

February 16, 2010



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**** PRESS ADVISORY ****

***BLACK MEN BUILT THE CAPITOL* AUTHOR TO SPEAK AT D.C. COURTS' BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENT**

WHERE: **Jurors' Lounge,
Moultrie Courthouse, 3rd Floor
500 Indiana Avenue, NW**

WHEN: **Friday, February 19, 2010, noon to 2pm**

Excerpt:

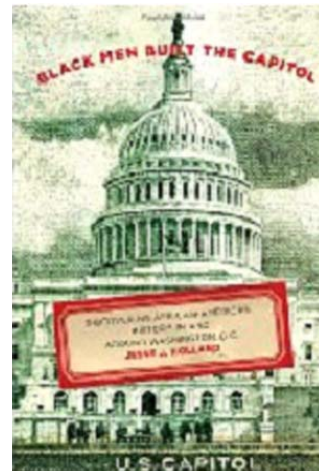
Historical records show African American slaves also are responsible for some of the most impressive architectural features inside the Capitol.

Some of these contributions are on display in Statuary Hall, the home of many of the statues donated by the 50 states to honor their greatest citizens and the original chamber of the House of Representatives.

Shaped like an ancient Greek amphitheater and the site of several presidential inaugurations, Congress was anxious to restore the room to its previous glory after British troops burned the Capitol during the War of 1812. To that end, the federal government contracted with a man named John Hartnet to provide the colossal columns of variegated Breccia marble to stand along the walls of House and Senate chambers. This marble was to be quarried from Noland's Ferry, Md., which was located along the Potomac River in an area that is now known as northern Montgomery County. But the choice of Hartnet proved to be a poor one because he was "woefully unprepared," according to William Allen, the architectural historian for the Architect of the Capitol who has written several books on the building's architecture and art.

Hartnet failed to quarry, cut and polish the marble from Noland's Ferry at the speed needed to complete the reconstruction of the House and Senate chambers, so the federal government decided to hire workers to complete the project, many of whom were slaves from nearby farms. While not paying these slaves for their work, the government provided clothing and temporary housing for these African American slaves as they successfully quarried, cut and polished the marble column shafts and sent them up the Potomac to Washington for placement. Those same marble shafts can now be seen along the walls of Statuary Hall and the old Senate chamber, one of the few places in the Capitol tourists can actually touch something historians and academics can positively attest was worked on by slaves.

The slaves' reward for their work was to be returned to the same enslavement in fields and farms from which they were brought, while their masters received payment from the federal government.



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Note: Cameras and recorders will be allowed into the courthouse for this event.