

appear to be delicate Chinese fretwork designs, while the later features (possibly added in 1841 or by Mills) are formed of turned balusters positioned between paneled plinths.

#### INTERIOR OF THE ROTUNDA

The analysis of Jefferson's surviving floor plans for the main floor and Dome Room (no plan of the ground floor/basement is known to exist) revealed a significant omission. The main floor plan [*Figure 6*] illustrates door and window openings as they existed and still exist today. Even the false windows situated behind the east and west chimney masses are shown by Jefferson at both plan levels. The Dome Room plan [*Figure 8*] also includes the real and false window openings in the east and west elevations, but no openings are shown in the curved and flat surfaces forming the north and south sides of the plan. The otherwise carefully drawn plan purposely omits openings in these locations. The same omission exists in the plan drawn by John Neilson. These openings need to be carefully probed to determine how they fit into the construction process. Jefferson's August 10, 1823 letter to Arthur S. Brockenbrough concerning the center opening in the south wall of the Dome Room reveals how design decisions were made as the building was under construction; probably the case for many features of the building.

The absence of pre-fire interior images of the Rotunda and terraces, except for several later nineteenth-century photographs of the north side of the Dome Room, makes it impossible to visualize the appearance of the many important spaces in the three structures.

The stair system in the Rotunda is an important feature whose appearance can only be speculated upon. Jefferson's main floor plan clearly indicates a pair of symmetrical double-flight stairs at the south end of the curiously shaped hall. The southeast stair includes a small fireplace at its intermediate landing. There are no surviving visible clues concerning the appearance and construction of the stairs, but a post-fire photograph may confirm that there was in fact of pair of stairs at first floor level. The October 28, 1895 image [*Figure 57*] shows what appears to be the outlines of the destroyed stair stringers on the walls of the hall, as seen through the open south windows. A significant aspect of the stairs as reconstructed in the mid-1970s, is found in the assertion that they were "said to be the first double freestanding stairs in the United States" (stated in the Vaughan, Gianning book on the Rotunda reconstruction). Actually, the pairs of stairs in the hall of Bulfinch's Joseph Barrell house (1792-93) predate Jefferson's design. In reality, no one knows what the original Rotunda stair looked like, and certainly there is no evidence for their construction and detailing.

The main floor plan does not show the stairs to the ground floor/basement level. These flights (if there were two) likely existed beneath the first runs of the main stair, and