

Preface

THIS VOLUME stems from the U.S. Capitol Historical Society Meeting in 2006, the third conference I had the privilege of organizing with my coeditor, Don Kennon. Every spring the United States Capitol Historical Society (USCHS) holds a scholarly conference on an aspect of American history that focuses on Congress, the nation's capital, and the federal government. My work with the USCHS began in 2004 with a conference on Congress in the 1820s followed by a conference in 2005 on Congress in the Age of Jackson. The papers from those two conferences were combined in *Congress and the Emergence of Sectionalism: From the Missouri Compromise to the Age of Jackson*. This volume follows, with essays on how slavery affected life in Washington, D.C., and how slavery affected politics in the capital.

The issues are interrelated. Congress met in a slaveholding city. Antislavery congressmen had to face the reality of slavery every day, and make compromises with the institution, even when they did not want to do so. Slaves were everywhere, working in the places congressmen lived, serving in the restaurants at which they ate, and driving the horse-drawn carriages in which they rode. Southerners also had to face the reality of a slave city with a growing free black population and an increasingly discontented slave population. The constant attempts of slaves to escape bondage—illustrated by the story of *The Pearl*, which is set out in this volume—illustrates how southerners could not easily and comfortably live in Washington with the myth that their slaves were happy and contented. This social reality of slavery affected the congressional debates over slavery in the territories, the annexation of Texas, and southern demands for a new fugitive slave law. *In the Shadow of Freedom: The Politics of Slavery in the National Capital* explores all of these interrelated themes.

As always, it was an enormous pleasure working with Don Kennon on the conference and on the book. Don is a thoughtful, careful scholar and editor. His staff at the USCHS makes our conference run smoothly. Both Don and I owe a great debt to his staff, especially Lauren Borchard and Felicia Bell. We are also greatly indebted to our editor at Ohio University Press, Gillian Berchowitz. She is smart, helpful, and creative. And, as with all great

editors, she knows just how to cajole late authors and editors to get their work in. Working with her is always an enormous pleasure. The staff at Ohio University Press, especially our project editor, Rick Huard, rounds out a great team.

Most of all, we are indebted to the colleagues who come to our conference to share their ideas and knowledge and to interact with each other and with the audience. Their papers—published here—reflect their dedication to interdisciplinary scholarship, history, and the life of the mind. Some of these papers are the work of younger scholars, offering new ideas and new research; some reflect a lifetime of work by some of the great masters of our profession. The authors come from different disciplines, but all are historians dedicated to the craft of understanding, explaining, and learning from our past. Don and I learned much from organizing the conference and editing these chapters. We hope our readers will as well.

Paul Finkelman