr. Davis returned to the Senate. How did he continue his passion for the Capitol extension upon reentering the United States Senate?

William Allen: When Davis rejoined the Senate after his term of secretary of war was over, he immediately became the chairman of the Senate Committee on Military Affairs and as such had control over the appropriations for the Capitol extension which were as, after all, the money went through the War Department for the building of the Capitol extension and the new dome, so he was, uh, you know, in a great position to control, uh, matters regarding the funding of these projects, uh, matters regarding the progress of the construction, the nature, any kind of questions that would come up, he would certainly be able to, uh, to assist Meigs in, in his continuation of the policies implemented in the previous administration.

Speaker 1: Given the controversy that surrounded the Capitol extension, was there any opposition to Mr. Davis assuming the chairmanship of the Military Affairs Committee because obviously he would continue to have such a pivotal role in its, in its, uh, extension?

William Allen: I, I don't know that any opposition to Jefferson Davis’s chairmanship would have involved the Capitol extension. There may have been other areas that enemies would have objected to Davis being the chairman, but it wouldn't've been the Capitol extension because he was considered, rightly so, the person most familiar with this project. He was there at the beginning. He was there, uh, the last 4 years. He was there when the new dome was authorized. He was there at all the pivotal crucial moments and so I think, uh, most members of, of the House and Senate would've been kind of relieved that someone of that experience would, would actually be supervising and having the say over this matter.

Speaker 1: You mentioned that Mr. Davis was considered a man of taste. Regardless, there were certain members of Congress who criticized the decorations of various portions of the new Capitol, uh, making complaints about the fact that the color scheme was bright and polychromat, polychromatic. Um, Mr. Davis dealt with those criticisms quite well. Why don't you talk to us about, uh, those battles back and forth on the actual decoration of the Capitol?
William Allen: One of the most interesting and controversial aspects of the Capitol extension were the interior decorations that were being undertaken by a whole army of painters and stucco artists and, um, uh, sculptors, all manner of, of people, many of whom, of course, were a foreign, uh, extraction who came to Washington to, uh, uh, in search of employment and the largest construction project of the age was going on here, and Meigs was delighted to have, uh, available to him so many talented artists. And he put them to work, put, uh, draw, uh, painting murals on the walls and ceilings to, to bring this building up to a European standard of, of excellence. That seemed to be particularly important to Jefferson Davis. Jefferson Davis seemed from the very beginning to be highly concerned with the opinion of Europeans about this building and so he set about with Montgomery Meigs to make sure that this building would be, uh, something that everyone could be proud of and would not be the object of ridicule by condescending Europeans. But like any matter, uh, dealing with the realm of taste, what is art? What is American art? What makes, uh, art American or, or foreign? These matters are, uh, certainly the grist for a lot of controversy and there were untold members of particularly the House of Representatives who rose and gave wonderfully flowery speeches about the, the desecration of the Capitol at the hands of immigrants and the, the gaudy, uh, tawdry decorations which were allowed to be a stain on the American character. And these, these oratorical flourishes that just, that soar, in particularly in the House of Representatives, are great fun to read 'cause they, they really, 'cause we look around and we see the decorations today and you hardly can recognize them if you read these, these descriptions. And, of course, Davis is, is being criticized, Meigs is being criticized, and the artists are being criticized. And they're being criticized by, uh, for a number of things, most often for making the Capitol look like an un-American building. So you get to whole issue of what constitute American art and, um, uh, there is one particular wonder, wonderful, uh, exchange between Jefferson Davis and a senator from, uh, Vermont. Soon after the House of Representatives moves from its old hall into its new chamber at the end of 1857, and, uh, Jacob Collamer gets up in the Senate and he says that he, uh, he's been over to see the new House chamber and he finds it to be just, you know, more colors than in Joseph's coat, uh, full of tinsel and gaudy, uh, gold leaf decorations, and he was certainly hoping that the, the polychrome, all the different colors, that kind of polychromy would be spared in the new Senate chamber. He hoped a more, more chaste look would prevail and he sat down and Jefferson Davis rose. Jefferson Davis looked at him and said he would be
surprised at the Senate if it would be contented by a crude notion of only one color on its walls. The artist, uh, known for his talents come out when he blends the colors and puts the different colors together to create a harmonious whole, and he would be absolutely surprised that, that the Senate of the United States would be content with something that was, uh, plain like one, one color. He called it a “crude notion.”

Speaker 1: How did his Senate colleagues, um, respond to his, his defense of the polychromatic schemes?

William Allen: Well, I can say that there was a spirit of compromise still in place in the 1850s and the Senate chamber was not as brightly decorated as the House chamber and I think, uh, some of what Jacob Collamer had said, uh, persuaded those in charge to sort of tone it down a little bit, to calm it down, but Jefferson Davis’s uh, desire for a richly decorated and richly, uh, painted interior also prevailed. It probably wasn't just quite as bright as maybe Davis would've liked.

Speaker 1: You mentioned Senator Collamer was from Vermont.

William Allen: Mm hmm.

Speaker 1: Was any of this debate tinged at all by a North/South rivalry?

William Allen: It's tempting to see, uh, in the, the critics a sectional, uh, rift and very often I find that it was northern men who would be criticizing, uh, Davis and the Capitol extension more often than southern men. That is not to say southern men didn't share some of the northern men's ideas, you know, theories and, and, and opinions and vice versa. But, um, I, I do know one of Davis’s last great defense of the Capitol extension occurred in 1860, when a, uh, senator from, from New Hampshire rose to support relocation, actually rebuilding the Senate chamber from its interior position, uh, back to the western walls, and, uh, uh, it was a blistering condemnation of the room in which they were standing and the room that Jefferson Davis as secretary of war had approved as the, the, the move from the western walls to the interior and
Davis with, with biting sarcasm replied that, um, um, if the gentleman from New Hampshire wished a window, then why not leave the Senate chamber and by all means go off and find a window. The Senate would miss his counsel but, uh, you know, be gone if you must. Uh, we don't need a window. This room is the best room for debate that's ever been built. And, uh, you know, once the, the, the, Jefferson Davis took his seat, the, the vote was taken for relocating the chamber and, and the, the proponents of moving the chamber only could muster eight votes. Uh, now the fact that the senator from New Hampshire was a northern man, did that factor in? I, I don't know. I don't know.

Speaker 1: By the late 1850s, Mr. Meigs was under a serious attack and ultimately was, uh, removed from office. How did Jefferson Davis handle the attacks of Mr. Meigs and how did he come to his defense/

William Allen: Jefferson Davis took every opportunity to defend Montgomery Meigs against the, uh, critics in the War Department and in the, uh, the Congress. These, uh, uh, critics were not altogether the most honorable of, of people. For instance, the, the secretary of war who succeeded Davis in the cabinet in the administration of James Buchanan was a rather shady character from Virginia named John B. Floyd. John B. Floyd's handling of Montgomery Meigs was entirely different of Davis's handling of the same person. Whereas Davis and Meigs had enjoyed a cordial relationship built on mutual respect, John B. Floyd looked at Meigs as an instrument by which to enrich Democratic party friends, uh, a person who could maybe steer contracts in a favorable way to reward the faithful. He saw the Capitol extension in an entirely different view and he soon locked horns with Meigs, who was scrupulously honest and was, uh, not as obedient as the new secretary of war would've wished, and on the floor of the Senate, when these attacks would be discussed, the attacks and the controversy between John B. Floyd in the War Department and Montgomery Meigs, the Corps of Engineers, these were often discussed on the floor of the Senate, and Jefferson Davis was always to be counted on to defend Meigs.

Speaker 1: Why is it that Jefferson Davis and his allies were unable to save Mr. Meigs from ultimate removal from office?
The controversies in the War Department, the battles between the secretary of war, John B. Floyd, and Montgomery Meigs went on for 2 years. Uh, it should've been the object of the, the controversy should have not been allowed to fester for so long but be that as it may, that's hindsight because Meigs had his allies, including Jefferson Davis in the Senate. John B. Floyd had his allies in the administration and also in the Congress. So the problem was we had a really weak president in, in James Buchanan. Uh, a weaker president than we'd probably never seen in our country, and this man was, the president was simply not willing to make a decision and to, to put his foot down and say, you know, this, this cannot go on. So for 2 years, this controversy dragged on and festered here in Washington. And just ultimately the, the secretary of war, uh, won this particular battle. He won in the short run but not in the long run.

Speaker 1: Explain why.

Well, in the long run, of course, when the outbreak of the Civil War occurred, uh, John B. Floyd was the first cabinet secretary to be sent packing. He left Washington, not before sending a large cache of munitions to the South.

Speaker 1: Mm hmm.

Um, but he was the, uh, he was the first cabinet member to, to, to be booted out.

Um, as 1860 dawned, it was becoming more and more evident that secession was just around the corner. Um, Jefferson Davis, of course, was not at, uh, a huge proponent of secession, not a fire-eater, um, given those conflicting feelings he must have had inside, did he continue though to pay strong attention to his pet project, that being the Capitol extension, throughout 1860?

He never lost interest in the Capitol extension, and I think one of the most poignant reminders of this is a photograph taken of a, uh, column being hoisted onto the, uh,
connecting corridor, that little corridor – although it, it’s wonderfully grand but a small detail of the Capitol extension – that connects the old building with the, with the new south wing, there standing just to the right of hoisted column is Jefferson Davis and next to him is the architect, Thomas U. Walter, showing that even though, uh, uh, the architect and the senator from Mississippi did not have a warm personal relationship, they both had a great deal of interest obviously in seeing the Capitol extension finished, and Davis would routinely visit the construction site, inspect the works, get a notion how things were going, and this photograph taken just a few weeks before Davis leaves the Senate – it was taken in November of 1860 – shows right up to the end that Davis was intimately involved in the, in the Capitol extension.

Speaker 1: The extension was concluded at some point during the Civil War and, uh, the Union used the Capitol completion as kind of a, a rallying cry and almost a metaphor for the Union success. Do you have any idea of how Mr. Davis may have felt, sitting in Richmond, knowing that the Capitol had been concluded? He was the individual that was the father of the Capitol and yet he was not part of, of, of this, uh, grand completion.

William Allen: I, I don't know the answer to that question. I do know that there were members of Davis’s cabinet who, at the conclusion of the, of the war were very interested in the latest news about the Capitol. The, uh, secretary of state [1861-62] in Davis’s cabinet was Richard [R. M. T.] Hunter of Virginia. Richard [Robert] Hunter had been the chairman of the Senate Committee on Public Buildings when Jefferson Davis was one of its three members back in 1850, back when Davis took the lead in writing the legislation for the Capitol extension and for getting the money through, into a bill that was eventually signed by the president, which funded this vast enlargement of the national Capitol. Richard [Robert] Hunter, uh, at the conclusion of the war, near the conclusion of the war, is famous for having asked, how goes the Capitol? Is it finished yet? And I suspect that Davis, to himself or probably wanted the same question answered. Uh, it's simply not recorded.

Speaker 1: Do we know if Jefferson Davis ever visited the completed Capitol?

William Allen: I don't believe he ever returned to Washington.
Speaker 1: Um, talk to us about the room next door, uh, which is Davis’s office during his chairmanship of Military Affairs. What's gonna happen, just so you know is, we'll hear your voice and then we'll be talking about the room.

William Allen: When, um, Davis returned to the Senate in, in 1857, the rooms in the Capitol extension were beginning to be completed. The building had been under construction for 6 years. Members of the House and Senate were anxious to, uh, get out of their cramped quarters in the old center building and to be allowed to use the rooms in the, in the new part, and no more so than Jefferson Davis. Jefferson Davis could not wait to take over, to take occupancy of the room that would be assigned to the Committee on Military Affairs. And this room was in process of being decorated. It was being decorated by a variety of artists, including Constantino Brumidi, the great Italian fresco artist, who worked here for 25 years. Uh, but also, English artists and others were working in the room. And the decorations were not finished, by any stretch of the imagination, in 1858, when the room was handed over to Davis and his committee. And we have to remember that one of the great privileges of being a chairman of a committee in this period was the fact that that room became your office. The Senate did not acquire, or did not build its first office building until the early 20th century. Senators were not accorded their own office until 1909. So, prior to that, it was the committee chairmen [who] were the only senators who had their own rooms in the Capitol. They used the committee rooms, uh, under their jurisdiction as their personal office. So Davis moved into the Committee on Military Affairs [room] in 1858, a full year before the Senate actually moved from its old chamber in the center building to its new room in the north wing. But the rooms – other rooms were being occupied such as Davis’s room – uh, prior to that, to that move in 1859. And the room is decorated ah, as, uh, very appropriately with scenes from the American Revolution. We have scenes of the Boston Massacre, scenes of Valley Forge, all, uh, uh, artistic embellishments so appropriate to a room on military affairs.

Speaker 1: Other than the modern conveniences that we have in the 21st century, does the room appear today as it did in 1858?
William Allen: The room is just as Davis would've known it, except in his time, the decorations had not been completed, so some of the, uh, murals that you see would've been just blank, but the, certainly, the, the decorations were on their way and he would recognize the room, um, today -- instantly, yes.

Speaker 1: Is there any –

Other Speaker: Can I change the tape on this?

Speaker 1: We're gonna change the tape, yeah. We're getting to the conclusion although –

PART 3

Other Speaker: All the good stuff.

Speaker 1: I'm gonna ask you one last question, and you may get questions from other members of the team, but always –

William Allen: From the studio audience.

Speaker 1: – look at me, even though you may hear a voice –

William Allen: Okay.

Speaker 1: – from other directions.

William Allen: I gotch you.

Speaker 1: Um, what is Jefferson Davis' legacy, as it relates to the United States Capitol?

William Allen: Davis' legacy is, is a very important contribution as a, as a, as a key player, uh, among a small handful of men that we now look back as towering figures in this very
important episode in the Capitol, who transformed a small, rather idiosyncratic building that had been begun by George Washington in 1793, had been nurtured through the Jefferson administration and burned by the British in the War of 1812, finally drawn to a conclusion at the beginning of the Jackson administration. But, all in all, a small building built for a nation of, uh, originally of, uh, just 15 states, when Washington approved the design. And we see at a crucial moment in the 1850s that the building is about to be transformed; and it can be transformed for good, or it could be transformed into an unrecognizable building with no, uh, resemblance to the building that Washington had approved. And what we have, thankfully and gratefully, is a building that has been transformed into the, this magnificent structure that commands the world's respect, uh, a building that has been admired for its grace and its beauty; and in the hands of lesser men, it could've been a much different and far less satisfactory outcome. But we have Davis; we have the architect, Walter; we have Montgomery Meigs; we have a cast of thousand lesser individuals, but the, the key people steered the project through very, very tough times, could've been tough times, in the creation of what is a symbol of national pride today.

Speaker 1: What qualities do you believe Jefferson Davis had that allowed him to become such a towering champion of this national monument?

William Allen: Well, Davis was self-assured. He had a clear idea that the Capitol should be as good as Americans could make it. He wished it to be as good as, as all the artists and all the money and all the good design talents at our disposal could make this building. He wished it to be a everlasting monument to his credit, to the credit of, of the president, Franklin Pierce, to all the artists. He wished it to be a source of national pride. He also had loyalty. He was very loyal to the people who served him well, and relationship of Jefferson Davis and Montgomery Meigs, I think, is, is a good expression of, of that loyalty.

Speaker 1: Brian?

Other Speaker: What is the significance, if any, of the room we're in right now?
William Allen: The Committee on Appropriations holds their hearings in a room that was originally designed for the Committee on Naval Affairs, and it is a room like the adjoining room, the Committee on, uh, Military Affairs, that excited a great deal of comment when it was finished in the 1850s. It is a room completely covered from the floor to the ceiling with murals, uh, painted by European artists, representing, uh, and a, and it was sort of a Pompeian framework, various aspects of naval life, naval mythology. Uh, maidens of the sea can be found, uh, on the walls holding instruments of navigation and of ship-building. The, uh, the room expresses the, the work of its original occupant, the Committee on Naval Affairs, and it does it in a way that is very unlike other American interiors at the time, hence, the source of so much controversy.

Other Speaker: Second question is: As a architectural historian, um, through the early 1800s to when the final completion of the Capitol, both the North and South seemingly had very different tastes in terms of building and design and construction; and did that actually play itself out, those thought patterns, those ideologies of, of the way things should look in terms of playing themselves out on the stage of the Capitol? And then, if so, how was Jefferson Davis able to get his aesthetic through in terms of the ultimate design of the Capitol?

William Allen: Well, I think you will find, if you look at the, at the architectural history of the country in the 1830s and '40s, in the era just preceding the Capitol extension, when Davis becomes a key player, we find actually a decline in regionalism. Uh, we find that, for instance, the Greek revival is the first national style in our architectural history. It is the first style that spreads across the land. Um, yes, it may be expressed differently in the South, where weather conditions demand that the sun's rays be kept off the walls to get porches and overhangs much more than in the North, but the, the style itself is just being expressed differently. So I think instead of seeing more regionalism in that time period, we're seeing actually less regionalism in, in, in some respects; and I think Davis, his influence on this building, is mainly found on the interior. The exterior, one of the great things that the architect did was that he did not wish to transform, uh, the architectural style of the Capitol--he wished to enlarge it in a respectful way. So if you look on the outside of the Capitol, unless you know that the building was built in multiple stages, you probably would not detect that the, on the outside, that the building really is
an evolution because Walter took his clues from the old building. It is still a three-story building. It is still Corinthian. He did not make it Gothic, for instance. So, on the outside, we, we have a slightly different situation, and we find on the inside, uh, the, the differences between the old building and the new building are much more startling; and that's where Davis comes in, the promotion of the, of the elegance, of, of use of artwork for everything from door handles to stair railings. Every opportunity to employ the fine arts in the Capitol was being encouraged by the secretary of war, unlike the old building, which was done in a different, pre-industrial time, without the use of, uh, many, uh, artists, although some were available, uh, in that early period to help, uh, give the building a higher finish. But if you go, look to the center of the Capitol, you will find a pre-industrial interior much, much plainer in its finish than in the Capitol extensions, in these wings where we are today, uh, much more elaborate, much, much more artistically finished interior.

Other Speaker: One last question: Uh, the hope of, or the desire of those like Jefferson Davis in that era, era, if you could contrast what they wanted both the country and the world to both see and feel, as they viewed this building, versus, say, the notions of the senators and the representatives and the legislators who go through these halls today, what do they want the country to see and feel? When you have access to people's journals, both talkin' about Meigs' journal and Davis' writings, how, has it changed, or is it similar to, to what this building is to represent both to this country and to the, abroad?

William Allen: Well, I think, and this is, this is my speculation, that in Davis' time period, in the 1850s, when he insisted that the building be decorated by, uh, the best artists available to the project, he was, I think, reacting to some of the less-than-kind remarks universally heard from Europeans visiting this country; and these remarks, uh, often focused on the crude manners of Americans, the crude cloth used in our dress, the crude language that was used, always the spitting of tobacco juice, always very unfavorably reported upon by European visitors, uh, the general crudeness of American society, the fact that we were rather rough and tumble, backwoods, uh, sort of adventuresome, courageous, but sort of silly in our own right. And I think Jefferson Davis and others saw the Capitol extension as one way to begin to erase the impression that America was still a frontier society, that we had moved beyond that. Uh, we
were in a position to indulge in artistic luxuries, that we were, in fact, a sophisticated society with the same sort of capabilities and desires of European courts, uh, of course, with our particular democratic flair; but I think we, we see this in the insistence on, uh, on everything from, uh, the stair railings to the floor tiles, to the baseboards--everything about this building should be the finest. And I do believe that this is sort of a self-conscious reaction to negative, uh, uh, remarks by Europeans. Today, of course, we don't have that kind of self-consciousness. Um, we are, uh, the envy of the world, not its ridicule.

Speaker 1: Wendy? Anything?

Other Speaker: He already answered a few of ’em.

Speaker 1: Personal? Anything?

Other Speaker: Mm mm.

Speaker 1: Mr. Allen, anything you'd like to add? Anything that we have omitted, you'd like to embellish? Since you have some history in Mississippi, anything, any anecdotes you'd like to tell us about Mr. Davis? Um, or we can conclude.

William Allen: I'm, I'm tryin' to think. Um, I, I, I think it's interesting that Davis in his support of Montgomery Meigs becomes the enemy of the architect, Thomas U. Walter, who was one of the great, greatest men to ever work on this building; and it's, uh, the, the controversy between Meigs and Walter, of course, is, is a very interesting, although very sad, chapter in the history of, of the Capitol. And Davis plays, of course, a role in that; and I don't understand why, um, Jefferson Davis did not appreciate the contributions of the architect. He tried to get the architect dismissed a number of times. He thought that the engineer could design as well as the architect. Now, the engineer had design talents. There's no question about that, but I think they are not to be compared with the talents of a truly remarkably gifted architect such as Thomas U. Walter, the man who designed the Capitol extensions, and a little bit later, the Capitol dome. Uh,
this I don't understand, and it's a mystery, and I, I hope to find some letter, some diary down the
road that will clue me in as to why Jefferson Davis took such a personal dislike to the architect.

Speaker 1:   Could it –

William Allen:   Uh, to the point of not, not speaking to him.

Speaker 1:   – Could it have been that Mr. Davis was so blindly loyal to his friends, that
simply because Mr. Meigs was under attack, that was a good enough reason to oppose the
architect?

William Allen:   I think that's probably a reason.  I th, but I think that wou, that would, it
would, it would have to stop, start somewhere, uh, a little bit more bluntly with, uh, uh, maybe a,
an unsatisfactory ex, exchange at a, at the president's house, New Year's Day open house.  Um,
maybe the architect stepped on Mrs. Davis' dress or, I mean, just something minor, you know
how it can, something like that can fester in a man's mind.  A slight of perceived or, or real, that,
that occurred.  I don't know.

Speaker 1:   One last question.

Other Speaker:   And I have one, one last one.

Speaker 1:   Is there any evidence that Mrs. Davis was involved at all in the, um, architectural,
architectural or artistic flair of the Capitol?

William Allen:   Mrs. Davis shows up only one time in the correspondence that I've been
through, in that she, she shows up; and she, she admires a casting of a snake, and she says that
she wants to take it.  And it's a, it's a, a, a casting done onsite.  We had our own bronze foundry
here, uh, cranking out little ornaments such as these, these bronze door handles that, uh, one can
see still at the front door of the House of Representatives; and she, she took a fancy to it, and she
wanted it.  And, uh, her husband wrote, I think it was, I think Jefferson Davis, or somebody,
wrote and asked permission to, to, to, to give this to Mrs. Jefferson Davis; and, uh, the architect thought it was totally frivolous and, you know, why should we have to do this? But he complained privately, not publicly.

Speaker 1: Brian?

Other Speaker: I'd just like to end with a hypothetical; and, you know, just use your imagination and if, let's say, Jefferson Davis had not been a part of the, let's say he was a senator, let's say he wasn't even in the picture with his conviction, his passion for creating some significant portions, and some of the most significant portions of this Capitol, what do you think we would have today?

William Allen: I must've missed something with that question. If they –

Other Speaker: If, remove Davis completely from the equation, is this –

William Allen: Remove Davis from the equation.

Other Speaker: – what would we have today?

William Allen: I think in the interior design, I think we would have, I don't think we would have murals. I don't think we would have, um, I think we would have paintings on the wall, but they would be the more conventional mid-19th century ways of decorating wall surfaces, which is basically to divide the walls off into a panel situation but not to fill the panels, as we have, with mermaids and sea gods and that kinda thing. And I also think that the statue of freedom on top would have a liberty cap.

Other Speaker: Mm, uh, there's, there's one other thing.

William Allen: Please.
Other Speaker: That, you know, but, but there's one other thing, um, and we talked about, uh, Davis and his bein' an artist. Right?

William Allen: Um, Davis and Meigs, both being graduates of West Point, uh, had a love of art, which was probably instilled during their days at West Point, when they were obliged to take art classes, and they both were accomplished sketchers. Uh, they were, uh, quite good with the, with pen and paper themselves; and it's not surprising, therefore, to see that there was a major art campaign undertaken when Jefferson Davis is, um, in charge of the War Department, encouraging Montgomery Meigs to make the Capitol as good as he possibly can. And this, of course, would include the banishment of bare walls and the substitution of artistically decorated walls. He also thought it would be a very good economy because once you decorate the walls, you never have to do it again. It's cheaper than wallpaper, and, of course, that always appeals to, uh, to Americans; and I think the, uh, this interest in the artistic decoration of the Capitol is, I think, a very, very interesting byproduct of probably Jefferson Davis's and Montgomery Meigs' years at, at West Point.

Speaker 1: Do you believe that Mr. Davis gets the credit he deserves for his contribution to the Capitol extension?

William Allen: The, the idea of credit is such an interesting question because one of the great, the, the cornerstone of the controversy between the architect and the engineer was the whole matter of credit. Who designed the Capitol extension? Did the architect design it? Or did, because the architect worked for the engineer, did the engineer really deserve the credit? The same controversy about the dome: Did Walter, as the architect, design the dome, or did Montgomery Meigs design the dome? And an extension of that is: Should we say that Jefferson Davis designed the dome? Nobody, I don't think, has ever said that Davis deserves the credit as the designer of the dome; but all of these men had talents which brought the dome about, and I would argue that Walter had the principal design talent. Meigs had the principal construction talent, as many of the problems encountered in building the dome were solved by Meigs; and Davis had the political and administrative talent to make sure that these other two men could do their jobs.
Speaker 1: Thank you, sir.

Other Speaker: Thank you.

Other Speaker: We needed, I think we need some more time.

Other Speaker: Yeah, we need about, uh –

Other Speaker: 40

Other Speaker: – 40 seconds. Okay, so –

William Allen: Did you like it?

Other Speaker: Yeah, yeah it was good. We could –

Other Speaker: Um, room tone, it's about 30 seconds starting now.

Other Speaker: ****.

Other Speaker: Uh, anything else you want to say particular ****.

Other Speaker: ****.

Other Speaker: Okay, ****.

Other Speaker: ****.

Other Speaker: ****.
[at 20:37 to end of tape: pans and close-ups of interiors of Rooms S-127 and S-128, especially artwork and decoration, also of hallway door to S-128, Military Affairs Committee room in Davis’s time]

Other Speaker: No, I got a bunch of ****.

Other Speaker: ****.

Other Speaker: Right, you know what I mean.

Other Speaker: Yeah.

Other Speaker: ****.

Other Speaker: ****.

Speaker 1: That, you want some, ****.

Other Speaker: ****.

Other Speaker: Yeah, we'll move our equipment out ****.