

Benjamin C. West

Remodeling of the House Press Gallery

Detailed description of the 1967 remodeling of the House Press Gallery.

Interview recorded August 24, 2005

And, this new Press Gallery featured, among other things a universal telephone system at two different staff desks, whereas previously it'd been a solo staff desk, and you could answer all twelve phones, booths on the wall. No longer did you get up and page people, walk around. The handout press release system. Before the remodeling, press releases came in. They were one, pinned on the board, and then stacked, one upon another. If you saw something on the board that attracted your eye, you had this pilgrimage through this mountain of paper and press releases to find that spare copy for yourself. Well, I designed cabinetry that had 60 individual slots, and it was rare that we would exceed 60 slots a day on handouts from Members received. And so, you looked, and I had a custom-made rubber stamp, said, "House Press Gallery, Board Copy, Do Not Remove, Slot Number." And you looked down at Slot 14, and you took one out. And you lived much longer, because you didn't have all this labor invested in rummaging through the stack. Now that seems like a small thing, but it manifestly improved the efficiency of our operation. It was much swifter. But again, just a small item. And it's just that very fact, that this multitude of small items melded into a modern-day, efficient, proud-to-have facility in the House of Representatives.