

THOLOS

VOLUME 25

USBG HIGHLIGHT

Long-Time Partnership
Yields Beautiful Results

MEET THE TEAM

Photography and
Technical Imaging Branch

FEATURE

Arboretum in the City



TABLE OF CONTENTS

FEATURE



4 FEATURE:
Arboretum in the City

USBG HIGHLIGHT



12 USBG HIGHLIGHT:
Long-Time Partnership
Yields Beautiful Results

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT



18 SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT:
Beyond the Dome: Fort Meade

MEET THE TEAM



22 MEET THE TEAM:
Photography and Technical
Imaging Branch

Arborists Matthew Arnold (left) and Matt Rawson cut down the 2022 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree so it can be recycled and made into musical instruments to be donated to local North Carolina communities.



FEATURE

ARBORETUM IN THE CITY

WRITTEN BY CAROL CAMPOS
PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS HATZENBUHLER

▼
Members of the Capitol Grounds & Arboretum Tree Care Division plant a new tree along the North Drive sidewalk (left to right: Henry Brady, Harper Martin, Aaron Rowe and Steven Graham).



Walking around the U.S. Capitol Grounds you can't help but be in awe of the impressive buildings and their historic meaning, what you probably don't know is that the U.S. Capitol Building is surrounded by an arboretum. The Capitol Grounds and Arboretum jurisdiction is a Level III-accredited arboretum recognized by ArbNet. This designation establishes the U.S. Capitol Grounds as one of 45 globally accredited arboreta that have at least 500 woody plant taxa, practice scientific research, promote conservation, and engage in public outreach and education to protect and preserve trees.

A team of professional arborists, urban foresters and plant health care specialists are responsible for the documentation and day-to-day care of over 4,800 trees and plants located throughout the 274-acre U.S. Capitol Grounds. This area includes lawns, parks, historic and commemorative trees, statuary, historic fountains and water features that provide an awe-inspiring setting for the U.S. Capitol.

The U.S. Capitol Grounds were designed by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted in a Capitol campus expansion project performed from 1874 to 1892. Olmsted used trees heavily in his design to both frame the building and provide

shade for visitors. There are about 890 trees immediately surrounding the U.S. Capitol Building; approximately 40 of the original trees planted in 1874 remain on the grounds today.

The work of the Capitol Grounds and Arboretum team is focused on preserving and improving Olmsted's legacy and the historical landscape. The Tree Care Division is a highly trained group of International Society of Arboriculture-certified arborists and licensed tree experts dedicated to the maintenance, documentation and overall care of the arboretum's woody plant collection. A team of arborists led by Steven Graham oversee tree health and risk assessment, tree planting, pruning, removals, emergency response, tree preservation, integrated pest management activities, and events such as memorial and commemorative tree planting ceremonies, and the Capitol Christmas Tree installation and lighting ceremony.

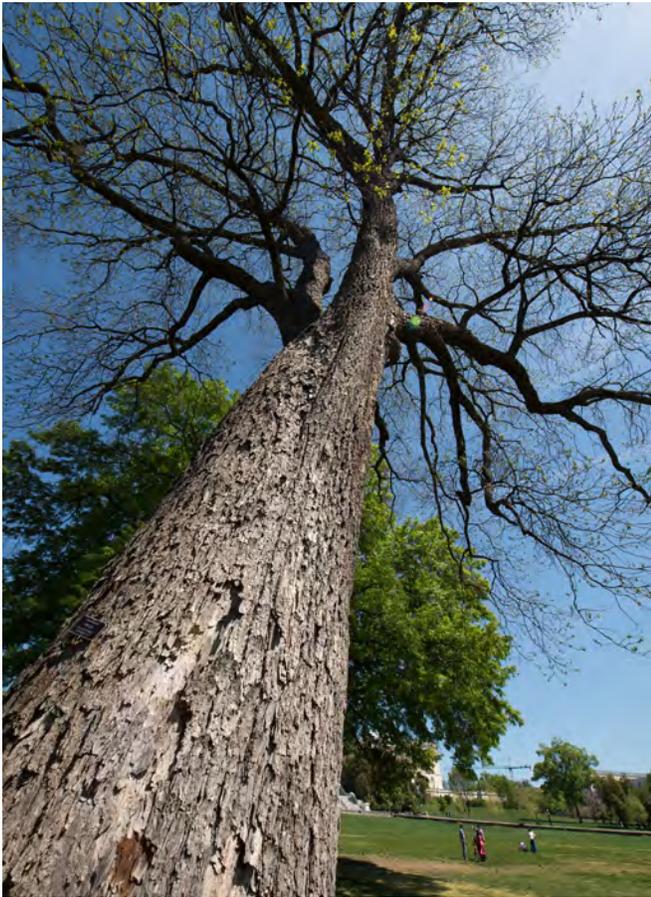
As part of routine maintenance around the Capitol campus, Melissa Westbrook, Capitol Grounds Urban Forester, and the arborist team use specialized tools to perform tree risk assessments. "We have several IML-RESI wood inspection drill systems that allow us to assess internal structural defects of trees that are not

"There are many magnificent trees on the Capitol Grounds, some nearly 200 years old, and I hope that the trees we choose to plant today will be on the grounds for hundreds of years into the future."

MELISSA WESTBROOK
Urban Forester
Capitol Grounds and Arboretum



▼
One of Olmsted's
original trees that
is still on the U.S.
Capitol Grounds.



▼
Olmsted's Japanese pagoda tree being milled by the District Department of Transportation Urban Forestry Division in Berryville, Virginia.

visible from the outside,” said Westbrook. These tools, along with other technology such as sonic tomography (essentially using sound waves to create a tree X-ray), allow the arborists and the urban forester to assess decay and evaluate wood quality and stability. These are important tools for making informed decisions about tree risk and mitigating safety concerns on the Capitol campus.

The Tree Care Division is focused on preserving mature trees on campus and

uses multiple evaluation tools to calculate ecosystem services and environmental benefits. Tree database software is used to develop an “eco-benefits” report of the arboretum’s tree canopy to interpret cost savings the canopy provides due to storm-water runoff, carbon sequestration and cooling effects. “It literally pays to preserve our mature trees and do what we can to help them thrive in the landscape for as long as possible,” said Westbrook. The team of arborists take their preservation role seriously and only prune or remove trees

based on tree health and risk. Pruning is one component of maintaining tree health. The team follows industry best management practices for pruning to ensure things like proper cutting techniques are used to avoid exposure to potential diseases. Healthy trees contribute more clean air to the space around them and are less likely to be affected by weather events, pests and diseases.

“Trees are generally only removed if they pose an unacceptable level of risk to

human safety or property that cannot be mitigated,” said Westbrook. When a tree needs to be removed, the team follows sustainability practices that minimize waste to upcycle historical trees and limbs that are cut as part of tree maintenance on the U.S. Capitol Grounds. Over the past two years, Capitol Grounds and Arboretum has collaborated with the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) Gift Shops, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) Urban Forestry Division (UFD) and the U.S. Forest Service to help tell the story of urban wood utilization. Reuse of urban wood is a sustainable practice, supports a carbon-neutral policy, and gives new life to historical and significant trees in the arboretum’s collections.

When a tree needs to be removed, viable wood is given to U.S.-based wood artisans to create one-of-a-kind items for sale in the CVC Gift Shops and its online store. Each crafted item is part of the “Artisan Crafts from the Capitol Grounds Collection” and comes with a provenance card detailing information about the exact tree from which the item was crafted. Items currently in the collection include pens, decorative bowls, plates, gavels and jewelry. This collaboration allows the public to purchase a piece of historical trees from the U.S. Capitol Grounds. “Once visitors discover that the wood product comes from the U.S. Capitol Grounds their face lights up and they begin to ask our Sales Associates questions about the Capitol Grounds and the trees planted on it,” said Jamilah Charles, CVC Gift Shops Merchandise Manager. Visitors are excited at the opportunity of bringing home an item that it is meaningful and unique. The most popular items in the collection are the Japanese pagoda and red oak gavels. The gavels in particular are a popular item among the Capitol Hill community. The collection will be expanded this spring when wooden candleholders will be introduced. This partnership between the CVC and Capitol Grounds and Arboretum allows the Capitol Grounds team to salvage wood materials and provides opportunities to educate visitors about trees within the arboretum’s living collection.



▼
Top: Finished wooden bowl made from the Japanese pagoda tree removed from campus.

Bottom: Wood from the historic Japanese pagoda tree is used to create a bowl sold at the CVC Gift Shops.



▼
Joseph Wilkinson
from Fredericksburg,
Virginia, works with
wood from the historic
Japanese pagoda tree
to create a bowl sold
at the CVC Gift Shops.



View of the display case at the CVC Gift Shop containing items from the Artisan Crafts from the Capitol Grounds Collection.

Another important sustainability initiative is the Capitol Grounds and Arboretum's urban wood reuse pilot program through the salvage of the Capitol Christmas Tree. This project, initiated in 2021, led to a collaboration that has allowed Capitol Grounds and Arboretum to transfer large, usable tree wood to DDOT UFD for sustainable reuse. After the end of the 2021 holiday season, arborists worked with DDOT to transfer the 70-foot Capitol Christmas Tree to their mill where the wood was repurposed into durable products such as tabletops and benches. The partnership allows DDOT to use wood from the Capitol Grounds in public school projects across the District of Columbia. Most recently, the 2022 Capitol Christmas Tree, a 78-foot-tall red spruce (*Picea rubens*) selected from the Pisgah National Forest, will be recycled to make musical instruments to be donated to local North Carolina communities.

More than 140 years after he envisioned it, Olmsted's design still drives all

landscaping decisions at the U.S. Capitol Grounds. "We use Olmsted's design as the basis of our decisions since we have historic records that indicate which species and locations Olmsted used in his design," said Westbrook. In planting new trees, the Capitol Grounds team considers how the species contribute to the overall plant collections and genetic diversity in addition to the arboretum's goals of plant conservation and sustainability. The team evaluates trees for size, hardiness, susceptibility to insects and diseases and soil conditions. Careful tree selection is important to create an attractive and resilient landscape in the face of ongoing and emerging challenges. Maintaining healthy trees and sustainable landscapes requires consideration of how the landscape can support pollinators and beneficial invertebrate communities. These communities in turn provide natural pest control for potentially harmful tree pests. The placement and selection of new trees continues to follow Olmsted's plan for creating a natural and peaceful landscape in the

nation's capital to be enjoyed and admired by visitors from all over the world.

Over the past five years, the Capitol Grounds and Arboretum team has used strategic tree planting initiatives to increase landscape function, resiliency and sustainability. These efforts have also reinforced the role the arboretum takes in managing urban forests to create landscapes that support the conservation of plant and animal species in urban ecosystems. The team is always working to expand their collaborative network among arboreta, public gardens and organizations committed to tree conservation, horticulture and collections management to protect and preserve the grounds for future generations.

Come visit the U.S. Capitol Grounds and enjoy an urban oasis in the nation's capital where the past and the future merge in the name of preservation.



USBG HIGHLIGHT

Long-Time Partnership Yields Beautiful Results

WRITTEN BY DEVIN DOTSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY LUKE WALTER

▼ Gardener Kenny Silveira installs orchids into the Tropics house feature.



A vestibule in the Tropics house showcases orchids from partner Smithsonian Gardens' collection.

In February 2023, the United States Botanic Garden (USBG) opened the 27th annual joint orchid exhibit in partnership with Smithsonian Gardens. Featured in several rooms of the USBG Conservatory, these two institutions have paired their substantial orchid collections and horticultural knowledge to showcase thousands of orchid blooms for the public.

“This is our oldest partnership, and we hope to continue it for decades to come,” said Dr. Susan K. Pell, USBG Executive Director. “Each of our orchid collections is many thousands strong, and joining together to display them allows us to present an even wider diversity of these wonderful plants along with fascinating, educational stories and programs.”

Each year, the two gardens present a joint display of orchids, alternating the location between the USBG Conservatory and one of the Smithsonian Institution museums. With both

organizations visited by many local, national and international travelers, it is likely several million people have enjoyed the beautiful results of this partnership.

This year’s exhibit, “Discover the World of Orchids,” runs February 17 to April 30, 2023. One of the largest plant families in the world, orchids vary greatly in floral shape, size, color and scent, and technology advances their conservation. From growing orchids via tissue culture to tools that let one see their hidden parts, technological advancement has changed humans’ relationship with orchids. Visitors can explore stories of how technology contributes to conserving, growing and understanding orchids.

Employees from across the USBG help make the exhibit come to life. Horticulture employees plan, grow and install the plants; while Operations constructs display elements and keeps the

▼
For the exhibit, the USBG team covered two custom, 9-foot-tall metal trees with orchids, displaying thousands of colorful blooms.



greenhouse systems in top shape. The USBG Learning and Engagement team helps prepare interpretive signage and plans and presents educational programs, and Administrative Services employees support the wide array of contracts and purchases needed for the ongoing partnership and exhibit. Over the course of the exhibit, both USBG and Smithsonian Gardens employees maintain the displays, swapping out additional orchids as they come into bloom to keep the exhibit fresh and full of blooms.

Guests can visit the Tropics house this year to see hundreds of orchids providing vibrant bursts of color at ground level and suspended in the air, as well as two 9-foot-tall tree sculptures

covered with hundreds of epiphytic orchids and bromeliads — a colorful photo opportunity. Visitors will find Dendrobium and Paphiopedilum orchids throughout the Plant Adaptations and Plant Conservation houses, including a special display that showcases pollination and pollinators featuring showy slipper orchids and strikingly fragrant Bulbophyllum orchids.

We invite everyone to come see this year's exhibition of many varieties of orchids created by this dynamic partnership and the hard work of employees across both organizations. From beauty to usefulness to conservation, orchids have many stories to share.



Visitors explore orchids installed in the Tropics house.

▼
The exhibit displays orchids throughout the Conservatory, including eight displays at eye level hung from the top of the 93-foot-high Tropics house.



Chris Saylor replaces the bearings in an electric motor.



SUSTAINABILITY SPOTLIGHT

BEYOND the DOME

FORT MEADE

WRITTEN BY ERIN NELSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES ROSENTHAL

The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is responsible for managing the buildings and grounds on Capitol Hill, but it also maintains several facilities across the National Capital Region, including facilities in Fort Meade, Maryland.

Among the structures sitting on the 100-acre lot at Fort Meade is the Library of Congress (LOC) Book Storage Facility. As the LOC collection grows, so does its need for more storage space — it receives approximately 8,000 new items every day. The Book Storage Facility currently consists of six modules and five cold storage rooms, with construction funding for a seventh module approved in the Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

The modules boast 35-foot-high ceilings with rows of bookshelves that reach up to 30 feet. Books, maps, manuscripts, photographs, microfilm and music are stored in one of 10 different-sized boxes and placed on one of six shelves of various sizes. There are three separate climates carefully maintained by the AOC, with temperatures set to 50, 35 and 25 degrees Fahrenheit, all at 30 percent relative humidity, to accommodate the various materials. Staging areas, set up outside of the cold storage rooms, allow items to acclimate to the varying temperatures and prevent condensation so they can be safely moved from one climate to another.

LOC staff are charged with overseeing the collection — receiving, sorting and cataloguing each piece — while AOC staff are responsible for efficiently operating, repairing and maintaining

the modules. AOC staff oversee the dehumidifiers, chillers, boilers, humidifiers, pumps, cooling towers, and all other mechanical and electrical equipment required to preserve the LOC's priceless collection.

The items in the LOC collection are tracked through an automated book system that enables LOC workers to quickly find and retrieve them. The process of “checking out” a book is a bit more involved given the distance it has to travel from shelf to hand, but items are transported between Fort Meade and Capitol Hill every day.

Given the height of the shelves, LOC workers often must use specialized lifts to retrieve items. A super-flat floor was installed to prevent the lifts from leaning and turning over, knocking over the thousands of carefully catalogued boxes. Magnets were also installed in certain spots in the floor, a few feet from the end of aisles, to slow the lifts as they enter the main aisles. Every detail of the modules is centered on protecting history in its various forms and preserving it for generations to come.

The first module was completed in 2002. From that year until 2017, the AOC maintained the modules through contract support. Beginning in 2017, the agency was able to add full-time AOC employees to manage the facilities. There are now two shifts overseeing the facilities with recent funding provided to add a much-needed third operations and maintenance shift.

▼
Chris Saylor and Rick Webb service a fan motor for one of the cold storage rooms.





John Smith and Derrick Smith repair the automatic door closer in Module 4.

Moving from contract support to AOC staff has resulted in better response times for correcting equipment issues, which has resulted in better environmental conditions. AOC staff have also found ways to create significant energy improvements, leading to a 30 percent reduction of energy consumption from 2016 to 2022.

The new third shift will add enough staff to perform all maintenance, repair and operations at Fort Meade, which is an ongoing task. The Book Storage Facility has increased in size by almost 40 percent since 2017, including the addition of a second heating and cooling plant, and will continue to grow with Module 7.

With the growth of the facility has come a significant focus on identifying the heating and cooling loads for the HVAC equipment and modifying the way the AOC thinks about matching the required energy loads. The building loads are driven by the outside air dew point, which is the temperature the air must be cooled for it to become saturated. A higher dew point results in a greater amount of moisture in the air and a higher energy load at the facility. AOC staff now incorporate the dew point into their daily operational plans and have modified controls to respond to this important parameter correctly.

What makes it so important? Preservation standards. For AOC staff to preserve the LOC's collection, the air must be cooler and dryer at the Book Storage Facility than in a normal office. This requires special attention. The AOC's work is always a balance between its important historic preservation mission and planning for future improvements. The work at Fort Meade is no different.

Future improvements will prioritize energy efficiency goals. Plans include the installation of special dehumidifiers that will provide for the reuse of up to 60 percent of energy in the facility as well as the implementation of on-site power generation through solar panels and energy storage to maximize energy savings and resiliency.

On Capitol Hill and beyond, the AOC's dedicated employees take pride in maintaining all facilities entrusted to their care and serving those that work to preserve the priceless items housed within them.



MEET THE TEAM

PHOTOGRAPHY AND TECHNICAL IMAGING BRANCH

WRITTEN BY KIREN MARSHALL

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AOC PHOTOGRAPHY AND TECHNICAL IMAGING BRANCH



Archivists Claralyn Burt and Leslie Matthaei select a frame from a historic role of 35mm color negatives depicting the Brumidi Corridors. The frame will be digitized using new capture technology and added to the AOC Image Bank.

The Photography and Technical Imaging Branch (PTIB) is responsible for the documentation of the historical buildings and grounds under the care of the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) and capturing the historic events within those spaces. The small but mighty PTIB often reports to work at dawn and stays late into the evening to capture the best images. After a gap in service during the Great Depression and WWII, AOC photography resumed in 1949 and has been going strong ever since. The department will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2024. The nine-person team took some time out of their busy schedules to talk about their work.

Leslie Matthaei and Claralyn Burt are the two staff archivists. Both have experience working in photographic archives for the federal government and academic institutions, in addition to records management experience. Leslie and Claralyn have four

primary responsibilities: to ensure that photographic and video assets are managed and preserved in perpetuity, to ensure that these assets are well-described and discoverable in the AOC Image Bank, which contains over 300,000 assets, to manage and maintain the AOC Image Bank, and to fulfill AOC staff requests for images.

Ryan Pierce, Digital Imaging Specialist, has a deep background in historic preservation and is helping to develop in-house 3D imaging capabilities for the agency, including scans of the statues in the National Statuary Hall Collection.

Michael Dunn leads the department and has served at the AOC for the last 26 years, and as the head of PTIB since 2005. His background is in art conservation. He's worked all over the country at museums and on historic preservation projects.



Michael Dunn

CHIEF OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Q: WHAT IS YOUR ROLE WITHIN PTIB AND HOW HAS IT EVOLVED OVER TIME?

A: Since 2005, my focus has been on building, supporting and directing a team of photographers, technical imaging specialists and photo archivists. The principal areas of our mission are to support major construction and maintenance projects, events like presidential inaugurations, historic preservation, communications, exhibits and educational outreach. Around the turn of the century the transition to digital photography was gaining steam, and I am proud of my role in helping the AOC photography mission transition from wet chemistry photography to digital photography.

Q: DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PHOTO THAT YOU'VE TAKEN?

A: I have had the honor of photographing several presidential inaugurations. My favorite photographs are the ones that show the event in the context of the building and the carefully constructed stage that the AOC builds for this most important occasion. Inaugurations bring everything together — all three branches of government, the American people, viewers from around the world, witnessing the peaceful transition of power.



Dewitt Roseborough

LEAD PHOTOGRAPHER

Q: TELL ME ABOUT HOW YOU GOT YOUR START IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND A BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND IN THE FIELD. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THE AGENCY AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?

A: I picked up a camera in high school, which my father left me after his passing but received formal training in photography in the U.S. Navy. I was a naval photographer for 21 years, traveling all over the world. After I retired from the Navy, I worked at the U.S. Naval Academy and came to the AOC in 2005. Here I focus on architectural photography and learned a lot from Michael Dunn and all of my other coworkers in the department. As the lead photographer, my job is to have a pulse on all the ongoing construction projects to make sure we have adequate coverage with our small team.

Q: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF THE JOB?

A: I continue to be impressed by the skill and craftsmanship of the men and women who work at the agency to preserve this historic building. It's really awe inspiring. I also love inauguration time because it takes almost everyone in the agency to pull off; it's a real team effort and takes nearly two years of preparation to accomplish, with over a year of documentation by PTIB.

Q: HOW HAS THE WORK IN PTIB EVOLVED OVER YOUR TENURE WITH THE AGENCY?

A: The role of PTIB has evolved over time; not everyone in the agency knows that. We aren't just taking photos — we have a large 3D program, including scanning/digitization, and we work with historical records and documentation as well. Researchers will come to us for historical images of the Capitol, and so will our maintenance team, to make sure they aren't about to hit any wires with their digging. That's where our archivists come in.



Sean Greene

PHOTOGRAPHER

Q: HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THE AGENCY AND HOW DID YOU GET YOUR START IN THE FIELD?

A: For about 10 years I worked as a freelance photo assistant and digital technician in New York City doing lighting and computer work for fashion and advertising photographers. It allowed me to work with top fashion brands and seasoned fashion and advertising photographers and was truly the best way to learn. Before I went to New York, I was a staff photographer for the United States Postal Service. Now, I've been working for the AOC for a little over three years and focus on the House office buildings. I have done some work documenting historic works of art, as well as capturing dedicated trade workers and laborers doing their jobs.

Q: DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PHOTO YOU'VE SHOT? WHY IS IT YOUR FAVORITE?

A: This image was created with my colleague Luke Walter; it's of the Speaker's Lobby and was taken for use in the Capitol Visitor Center's new Exhibition Hall space. We set the frame and placed the camera on a tripod and shot over 12 different exposures with strobe lighting in different positions to capture the perfect lighting for each area. It took a couple hours to shoot and about a day of Photoshop work. It touches on some of the best tools in technical photography, both traditional and digital.



Q: WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORK?

A: One of the more challenging aspects of the work I would say would be on the video side — trying to distill a broad range of amazing work being done into a bite-size video. Showing as much of that as possible to accurately portray the work is a big task.



Thomas Hatzenbuhler

PHOTOGRAPHER

Q: TELL ME ABOUT HOW YOU GOT YOUR START IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND A BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND IN THE FIELD.

A: Photography began as a fascination and creative outlet for me as early as my years in college. In 2011, I purchased my first “real” camera and began photographing everything and anything that I could: landscapes, portraits, weddings and events. Of all the many genres of photography I’ve practiced over the last decade or more, I find this role to be the most challenging, rewarding and engaging.

Q: CAN YOU SHARE ANY TIPS ON THE BEST PLACE TO GET A GOOD PHOTO OF THE U.S. CAPITOL, AND YOUR PREFERRED TIME OF DAY FOR SHOOTING?

A: I think the best time to photograph the Capitol is at sunrise or at first light. There is a peaceful and quiet feeling to the Capitol during those hours of the morning that translates into photography very well. I’ve spent many mornings watching the golden or pink morning light slowly working its way down the east façade of the Capitol in a state of awe. My tips on photographing the Capitol are simple: use a wide field of view and keep the camera level to the horizon. Doing so will keep the lines of the architecture straight and prevent the resulting image from looking as though the building is falling over.

Q: WHAT DO YOU PRIMARILY COVER AT THE AOC? WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT?

A: I have been with the agency for five years and am involved in documenting several stonework restoration projects, including the Russell Senate Office Building and Phase 3 of the Capitol Exterior Preservation — Stone and Metal Project. I can generally be found, however, in the Senate office buildings, the Capitol Building, the U.S. Botanic Garden, or on the Capitol Grounds with a camera in hand. The challenge and duty to tell the complete story of a multi-year project through photography and videography is incredibly rewarding.

Q: FAVORITE PHOTO YOU’VE TAKEN?

A: One of my favorite images is an early morning photo of the Capitol Building from the roof of the Russell Senate Office Building. What makes this image special is the color of the sunrise and the double rainbow arching across the sky from the north end of the Capitol.





James Rosenthal

PHOTOGRAPHER

Q: TELL ME ABOUT HOW YOU GOT YOUR START IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND A BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND IN THE FIELD. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH THE AGENCY AND WHAT BROUGHT YOU HERE?

A: I started taking pictures with my mother's camera when I was 12 and got my own camera a year later. I had always loved taking pictures of buildings, but my passion for documenting our built environment started in college. My degree is in historic preservation and architectural history. I started working with National Park Service in 1999 and traveled to 46 states during the 13 years I worked there. I have been with the AOC since 2012.

Q: DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PHOTO YOU'VE SHOT? WHY IS IT YOUR FAVORITE?

A: I have a few: some of conservation work in the Brumidi Corridors — the process is fascinating— some of elaborate interior spaces, and some of historic events — because c'mon, look where we work! But I think my favorite photograph, if I must pick one, is of the Capitol Gnome. I was assigned to document the "tiny doors" in the Senate and House wings, which included opening the doors to shoot inside. One of the U.S. Capitol Deputy Superintendents had a small garden gnome, which I brought along to be a prop in one of the shots as a joke. It turned out to be the best photograph from the series.

Q: WHAT DO YOU PRIMARILY COVER AT THE AOC, AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT?

A: My specialty is architecture and complex architectural interior lighting. I cover all types of work, from construction to preservation and conservation work, but my passion is for highly decorative spaces and the use of creative lighting to really bring the viewer into the spaces and see them as they may have never seen them before.



Q: WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING AND LESSER-KNOWN ASPECTS OF YOUR WORK?

A: The ability to pivot from one type of work to another on the fly. It's not uncommon to be documenting a concrete pour in the morning wearing coveralls and full personal protective equipment (PPE), changing into a suit for a mid-day congressional event, then back into field clothes for an afternoon of bronze statue conservation.

Luke Walter

PHOTOGRAPHER

Q: TELL ME ABOUT HOW YOU GOT YOUR START IN PHOTOGRAPHY AND A BIT ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND. WHAT DO YOU PRIMARILY COVER AT THE AOC, AND WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE TYPE OF ASSIGNMENT?

A: I grew up making home movies on VHS and Hi8 with my friends and brothers, who now also work in the industry. From there I was hooked, going on to study formally in high school and college, while living and working in New York. I've been with the AOC for five years. I'm mostly covering the Library buildings now, and my favorite assignments highlight our various craftsmen and women doing what they do best.

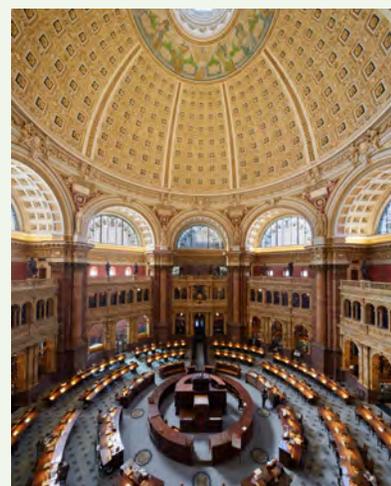


Q: DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PHOTO THAT YOU'VE TAKEN?

A: There are so many opportunities to create beautiful images around campus. From recent memory, two I've enjoyed producing are of the Jefferson Building: one of the exterior while lit for its 125th anniversary celebration and the other a vertical panorama of the interior of the Main Reading Room.

Q: WHAT ARE THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECTS OF YOUR WORK?

A: Moving safely around construction sites is something we're always especially cognizant of — that and allowing the tradespeople to work unimpededly.





Leslie Matthaei

STAFF ARCHIVIST

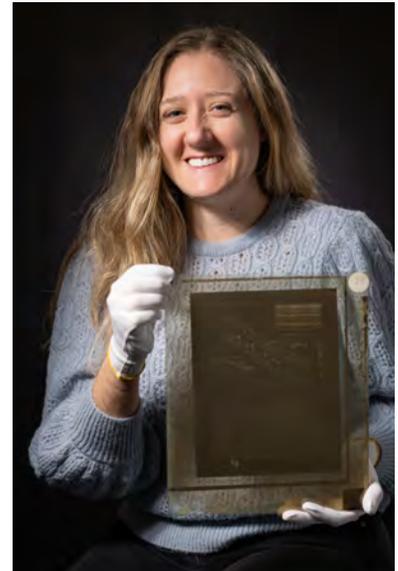
“The best part of my job is providing AOC staff with historic photographs that inform their present-day projects.”



Ryan Pierce

DIGITAL IMAGING SPECIALIST

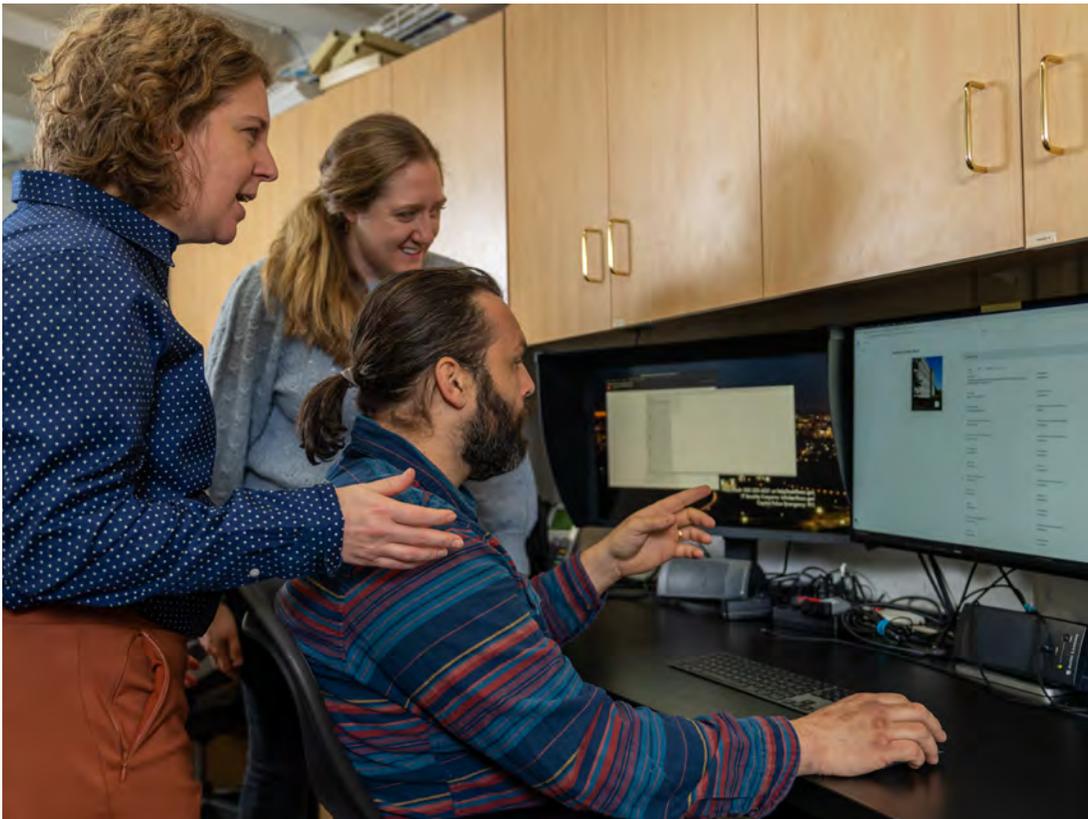
“I like how the variety of AOC projects stretches my knowledge, learning new techniques and improving old ones to document everything from small historic objects to project sites.”



Claralyn Burt

STAFF ARCHIVIST

“It’s immensely fulfilling to work with such a talented team in a hard-working agency to preserve the history of these iconic buildings and spaces.”



▼
Staff Archivists Leslie Matthaei and Claralyn Burt assist Photographer Sean Greene in providing detailed metadata descriptions in the AOC Image Bank. Accurate descriptions help users discover assets in the system.



Legislative and Public Affairs
U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

THOLOS VOLUME 25

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 Legislative and Public Affairs at communications@aoc.gov or 202.228.1793.

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/uscapitol](https://youtube.com/uscapitol)
www.aoc.gov

Front Cover Photo By:

Luke Walter

Back Cover Photo By:

Sean Greene

