OLD SENATE CHAMBER.

As It Was When Washington Resigned His Commission.

HISTORIC SCENE PAINTED BY WHITE.

Mass of Portraits of Prominent Persons Who Were Present—Gilbert Stuart's Washington and Other Likenesses—Old Gallery and Fireplace.

Governor Brown has reached no decision as to whether or not the celebrated painting, "Washington Resigning His Commission," shall be removed from the State House in Annapolis to be exhibited at the World's Fair.

The picture hangs in the most appropriate place that could have been selected for it—the wall of the Senate chamber overlooking the spot on which the events depicted occurred. To be sure the room is sadly changed now, with its new paint and its modern appointments, but, as one stands before the large picture, the old atmosphere seems to return and latter-day vandalism is forgot in imaginings of the scene in the simply-furnished room preserved on the canvas. The painting is 14 by 11 feet and is set in a heavy gilt frame. It was executed in 1859 by Edwin White, of New York by order of the General Assembly. White was born in 1817 and died in 1877, and it is said that the work was executed in Paris. It is not considered historically accurate in the details of the ceremony as it occurred, for the artist had to draw largely upon his imagination and contemporaneous accounts to produce it. It is said, however, that White obtained accurate information in reference to the persons present in the Senate chamber at the time, and traveled all over the country hunting up family portraits on which to base his work.

A Striking Scene.

Whether historically accurate or not in every minute detail, the canvas shows a striking and interesting scene. A large portion of the Senate chamber stretches out before the eyes, against its neutral greenish-gray walls being outlined groups of famous men whose legacy to their sons and daughters was a hard-earned peace and independence. At the right of the canvas, and seated before a table on a platform in front of the arched niche marking the place of honor, is Thomas Mifflin, President of the United States Congress. At another table in front of this is seated the secretary, Charles Thompson, busily writing. With one hand resting lightly on an open document on this table stands the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, his stalwart figure clad in the blue and yellow Continental uniform, and from his shoulders depending a heavy military cloak. The pose is easy, yet dignified, and the face, with its earnest, vigorous outline framed in snow-white hair, is that of a man who has borne the brunt of the conflict and bears the marks of time and service. Bending over the table near this striking portraiture of General Washington is an old soldier, and in the background are the two aids, Col. Benjamin Walker and Col. David Humphreys, both portrait pictures.

The old room is represented as thronged with men and women, Congressmen, citizens, ladies and children in the varied costumes—military or civilian—that marked the period. Every face is intent, and the majority of them are correct portraits of the originals. In the midst of this notable gathering is seen the gentle old face of Martha Washington, with its frame of soft white hair and black and white head dress, while in happy contrast to this matronly figure is that of a young girl, her niece, in a pretty bright-colored gown. Among those most intent on the stirring scene are Charles Carroll of Carrollton and his daughters, a picturesque trio, the dainty gowns of the ladies making a graceful touch of soft coloring against the tones of the background.

Some Famous Men.

The faces of James Madison, James Monroe and Thomas Jefferson are recognizable among the listeners, and other pictured faces are those of Alexander Hamilton, of New York, Col. John Eager Howard, Col. Samuel Smith, Joshua Barney, Edward Lloyd, General Smallwood, Otho Holland Williams, Thomas Stone, William Paca and Samuel Chase of Maryland, and celebrated men of other States.

Adorning one side of the wall is a group of tattered flags—the Hessian flag, taken at Trenton; the British flag, taken at Yorktown, a French and an American flag. One of the two beautiful old-fashioned candle chandeliers of heavy brass that formerly lighted the room is discernible, while a glimpse is shown in the background of the great eighteenth century fire-place that once occupied about the same position now held by the picture. Beneath the painting are hung, in gilt frames, explanations of its figures and copies of the speeches delivered by General Washington and President Mifflin on the occasion of the resigning of the commission, when the brave soldier was informed that "the United States in Congress assembled receive with emotions too affecting for utterance the solemn resignation of the authorities under which you have led their troops with success through a perilous and doubtful war."

The Maryland Signers.

Four large portraits are among the adornments of the walls of the Senate chamber at present. They are those of the Maryland signers of the Declaration of Independence—Chase, Carroll, Stone and Paca—represented in full length figures, sitting or standing, and each holding or having near him an official document, apparently the great declaration itself. On the east wall, hung so high and in so poor a light that a good look at it is next to an impossibility, is the famous Gilbert Stuart portrait of Washington, considered one of the best ever painted of the first President. On each side of the platform are two old-fashioned steel engravings, on one side Henry Clay and Benjamin Franklin, on the other Andrew Jackson and John Adams.

The Old Chamber.

As the old room is represented in "Washington Resigning His Commission" so it looked pretty much on that memorable day in reality, December 23, 1783. So it looked also in 1784 when in this chamber the peace with Great Britain was ratified in the presence of Congress, closing the long struggle for American independence; so also in September, 1786, when the first Constitutional Congress met; so also at the inauguration of the Governors of Maryland until John Lee Carroll's administration. The General Assembly of that day passed a bill for its remodeling and so-called improvement, and succeeded in destroying the principal attractions of a room rich in historic associations. True, the General Assembly of 1892 appointed a committee, with Senator Thomas G. Hayes, of Baltimore, to consider the advisability and cost of restoring the chamber to the condition it was in when Washington resigned his commission, and action in the matter will probably be taken at the General Assembly of 1894. But this can hardly be more than a reproduction, for restoration has been made difficult from the fact that the furniture and decorations have disappeared. Behind the conventional and gaudy arrangement of red brocade and ecru satin the old niche, in front of which President Mifflin sat, is still intact. But the imposing old chimney piece has been walled up, the little gallery for spectators has been torn down and only a few fragments of it are left, a bit of stucco work treasured by one family, a piece of the molding and a few of the columns by another, while the superb old andirons and fenders, the chandeliers and the furniture generally have gone the usual way.

"The World's Fair committee," said Mrs. William Reed on Saturday, "thought of making a Senate chamber exhibit, but this was abandoned, as so little trace was found of the old articles in the room. It is said that beneath the present crimson carpet that covers the floor there is a mark designating the spot where Washington stood."

There are many interesting portraits in other rooms of the State House, including those in the Governor's chamber. The portrait of George Calvert, first Lord Baltimore, by Mytens, is probably the finest of these. It was copied from the original in the gallery of the Earl of Varulems, Glastonbury, England, and presented to the State by the late John W. Garrett.