



FERDINAND PETTRICH'S
WASHINGTON RESIGNING HIS COMMISSION

Bronzed plaster. This statue probably was originally intended for Washington Square in Philadelphia.

Courtesy The Smithsonian Institution

FERDINAND PETTRICH IN AMERICA

BY R. L. STEHLE*

THE German sculptor Ferdinand Pettrich (1798-1872) spent most of the period 1835-1843 in the United States. He arrived in 1835 in September and settled in Washington in March, 1836.¹ In Europe his active life had been divided between his own country and Rome. As a youth he had been trained in the studio of his father in Dresden. When he was twenty-one he went to Rome, where he at once became a pupil of the famous Danish sculptor Thorwaldsen. In 1843 he left Italy for Brazil and after sojourning there for fourteen years, returned to Rome for the remainder of his life. These pages concern his activities in the United States, including a period spent in Pennsylvania.²

The first mention of Pettrich which the author has found in American sources is in the *National Intelligencer*, Washington, for April 25, 1836, in a communication signed "X." The notice was occasioned, "X" says, by a malicious and unfounded report which had been circulated to the effect that Pettrich had not been Thorwaldsen's pupil. This charge the writer puts to rest by quoting a letter of recommendation written by Thorwaldsen. "X" states also that the Danish sculptor had specifically recommended Pettrich to Commodore Daniel T. Patterson when the latter was in Rome; it may be assumed that Patterson was acting for someone in the United States who had commissions to offer. "X" concludes with the statement that at the time he was writing, Pettrich had been commissioned by a Philadelphia society to be

*Dr. Stehle headed the Department of Pharmacology at McGill University. Since his retirement he has been preparing a biography of Emanuel Leutze. His article on Leutze in *Pennsylvania History*, XXXI (1964), 269-294, not only reviewed the history of *Washington Crossing the Delaware* but restored Leutze's *Washington at Monmouth* to public notice.

¹Petition of Ferdinand Pettrich, National Archives, Record Group 233, HE25A-G17.1.

²For the reader who wishes to know more about Pettrich's life in Germany, Rome, and Brazil there are two works he should consult: Paolo dalla Torre, *Le Plastiche a Soggetto Indigeno Nordamericano del Pettrichi nel Pontificio Museo Missionario Etnologico, Annali Lateranensi IV*, pp. 9-96 (1940), and Hans Geller, *Franz und Ferdinand Pettrich* (Dresden, 1955). Both have many illustrations.

sculptor of a group representing Charity and that he would commence work on it soon in Washington.

In the same issue of this paper a letter is published, the author signing himself "Q," in which a plea is made for the employment of American artists, rather than foreigners, for the artistic projects of the government.

A little later in 1836, on June 13, a writer to the *Intelligencer* who signed himself "T" stated that Pettrich's group representing Charity, intended for a niche in the front of a public building in Philadelphia, was on exhibition in the Capitol in the room of the Committee of the Senate for Foreign Relations. The writer commented favorably on the group.

There is evidence of sorts to indicate that Pettrich, his wife and three sons had settled in Georgetown. There is no doubt that his studio was in Georgetown; it was in St. John's Church at the southeast corner of Potomac and O streets. The church had fallen into financial difficulties by 1831 and was abandoned as a place of worship. What remained of the membership continued to maintain the form of a congregation. Pettrich sought the use of the building for his studio, and the vestry rented it to him for fifty dollars a year.³ He is said to have occupied it for several years and to have been continually behind in paying his rent. A few years after this period a rector of the rejuvenated church, the Reverend C. M. Butler, felt deeply chagrined at the use of the building as "the workshop of a sculptor." In a sermon preached at St. John's in 1844, he said:

Yes, in this Christian community, a Christian temple was allowed to undergo the most shameful desecration, and they who had worshipped under its roof, and gathered about its sacred board, or in it been dedicated to God by baptism, passed it by, and saw the statues of heathen gods and goddesses as a sign at its portico, and heard the chisellings of the workmen, where the voice of prayer and praise was wont for years to rise, and they suffered it to be so.⁴

Mention will be made later of a statue of Athena with her owl,

³ Dorothy Lauder Ten Eyck, *One Hundred and Fifty Years in the Life of St. John's Church* (Georgetown, D. C., 1946).

⁴ C. M. Butler, *A Sermon Giving a Historical Account of St. John's Church* (Georgetown, D. C., 1946).

and one may wonder whether she was one of the heathen goddesses who once stood at the portico.

Just where Pettrich and his family lived is not known. It was probably in Georgetown too. In a letter he wrote to Thorwaldsen on July 20, 1836 he gives his address as "Georgetown College by Washington" and says: "Next October I begin my duties as Professor at Georgetown College and the large number of students can hardly await the day till I become their teacher."⁵ A daughter, born November 11, 1836, was baptized several days later at the Holy Trinity Church in Georgetown. One of the sculptor's sons, Adolph, was a pupil from 1838 till 1840 in a school conducted at what is now Georgetown University.

Statues for the blockings of the east steps of the Capitol seem to have been a matter for informal discussions among some of the members of Congress before any formal action was taken to obtain them. The Georgetown newspaper, *The Metropolitan*, in its issue for March 7, 1836 had a long laudatory article about Luigi Persico, who had done the sculptures in the pediment over the entrance to the Capitol and the statues of War and Peace in the niches at the sides of the entrance. The article states that Persico was then in Washington expecting to receive an order from Congress for two colossal groups to occupy the two broad platforms at the sides of the steps on the east front of the Capitol, and that he had hoped to receive such an order from Congress at the last session. One of his models had been completed and he was engaged with the other. On April 20 the same paper reported that both models were completed and on exhibition in the Capitol.

The first formal evidence that anyone in Congress was interested in statues to adorn the blockings at the sides of the east steps was provided by Senator James Buchanan of Pennsylvania, who on April 25, 1836 (that is, after Persico's models had been on view for some time) introduced a resolution asking the Committee on Finance to inquire into the expediency of contracting with Persico for two groups of statues to complete the ornaments of the east side of the Capitol.⁶ The resolution was discussed in the Senate on April 28, and opposition came from several Senators

⁵ Thorwaldsen Museum, Copenhagen. This museum has, in its Arkiv, several letters written by Pettrich to Thorwaldsen. Copies of three of these letters are sources of the information given here.

⁶ *Congressional Globe*, 24th Congress, 1st Session, III (April 25, 1836), 328.

who resented having a foreigner given so much preferment. One of them, Senator William C. Preston, suggested that the American sculptor Horatio Greenough be considered.⁷ A resolution reported out by Senator Silas Wright, Jr., for the Finance Committee on May 17, 1836 was less specific than the original resolution.⁸ It merely requested the President to take measures for obtaining two statues or groups of statues for the sides of the front steps and authorized him to pay "such compensation as he shall think reasonable for all the models and drawings he may order."

When the resolution was introduced in the Senate, Pettrich, on inquiry through a friend (presumably Father Thomas F. Mulledy, president of Georgetown College), was assured by President Jackson that any models he submitted would be considered, whereupon he began work. The fact that Persico's models were already on exhibition did not deter him.

The Georgetown newspaper, *The Metropolitan*, on June 22, 1836, showed its impatience with the way Congress was neglecting the matter, as it thought, by urging that Persico be given a contract for his two groups. It pointed out that he had become naturalized, that he was an American by his own choice. *The Metropolitan* does not mention Pettrich in connection with these statues even though he was a resident of Georgetown. However, Congress was busy with other things, and the House allowed the resolution to die in committee. Pettrich hoped the session of Congress to begin in December would fulfill his expectations, but there were self-seekers and incompetents to contend with in America as well as in Europe. In September he was devoting his efforts to the models he expected to submit to the new session.⁹

Soon after Congress reconvened in December, Persico submitted a petition asking for compensation for his work.¹⁰ His models were still in the Capitol.

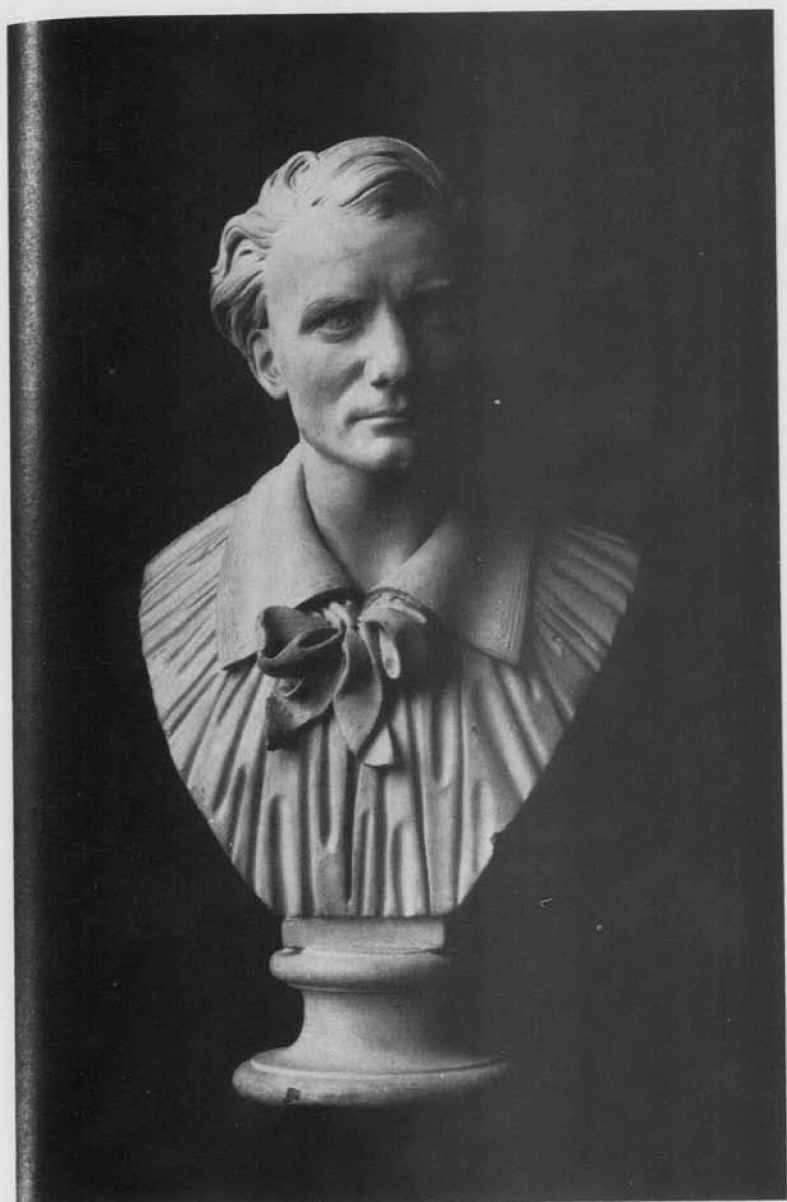
On February 1, 1837, the Artists' Fund Society of Philadelphia tried to help Persico. It presented to Congress a memorial signed by John Neagle, recommending that consideration be given to

⁷ *Ibid.* (April 28, 1836), 335-336.

⁸ *Ibid.* (May 17, 1836), 380.

⁹ Pettrich to Thorwaldsen, Thorwaldsen Museum, Copenhagen.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, IV (January 9, 1837), 78. Persico's petition may be found in the National Archives.



FERDINAND PETTRICH, SELF-PORTRAIT
Plaster 22½ x 15½ x 9.

Persico in allocating contracts for the decoration of the east front of the Capitol.¹¹ No other artists were mentioned. This memorial may have been the stimulus for a bill introduced in the House on February 14, 1837 by Aaron Ward of the Committee on Public Buildings.¹² It asked for an appropriation of eight thousand dollars

to enable the President of the United States to contract with Luigi Persico for a group of statues to adorn one of the two blockings; and with such other artist for another group, to adorn, in like manner the other blocking on the east front of the Capitol.

The request was not granted, but one of the last acts of the Twenty-fourth Congress, the appropriation of eight thousand dollars to enable the President to contract for two groups of statues for the east front of the Capitol (no names being mentioned), may have been a substitute for Ward's bill.¹³

The appropriation was made on March 1, 1837, as an amendment by Senator Buchanan to a bill for the civil and diplomatic expenses of the government for the year 1837.¹⁴ No discussion of the matter is to be found in the *Congressional Globe*, and the promptness with which the commissions were awarded indicates that there was no uncertainty in the minds of those behind this legislation regarding the artists who would be offered contracts.

The course of events was not affected by a communication signed "S" published on March 24 in the *Intelligencer*. It was a short biographical article about Petrich, in which were enumerated some of the works which he had carried out in Rome—*The Fisher Girl* then in the Brera (Milan), figures of the archangels Michael and Raphael in the church of Santa Maria degli Angeli (Rome), and a bust of Pope Gregory XVI. The writer said that Petrich had recently received from Rome the plaster original of the first-named piece and that of another called *Innocence*. Both were said to be in the President's House for examination.

It was without doubt the wife of the editor of the *National Intelligencer*, Mrs. Samuel H. Smith, who had contributed this

¹¹ 24th Congress, 2nd Session, Executive Documents, Vol. IV, No. 159.

¹² *Congressional Globe*, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, IV (February 14, 1837), 182.

¹³ *United States Statutes at Large*, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, V, 173.

¹⁴ *Congressional Globe*, 24th Congress, 2nd Session, IV (March 1, 1837), 214.

article. A letter she wrote to her sister on November 20, 1836 makes it plain that she had embraced Pettrich's cause.¹⁵ The part of interest to us goes:

Today I walked to Georgetown. Mr. Pettrich the German sculptor who looks on me as his best friend here, and for whom I feel a lively interest, called for the third time to accompany me to his studio (the upper part of Georgetown) and seemed so desirous that I should see the models that he has prepared for exhibition that I could not decline. . . . [Here Mrs. Smith says that she had introduced Pettrich to the Forsyths, hoping to excite their interest in him. The meaning is clear but some of the handwriting is not legible. John Forsyth was Secretary of State at the time.] Last week I went to a charming little party at General McComb's [Alexander Macomb's] and took the opportunity in the course of a conversation with Mr. [John Quincy] Adams, of giving him the history of this poor foreigner and able artist and obtained his permission to introduce Mr. Pettrich to him and the promise that if, after an examination of his works, he was satisfied of his . . . [?] that he would use his influence to have him employed by the government. The next morning I gave Mr. Pettrich a note of introduction to Mr. Adams. When he returned from his interview, he thanked me a thousand times and said that Mr. Adams had been very kind and promised the next day to visit his studio, and I trust from the result of this visit he gained a powerful friend. This has been one of the most pleasant events of the week and the poor man's gratitude has warmed and cheered my heart.

If Adams ever did visit Pettrich's studio he did not note it in his *Memoirs*—which show that he had had close relations with Persico for ten years.

In another letter, dated March 28, 1837, Mrs. Smith reverts to the subject, saying plainly that Pettrich and Persico were the competitors for the commissions to be awarded by the President and that the friends of each were doing all they could for their respective candidates. "Everything goes by favor," she says, and adds:

Mrs. Taylor and I are the most zealous suitors in his behalf. She with the President, I with his bosom friend

¹⁵ Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Letters of Mrs. Samuel Harrison Smith.

Mr. Butler. . . . We have both during the last winter seen poor Mr. Pettrich almost daily. She has been [able] to do much more for him than I have in the pecuniary way for he has fallen into great difficulties. I cannot tell you how much I feel for him and his poor little wife. He has such a warm grateful heart and no one can know him without being interested in him. . . . The more I know the better I like this lovely family.

On April 3, 1837 President Van Buren made a contract with Persico for a group, "conformable to the proposals submitted to the Committee of Congress upon Public Buildings and by them approved."¹⁶ The next day the Secretary of State, John Forsyth, wrote to Horatio Greenough telling him of the contract with Persico and asking him for proposals for the second group.¹⁷ If he could not fulfill a contract similar to that made with Persico, he was asked to inquire from Thorwaldsen upon what terms the latter would submit designs for a group.

When Pettrich learned that commissions for the two groups had been given to Persico and Greenough he was much disappointed. Of the nature of his models or their fate nothing is known. Though members of Congress seem to have had an opportunity to see them, when and where they were exhibited has not been reported. Those responsible for the decision evidently preferred Persico's *Discovery* group to anything Pettrich had submitted. But they also decided that if it was at all possible a native American, not Pettrich or Persico, was to make the second group. In 1958, when the extension forward of the east front of the Capitol was begun, the *Discovery* group of Persico and the *Rescue* group of Greenough were put into storage, where they remain.

Though disappointed, Pettrich seems to have thought he had reason to regard his future in Washington as promising. He doubtless had carried out some private commissions, but aside from the *Charity* mentioned earlier the only one the present writer knows of is a bust of Joel Poinsett, the Secretary of War, for which he received five hundred dollars. On May 15, 1837, the *Intelligencer* published a notice, written presumably by him, announcing that since he had become a permanent resident of Washington, he pro-

¹⁶ National Archives, Record Group 56, Contract between President Van Buren and Luigi Persico including the Proposals submitted by Persico.

¹⁷ National Archives, Department of State, Domestic Letters, XXIX. 69.

posed to establish a Free School of Sculpture in the beginning of the coming October and requesting the governors of the states to select candidates for the school. Applications were to be sent to Ferdinand Pettrich, Sculptor, Washington City. No further mention of this enterprise has come to light.

In the second half of 1837 delegations of many Indian tribes visited Washington to make treaties. Pettrich was much interested in them, and many of the chiefs visited his studio. Studies which he carried to completion later in Brazil were probably made at this time. On October 24, 1837 the Sioux delegation performed some dances, including their war dance, in Franklin Square. Pettrich's sketch of the war dance was reproduced in a publication to be mentioned later.

On December 29, 1837 (that is, eight months after commissions had been given to Persico and offered to Greenough), in a petition prepared by Pettrich and presented to Congress by Senator Preston, the sculptor asked for some recompense for the five months he had devoted to his models.¹⁸ His plea was that not being familiar with legislative methods, he had not realized that the Senate resolution of the previous year had to be passed by the House before it became law.

The petition was supported in letters to the Committee on Public Buildings by a number of prominent men, among them ex-President Jackson and Robert Mills, the Architect of Public Buildings.¹⁹ Mills said that he had seen Pettrich's models and thought that "they possess considerable merit" and might be introduced to ornament some suitable place in the Capitol or President's House. He thought Pettrich worth encouraging. He had employed him for the execution of some of the capitals of the columns for the new Treasury Building and for the gateway to the Capitol. Benjamin F. Butler, the Attorney General, supported the petition and said that it was he who first informed Pettrich of the decision of the President to employ Persico and Greenough to execute the desired statuary. Father Thomas F. Mulledy wrote that Pettrich had asked him to inquire of President Jackson whether he (Pettrich) could submit models and that Jackson had given his approval. He added that he had received letters from

¹⁸ See note 1, above.

¹⁹ These letters accompany the petition (note 1, above).

distinguished persons in Rome recommending Pettrich, that the artist was penniless while working on his models, and that he (Father Mulledy) had supported the family and furnished the money for the materials needed.

On July 16, 1838 Pettrich received six hundred dollars in consequence of his petition. It is interesting to note that the act making this award states that the models were made for the *western front* of the Capitol. The steps on this side have never received any sculptural decorations; in 1837 there were no steps on the west side.²⁰

Just when Pettrich and his family left Washington to go to Philadelphia has escaped the present writer if it is recorded anywhere. It was after June 8, 1838, for another letter of Mrs. Smith of that date informs us that the illness of one of his children had caused him to appeal to her for help. She did what she could and all turned out well. In this letter she says that Pettrich had asked her to try to get Henry Clay to sit for a bust, that Clay had sent him a nice reply, and that the artist hoped to make a little money.

In Philadelphia more or less steady employment was in sight, for Pettrich entered the employ of John Struthers, described in the Philadelphia directory as a marble mason. Whatever was made of stone seems to have interested Struthers. He fashioned much of the masonry of the City Hall and other monumental buildings, and his reputation in the field of sepulchral monuments extended as far as Boston and Richmond. It was in his establishment that the sarcophagus was made which was used when Washington's remains were transferred to the tomb where they now rest. An article in the *United States Gazette* for October 18, 1842 is devoted to Struthers's activities in this branch of sculpture. Pettrich's father is represented by many monuments in the cemeteries of Dresden, and it was in all probability for the execution of sepulchral works that Struthers employed the son.²¹

In 1835 a movement was started in Philadelphia to erect a statue of Washington in Washington Square. After the laying of a foundation, the project languished. By 1840 there was enough money in the fund to warrant resumption of the plan, and Pettrich was the sculptor favored to execute it.²²

²⁰ *United States Statutes at Large*, V, 267.

²¹ Geller, *Franz und Ferdinand Pettrich*.

²² *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, June 20, 1840.

On July 2, 1840, at a meeting of citizens, a series of resolutions was adopted, one of which ran:

Resolved, that this meeting having been furnished with the best testimonials of the skill and classical taste of Ferdinand Pettrich, pupil of Thorwaldsen, that he be requested, at the earliest period, to furnish this committee a model of the statue upon a pedestal of proportionate dimensions, containing appropriate bas relief representations in full costume of the continental army of the revolution.²³

An article published in the *Saturday Courier* on July 25, 1840, gave the public some biographical information about Pettrich. He had been living in Philadelphia practically unknown for half a year, according to the writer.²⁴ Some works which he had carried to completion since arriving in America were named:

. . . the model of General Washington's statue [Is one to assume that the model for the proposed monument was already made?]; five Colossal statues, viz.: St. Mary with our Saviour, St. Joseph, two kneeling Angels, and a Saint whose name is not recollected; la Charite; Mephistopheles . . . in clay, like his Dying Tecumseh; bas relief Romulus and Remus; the Fisher Maid, in the possession of Mr. Keim; the Huntsman's Boy (the pendant to the former). Several busts of American Statesmen as of Van Buren, Henry Clay, Forsyth, Amos Kendall, etc.

About the middle of August announcement was made that permission had been obtained from the Council of the City to exhibit the model of the Washington statue in Independence Hall, and that it would be on view there from August 18 until September 1.²⁵ A description of the work is to be found in the *Saturday Evening Post* for August 29, 1840:

Statue of Washington. The model exhibited during the last week to large crowds in the Hall of Independence is one eighth of the full dimensions when completed. The

²³ *National Gazette*, Philadelphia, July 6, 1840.

²⁴ *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, June 11, 1842. Later Pettrich lived in Camden.

²⁵ *National Gazette*, Philadelphia, August 17, 1840.

bas reliefs on the four panels represent figures which are to be the size of life. The basement and sub-basement are to be composed of New England granite to the height of fourteen feet, and executed in imitation of rock work. The steps of which there are thirteen corresponding to the original confederation of the states are to be composed of Pennsylvania marble eight feet in height. The Equestrian statue is to be eighteen feet in height, that is, from the hoofs of the horse, to the crown of the head of the rider and to be executed in iron made from anthracite coal from the mines of Pennsylvania. The model of the statue is made by Ferdinand Pettrich, sculptor. The pedestal and steps are designed by W. Strickland, architect.

There are four panels with figures in bas relief representing—

The surrender of Cornwallis.

The Ladies of Trenton greeting General Washington and strewing his path with flowers from a triumphal arch erected on a bridge crossing Assunpink Creek. The occurrence took place twelve years after the battle of Trenton and on the same spot.

The arms of the United States and military trophies.

The surrender of his commission to Congress.

All the bas reliefs to be in cast iron, and to be finished in what is called gunbarrel or brown bronze.

The horizontal dimensions of the pedestal equal twenty-one feet by thirty feet and the whole height from the ground to the crown of the statue will be forty feet and the weight of the casting from twelve to fourteen tons.

The whole estimate of cost will exceed fifty thousand dollars and may be completed in less than three years.²⁶

The next notice of the project the present writer has found indicates that the plans had been changed. The *Saturday Courier* for May 22, 1841 states that at a meeting of the subscribers to the long contemplated statue of Washington it had been decided to erect a "Pedestrian Statue to be wrought by the gifted Pettrich at a cost of ten thousand dollars."²⁷ A committee consisting of William Strickland, Joseph Hopkinson, and Thomas Sully was to superintend the work. The author of the article says that he had seen the model in plaster in Pettrich's studio in the Mer-

²⁶ This is said to have been copied from the Philadelphia *North American*.

²⁷ According to the *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, June 4, 1842, the model of the equestrian statue was then in the Grand Jury room of the United States Court.

chants' Exchange. He wrote: "It is a truly noble figure, simple and beautiful. The features are copied from an original cast of the face of the great and good man." This cast would have been the Houdon mask, which the sculptor W. W. Story says was given to Pettrich by Struthers in 1839.²⁸

In the agreement the artist was given eighteen months to complete the commission. The model may have been a free standing version of one of the panels mentioned for the pedestal of the equestrian statue. It is probably the bronzed plaster statue of *Washington Resigning His Commission* which, at this writing stands in the vestibule of the Natural History Museum in Washington. Since Pettrich himself presented it to the National Institute for the Promotion of Science, not long before he left for Brazil, it would appear that he had never received any compensation for it.

Why the plans for the erection of this statue were never carried out the present writer has not discovered with certainty. Pettrich may have allowed himself to be diverted by a call which he had received from Washington and which he thought he could attend to without interfering with the fulfillment of his obligation in Philadelphia.

For years Horatio Greenough had been engaged in Florence upon a statue of Washington intended for the rotunda of the Capitol, and in the summer of 1841 the statue began its voyage from Leghorn to the Washington Navy Yard. The Secretary of the Navy, A. P. Upshur, was given the task of removing it to the Capitol and setting it up for exhibition. Five thousand dollars was appropriated by Congress on September 9 to cover the expenses.²⁹ Twenty-five hundred dollars was required for transportation and erection upon a temporary wooden pedestal; accordingly a like amount remained for a suitable permanent pedestal. Upshur called Pettrich from Philadelphia, at a date undiscovered, to carry out the order of Congress for the pedestal, agreeing to pay him one thousand dollars at a particular stage of the work, one thousand dollars when the marble for the facing should be delivered in Washington, and five hundred dollars when the work should be completed.³⁰ It should be stated here, in the light of a

²⁸ W. W. Story, *Harper's Weekly*, XXXI (February 26, 1887), 144-146.

²⁹ *United States Statutes at Large*, V, 460.

³⁰ National Archives, Letters Sent by the Secretary of the Navy to Congress, VIII, 443.

situation which was soon to develop, that there is no evidence that in giving this contract to Pettrich any affront to Greenough was intended. It was the obligation of the Secretary of the Navy to erect the statue, and obviously a respectable pedestal was needed as soon as one could be obtained. This was the beginning of a tale whose end was almost tragic.

While waiting for the marble to arrive, Pettrich pursued an impulse of his own, namely, to make models of subjects with which to embellish the panels of the pedestal. The idea seemed good to others too, and

. . . it did not appear to be doubted that Congress would cheerfully appropriate a sufficient sum to cover the cost of such illustrations if the design were approved. Mr. Pettrich stated that he would execute it for ten thousand dollars and it was formally agreed that he should produce his design in plaster to be submitted to and approved by the Secretary of the Navy.

This quotation is from a communication which appeared in the *Intelligencer* on June 1, 1842, written by a friend of Pettrich who was familiar with the details of the confusion which had enveloped the pedestal of Greenough's statue. On December 6, 1841, Pettrich received the first payment specified in his contract with Upshur. Word of what was going on reached Boston, and on November 18, 1841 a committee of the Boston Athenaeum sent a letter of protest to Upshur.⁵¹ The committee wanted no foreigner to have any part in this work, and it did not want Greenough's feelings wounded. Had Pettrich adhered to his contract there might have been no commotion; it may have been his plan to include bas reliefs on the panels which aroused the friends of Greenough.

Notwithstanding the contract which the Secretary of the Navy had made with Pettrich, on December 22, 1841 a resolution was introduced by Senator Preston asking for the appointment of a joint committee of Congress "to arrange the placing of the statue of Washington in the rotunda, and to direct the details of the pedestal."⁵² On December 29 the House concurred, and the men-

⁵¹ National Archives, Miscellaneous Letters Received by the Secretary of the Navy during November, 1841.

⁵² *Congressional Globe*, 27th Congress, 2nd Session, XI (December 22, 1841), 48.

bership was settled with the naming of four members from each body; Preston was made chairman.³³

From the record of the deliberations of the House on May 11, 1842, it seems clear that some of its members were determined that Greenough should make the pedestal for his statue; they had no intention of seeing it rest upon one created by another artist.³⁴ Emotions ran high, and language became unduly forceful; George C. Hazelton, in his book *The National Capitol*, remarks that if the debate were not in the *Globe* it might require expurgation.³⁵ On May 18, 1842 the committee received an appropriation of one thousand dollars to remove the statue from the rotunda (where it was to be deposited is not mentioned),³⁶ and not long thereafter Pettrich seems to have been informed that there was no chance of his being recompensed for the pedestal upon which he had been working.³⁷ The committee could not cancel the contract made between him and the Secretary of the Navy; it could only say that it would not accept a pedestal from him.

The attitude and action of the committee were known to Pettrich's friends before they became known to the artist, and efforts were made to obtain some recompense for his work. The first thousand dollars specified in the contract was the only compensation he had received. The author of the article in the *Intelligencer*, from which we quoted above, wrote in the same article that Pettrich and his family were starving. The efforts of his friends had been fruitless until May 29, when a real calamity descended upon the sculptor. We quote the account of it which appeared in the *Intelligencer* on May 31, 1842:

An attempt at assassination—One of the most atrocious attempts to take away the life of a respectable citizen that it has ever befallen our lot to record occurred last Sunday night about ten o'clock, in the first ward of this city, at a building not far from the Executive Mansion. Two assassins entered the studio of Mr. Pettrich, the sculptor, and after a severe struggle, stabbed him in two places. This fiend-like and cowardly attack was made,

³³ *Ibid.* (December 29, 1841), 74.

³⁴ *Ibid.* (May 11, 1842), 490-491.

³⁵ George C. Hazelton, *The National Capitol* (New York: J. J. Little & Co., 1897).

³⁶ *United States Statutes at Large*, V, 485.

³⁷ *National Intelligencer*, Washington, June 1, 1842.

as it is thought, by two white men with their faces blacked. Mr. Pettrich received two stabs, on the left breast, and in the abdomen with a sword-cane or pointed instrument, which entered obliquely. It is thought by Dr. Miller, the attending surgeon, that Mr. Pettrich may recover although the wounds are severe and his situation is critical. We understand that the Mayor, who received information about the circumstances about eleven o'clock, remained with Mr. Pettrich until twelve o'clock on the night of this atrocious outrage, and took steps to set the city police on the alert for the apprehension of the assassins to whom no clue, however, has yet been found. It is earnestly to be hoped that their efforts may prove successful.

Since writing the above we have just learned from Dr. Miller (eight o'clock P.M.) that Mr. Pettrich is better.

A shorter account of the attack will be found in the *Madisonian* for the same date. From it one may conclude that at that time Pettrich's studio (it was also his dwelling) was in "an old building" located about where the Corcoran Art Gallery now stands, or across New York Avenue from it. The church in which he had worked after his first arrival in Washington was in 1842 again serving its intended purpose.

The affair excited the sympathy not only of the mayor but also of President Tyler. The *Intelligencer* for June 6 reports that many distinguished individuals manifested their kindness to the sculptor, and that Lord Ashburton, who with Daniel Webster had just finished drawing up the Maine boundary treaty, a few days before had made Pettrich a donation of one hundred dollars.

On June 10, 1842, Secretary Upshur gave evidence of his sympathy for the artist in a letter he wrote to Senator Preston. In it he stated clearly the terms of the arrangement he had made with Pettrich. He pointed out that panels bearing his reliefs were not part of the contract, but he thought that the original contract was still valid and that if it were cancelled damages would be due to Pettrich.

On June 24 the Senate passed a resolution for the payment of "the unexpended balance of the appropriation for the finishing of the Statue of Washington," that is, of the appropriation which had been made to the Secretary of the Navy for the removal of the statue from the Navy Yard and its erection in the Capitol.

This resolution was concurred in by the House on August 27 and approved by the President on August 30.³⁸ On September 8 Pettrich received fifteen hundred dollars.

The models Pettrich had made were of clay and they were crumbling. Penniless as he was, he had not been able to carry them to the plaster stage. The writer in the *Intelligencer* for June 1, 1842 explains the artist's attitude toward his task and his plan to meet it:

The sculptor found that the figure of Washington in the statue had something in it of the mythological, or, in other words, of the religious allegory of classic times; and he moulded his own imaginations for the pedestal to harmonize with those of Greenough for the statue. For the front panel, he fashioned a female figure, emblematic of our republic; her head surmounted by the mural crown, symbolical of power; in one hand the palm of triumph, and the other reposing on the national arms, which are sustained by a block of marble. The two remaining panels—those for the sides—contain one, History, with a tablet in the one hand, and, in the other, a stylus where-with she has inscribed the name of Washington, towards which Glory, with her right hand extends the laurel wreath. In the other panel appears Peace, up-rearing with her right arm the olive branch; Freedom, leaning upon fasces, surmounted by a cap of liberty, and on the clasp of her girdle the Eagle of America and Thirteen Stars.

In an article written twenty-five years ago, devoted chiefly to those of Pettrich's works which are in the Missionary Museum of St. John Lateran in Rome, some additional light is thrown upon Pettrich's predicament in Washington.³⁹ The author, Paolo dalla Torre, states that some people resented the employment of a foreigner to execute sculptures for the government. John Quincy Adams is said to have been the leader of these xenophobic spirits, and their sentiments bore fruit in the attack on Pettrich. In Congress Adams supported heartily the idea that Greenough, not Pettrich, should make the pedestal for the statue of Washington. In the debate in the House Adams had remarked that he and others who did not approve employing another artist upon the

³⁸ *United States Statutes at Large*, VI, 877.

³⁹ See dalla Torre's work cited in note 2, above.

pedestal would rather see the statue meet a fate like that which Canova's statue of Washington at Raleigh had met than have Greenough exposed to an indignity so mortifying as the calling in of another to finish what he had begun.⁴⁰ Pettrich himself must have been the ultimate source of the explanation given by his Italian biographer.

The pedestal of Greenough's statue, the one designed by the sculptor himself, has found a strange resting place. When the statue was removed to the Smithsonian Institution in 1908 the base was used, like a common building block, in laying the foundation of one of the buildings of the giant power plant which serves the buildings on Capitol Hill. Having located it one may read: "First in War." Keeping it company in the grounds of the power plant, temporarily at any rate, are the groups by Persico and Greenough which formerly adorned the blockings of the steps of the east front of the Capitol and which were mentioned earlier as being in storage.

Since Pettrich's family had remained in Philadelphia (or Camden), it is to be assumed that he returned there as soon as he was able after the attack upon his life. During the summer he was well enough to do a bust of John Vaughan, who had been the Librarian of the American Philosophical Society; it is marked "August, 1842."⁴¹ A bust of William Strickland was probably made while Pettrich was in Struthers's employ, but whether before or after the Washington interlude is not known. The same is also true of the bust of William Norris, a Philadelphia industrialist prominent in the development of the steam locomotive.⁴² The Strickland bust was listed in 1868 among the permanent possessions of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, but it is not listed in later catalogs. In the exhibition of the Franklin Institute in the fall of 1842 there was a bronze eagle, "the property of the United States," designed by Pettrich.

A number of works by Pettrich are now in the National Collection of Fine Arts in Washington. The model for the statue of Washington, intended for erection in Washington Square, Phila-

⁴⁰ Canova's statue was destroyed in the burning of the North Carolina State House in 1831.

⁴¹ *Catalog of Portraits and Other Works of Art in the American Philosophical Society* (1961).

⁴² *Third Bulletin of the Proceedings of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science* (1845).

delphia, has been mentioned. The marble version of *The Dying Tecumseh* with the inscription "Pettrich e. figli sculp. 1856," is here. The earliest printed reference to this work which has been found is in the *Saturday Courier*, Philadelphia, for June 20, 1840; the reference is to a clay (plaster?) version. The marble version was made in Rio de Janeiro; the plaster *Tecumseh* is now in Rome. The other works are plaster busts of the sculptor himself, his wife, his son Gustav Adolph Pettrich, William Norris (mentioned above), Martin Van Buren (?), Henry Clay, John Vaughan (a replica of the bust in the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia), a marble bust of Joel Poinsett, and a bronze bust of Washington. According to an article in the *Art Journal*, New York, 1878, there were in the Smithsonian Institution at that time busts by Pettrich of Webster, John C. Calhoun, and Thomas Hart Benton, and one might suppose his busts of Forsyth and Amos Kendall were there too. The last five seem to have disappeared. In a letter to Thorwaldsen, Pettrich mentions a bust of President Jackson which he began soon after arriving in Washington. In all probability he finished it, but what has become of it is unrecorded.⁴³

A number of other works, listed in the *Catalogue of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science for 1857*, have also disappeared: a plaster model of *The Fisherman's Daughter* (*The Fisher Girl*), mentioned earlier and said by Geller to have been done in Rome in 1823 (Pettrich made a marble version of this for General George M. Keim which was in the exhibition of the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in 1843); a plaster model of *The Sleeping Saviour* (probably the piece called *The Christ Child Sleeping upon the Cross* in Geller's book, done in Rome in 1820 and also in the Academy exhibition of 1843); a plaster model of *Innocence* (probably the piece mentioned by Mrs. Smith and by Geller and said by the latter to have been done in Rome in 1825); an *Athena* with an owl at her feet; a *Young Hunter* with his game spread around him (*The Huntsman's Boy*); a *Sleeping Child* (probably the model of a gravestone in Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, made for Matthew T. Miller).

The first indication that Pettrich intended to leave the United States seems to be found in a communication in the *Intelligencer*,

⁴³ Pettrich to Thorwaldsen, Thorwaldsen Museum, Copenhagen.

Washington, for October 10, 1842, announcing a forthcoming publication by the sculptor. Here it is simply stated that he was about to start for Rio de Janeiro. The writer of this letter had, by chance, seen the proof sheets of the proposed publication in Baltimore—five folios of lithographs of Indians. The idea for the publication was the result of a request by Lord Ashburton, who had seen the sketches of Indians which Pettrich had drawn upon the walls of his studio and had asked for copies. Pettrich copied them, and a friend suggested that he make lithographs of the sketches for general circulation. When the publication was revived in the *United States Gazette*, Philadelphia, on October 18, 1842, his contemplated departure for South America was mentioned again, with the added information that the President had granted him passage on any "public ship" going to Brazil. Most of the first edition of this work was bought up for shipment to Germany. The title page of the second edition reads:

Portraits
of
Distinguished
Indians
from several tribes
who visited Washington in 1837

also

a faithful representation of

The Indian War Dance
which took place during the visit
drawn on the spot by
Ferdinand Pettrich

second edition

The above portraits were originally drawn from life,
full-size, on the four walls of Pettrich's studio and
now for the first time presented to the public by
Ferdinand Pettrich

Lithographed by Edward Weber & Co.
Baltimore
1842

While there is no published evidence prior to this newspaper item that Pettrich was contemplating leaving the United States, in a letter he wrote to Thorwaldsen from Philadelphia on July 26, 1841 he leaves no doubt that he was disillusioned concerning his prospects. He states that he hoped to save enough in the next two years to move to Greece.⁴⁴ There he would enjoy the favor of the royal family; he had done a bust of Otto I before coming to the United States. He could expect to save something from the commission for the Washington statue which he had received not long before. The troubles which descended upon him in Washington seem to have discouraged him to the point of deciding that his American adventure had been a failure, and he was so determined to leave it behind that even the commission in Philadelphia was not strong enough to detain him. Why, when he did leave, he went to Brazil rather than to Greece is unexplained.

There is a document in the Archives of Georgetown University which indicates that before leaving for South America Pettrich had tried to settle a debt to the college. His son Adolph had attended its preparatory school in the years 1838-1840. On November 30, 1842, the artist assigned his rights to several pieces of sculpture to "George Town College." They were then in the college chapel—*The Holy Family* (also called *Charity* in this document) and two angels. The whereabouts of these works is now unknown, as is the case with several others named in a list of "Presents made to George Town College by Ferdinand Pettrich." They were: *The Pharisee and Publican*, a bust of Christ, another of the Virgin Mary, a bas relief of the head of Christ, another of the Virgin, and two holy water vessels. Whether the first of these works is the one mentioned earlier as being intended for a public building in Philadelphia is an unanswered question.⁴⁵

Pettrich and his eldest son, Adolph, sailed from Boston on February 9, 1834 on the United States storeship *Erie*, bound for the Pacific but stopping at Rio to deliver supplies to the Brazil Station. They reached their destination on April 13.⁴⁶ The rest of the family went to Rio by way of Hamburg.

During his sojourn in Brazil, Pettrich was visited in March, 1855 by Wilhelm Heine, who, having been with Matthew Perry

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, February 10, 1843.

⁴⁶ National Archives, Log of the United States Ship *Erie* for 1843.

as artist of the Japanese Expedition of 1853-1855, was returning to New York. Heine's account of the visit contains information of interest to us.⁴⁷ He saw not only many of the works of the sculptor in the city and region of Rio de Janeiro, but also the plaster models of Indians which Pettrich had made from his Washington studies. (These are still to be seen in the Lateran Museum.) He mentions the model of *The Dying Tecumseh* and of *Tah-tapesaa* and states that these were two of six life-size figures. There was also a long relief, five to six feet high, giving a history of the Indians up to the coming of the white man—camp life, with a war dance and the parting of the warriors from the squaws and children; a battle between Creeks and Blackfeet; a buffalo hunt; and a treaty conference between American statesmen and Indian chiefs. An appendix to the article by dalla Torre, dated November 13, 1856, states that Pettrich had recently received a commission from an English nobleman for six life-size statues of Indian chiefs of North American tribes and a frieze twenty-six meters long and about two and a half meters high divided into four parts, each representing something noteworthy in Indian life. It was probably the models for this work that Heine saw. Nothing has been found to show that the commission was ever carried out, but the bas reliefs and several of the large pieces are in the Lateran Museum.

Soon after Heine's visit Pettrich and his sons made the marble version of *The Dying Tecumseh* and several other works also in marble. All were made for DeWitt Clinton Van Tuyl, an American dentist practicing in Rio de Janeiro. The Tecumseh statue seems to have been brought to this country by C. B. Norton, who in 1864 deposited it in the Capitol. In 1878 it was transferred to the Corcoran Gallery and in 1916 to the Smithsonian Institution.⁴⁸ The other pieces, which about 1917 were owned by A. P. Van Tuyl of Elizabeth, New Jersey, were a life size *Chastity*, four heroic busts representing the Seasons, and two large medallions representing Day and Night. Where these works are now the present writer has not discovered. They are mentioned here because they are works executed in America, though not in the

⁴⁷ Wilhelm Heine, *Reise um die Erde nach Japan, etc.* (1856).

⁴⁸ Letters in the "Tecumseh" file of the Library of the Architect of the Capitol are the basis for what is said here.

United States, and are not included in Geller's list of Pettrich's works.

Italy was Ferdinand Pettrich's chosen land, and anyone wishing to see the most interesting of his works (works which were begun at least in this country) must go to Italy to find them. They are now starred in the Italian Touring Club's guide to Rome. Of the few sculptures by him which are known to be in the United States, only one is on public view—the statue of *Washington Resigning His Commission*. When the rejuvenated National Collection of Fine Arts and the new National Portrait Gallery take up their quarters in the monumental building on F Street the Washington statue will, in fact, be returning home. This building, when it served as the Patent Office, for a time housed the collection of the National Institute for the Promotion of Science. In the 1857 catalog of this collection one reads: "In the center of the hall, opposite the entrance and under the great arch, we behold a statue of Washington by Pettrich." With the restoration of the original spacious interior, "the great arch" or vaulted hall is now regaining its impressiveness. Perhaps it will again be possible to view the work of our nearly forgotten visitor displayed as it deserves.