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## CHAPTER XXIII

# SUPERINTENDENTS OF THE CAPITOL EXTENSION

**M**ONTGOMERY C. MEIGS [Plate 319] was born at Augusta, Ga., May 13, 1816, and was the son of Charles D. Meigs and Mary Montgomery. He was a lineal descendant of Vincent Meigs, who emigrated to America in 1634 and settled in Connecticut. He was educated at Franklin Institute and the University of Pennsylvania, and at the age of 16 entered the Military Academy at West Point, from which he was graduated in 1836.

He entered the Engineer Corps, and was made captain in 1853. He assisted Robert E. Lee in the surveys of the harbor of St. Louis and the rapids of the Mississippi. He was employed in the Engineer Bureau in Washington, D.C., from 1849 to 1850, making the surveys and plans for the Washington Aqueduct. These plans were adopted by Congress in 1853 to 1861 and he was made chief engineer, and the work, including Cabin John Bridge, the most imposing stone arch in the world, was executed under his direction.<sup>1</sup> His work in connection with the Capitol has already been described in this volume. In 1861 he was ordered to Florida to the relief of Fort Pickens, which he was instrumental in saving, thus securing to the United States the important harbor of Pensacola. He was commissioned colonel May 14, 1861, Quartermaster-General May 15, 1861, with the rank of brigadier-general, which rank he retained until he was retired, February 6, 1882. His duties as Quartermaster-General, in charge of the business of equipment and supplies, kept him principally confined to Washington. He was present at the first battle of Bull Run and during the siege of Chattanooga, and visited

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<sup>1</sup>Meigs was superintendent of the Capitol extension from 1853 to 1859 and again from February 1861 to April 1861.

the armies of McClellan, Butler, and Grant during their operations on the James and the Potomac, at times taking personal charge of the base of supplies. In 1876 he was a member of the Commission for the Reform and Reorganization of the Army. He was a member of the boards to prepare plans for the National Museum and War Department buildings. After his retirement, by special act of Congress, he was made architect and superintendent of the Pension building, which was executed from his designs. He died in Washington, D.C., January 2, 1892.<sup>2</sup>

WILLIAM BUEL FRANKLIN [Plate 320] was born in York, Pa., February 27, 1823, and was graduated from West Point in 1843 at the head of his class. He served in the Topographical Engineers until the beginning of the civil war, being appointed captain July 1, 1857. In 1861 he was stationed in Washington and acted as superintendent of the Capitol extension and the Treasury and Post-Office Department buildings.<sup>3</sup> He became a colonel May 14, 1861; brigadier-general June 30, 1862, for meritorious conduct in the battles before Richmond, and major-general March 13, 1865, for signal services during the civil war. He took part in the battles of Bull Run, Yorktown, West Point, White Oak Bridge, Savage Station, Malvern Hill, and Harrisons Landing. He

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<sup>2</sup>Brown made two errors in his sketch of Meigs's life. Meigs was born on May 8, 1816, and his plan for the Washington Aqueduct was adopted in 1852. Brown's sources were Samuel P. Langley, "Montgomery C. Meigs," *Bulletin of the Philosophical Society of Washington* 12 (1892-1894): 471-476; W. Rhees, "Montgomery C. Meigs Sketch," in George Brown Goode, ed., *Annual Report of the Board of Regents, Smithsonian Institution, 1846-1896* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1897), 103.

<sup>3</sup>Franklin was stationed in Washington in 1859 before the outbreak of the Civil War.

was at Cramptons Gap, South Mountain, September 14, and at Antietam September 17, 1862. At the battle of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862, he commanded the left grand division. He was badly wounded at the battle of Sabine Crossroads April 8, 1864. He resigned from the Army March 15, 1866, and was for some time president of the Colt's Firearms Company, Hartford, Conn. He was State commissioner of Connecticut at the Centennial Exposition, Philadelphia, Presidential elector in 1876, adjutant-general of Connecticut 1877-78, and president of the Board of Managers of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers from 1880 to 1887. He died March 8, 1903.

CONSTANTINO BRUMIDI [Plate 322] was born in Rome, Italy, June 10, 1805. His father was a Greek and his mother an Italian. He studied in the Academia di San Luca. He painted frescoes in several palaces in Rome, and worked three years in the Vatican under Gregory

XVI. Brumidi was a captain in the Papal Guards during the Italian revolution. Just before Rossi was assassinated, refusing to execute commands to turn the guns of his company upon the oppressed, he was arrested and thrown into prison. He was released at the intervention of the Pope, upon condition that he immediately leave Italy. He landed in New York in 1849 and was naturalized in 1852. He could not secure satisfactory employment, and went to Mexico, where he stayed three years, when he came to Washington and spent the rest of his life working upon the frescoes of the Capitol. He died February 19, 1880.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Brumidi was actually born on July 26, 1805, landed in New York in 1852, and became a naturalized citizen in 1857. He was in Mexico for part of 1854. Brown probably obtained his information on Brumidi from Edward Clark.



GENERAL M. C. MEIGGS, SUPERINTENDENT.

Brown's plate is a detail of the original photograph taken ca. 1865. Brown misspelled Meigs's name in his caption. *Brady Collection, NARA.*



GENERAL W. B. FRANKLIN, SUPERINTENDENT.

Photograph taken ca. 1865. *Location unknown.*



THOMAS WISEDELL, ASSISTANT TO F. L. OLMSTED.

Photograph taken ca. 1880. *Location unknown.*



CONSTANTINO BRUMIDI, FRESCO PAINTER.

Photograph taken by Meigs in 1859.