
**Travels in North
America in the
Years 1827 and
1828, Volume 3**

Hall Basil

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in the Years 1827 and 1828,
Volume 3**

Author: Hall Basil

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TRAVELS
IN
NORTH AMERICA,

IN THE
YEARS 1827 AND 1828.

BY CAPTAIN BASIL HALL,
ROYAL NAVY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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building well placed on a high ground—to the President's house, and the public offices near it.

Washington stands on the left bank of the Potomac, in what is called the District of Columbia—a portion of territory distinct from all the States in the Union, and appropriated by common agreement as the site of the capital, and the residence of the General Government. This space contains one hundred square miles; and many persons in that country believe the time will come when their capital shall cover the whole area of this great square.

Washington offers so many objects of attraction to strangers, that we were tempted to remain there upwards of a month. The society is very agreeable, and is interesting, in many respects, from being composed of persons assembled from every part of the Union, and, I may add, from every part of Europe—for the Corps Diplomatique form a considerable party of themselves. The same kindness and hospitality were shown to us here, as elsewhere; and the hours for evening parties being always early, it was possible to go a good deal into company without much fatigue; although the smallness of the rooms made the heat and crowd sometimes not very pleasant. It is foreign to my purpose, however, to enter into any minute description of a society, drawn together for a temporary purpose,

and living under disadvantageous circumstances as to the elegancies of life. With slight modifications, the remarks made at Philadelphia and elsewhere will apply to the Capital. Differences in style and manners were to be found there, as in every other place: but, however this may be, we, individually, never discovered the slightest diminution of that attention by which we had already been so much flattered, during the journey.

My chief object in arranging matters for visiting Washington at this period, was to attend to the proceedings of Congress, of which I had everywhere heard so much. Connected with this purpose, was the desire of making acquaintance with the principal men of the country, assembled at head-quarters, expressly to devote themselves to public business. And I was well pleased to find these gentlemen had sufficient leisure to satisfy the enquiries of a stranger.

I accordingly visited the Capitol every day, or almost every day; and if not actually in the Senate or the House of Representatives, found ample objects of interest in the Supreme Court, which holds its sittings in the same building. I found all the official men accessible—many of them affable, and nearly all of them as communicative as could be expected;—even from those who were not so frank as I could have wished, there was still something

to be gained in the shape of stimulus to fresh investigation, or in wholesome checks to those views which insinuate themselves into our breasts when we least suspect their existence.

As a literal transcript from my journal of our daily proceedings at Washington would not give, upon the whole, nearly so just a conception of our visit as a more condensed summary may convey, I shall throw together, without much attention to arrangement, the results of this interesting period, perhaps the most instructive of the whole journey.

The Representative Hall in the Capitol differs from the House of Commons, not less in its architecture and furniture, than in habits of doing business. In the House of Commons, the members are crowded into an old-fashioned, oblong room, of such convenient dimensions, however, that any member's voice may easily be heard when raised a little above the pitch of ordinary conversation; and, consequently, the loud oratorical tone, which is the bane of good debating, is entirely excluded, as unnecessary, and out of place. It is furnished with benches, ranged in rows, rising one above another, for the members; while the strangers are squeezed into a little gallery.

The House of Representatives at Washington, on the contrary, is a splendid hall of a semicircular form, 96 feet across, and 40 in height. Along its