In This Chamber



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In This Chamber

Presented by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Senate

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Adapted and Directed by Leslie B. Jacobson

Stage Manager Erica M. Welzenbach

Costumes
William Pucilowsky

Lighting
Carl F. Gudenius

Sound and Music John Anthony Ward

Union, Henry S. Sadd, 1852. This print, which unites Daniel Webster of Massachusetts, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, and Henry Clay of Kentucky, celebrates the political consensus achieved by the Compromise of 1850. Webster and Calhoun stand with their hands resting on the "Constitution of the United States," while Clay is seated nearby.

If the Federal Government is to prescribe the limits of its own authority, and the States are bound to submit to the decision... this is practically "a government without limitation of power." The States are at once reduced to mere petty corporations and the people are entirely at your mercy.

-- Senator Robert Y. Hayne January 25, 1830

When my eyes shall be turned to behold, for the last time, the sun in heaven, may I not see him shining on the broken and dishonored fragments of a once glorious Union... but every where, spread all over in characters of living light, blazing on all its ample folds, as they float over the sea and over the land, and in every wind under the whole heavens, that other sentiment, dear to every true American heart-Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!

-- Senator Daniel Webster January 27, 1830

The Constitution... was made, not merely for the generation which then existed, but for posterity, undefined, unlimited, permanent and perpetual-for their posterity, and for every subsequent state which might come into the Union, binding themselves by that indissoluble bond.

-- Senator Henry Clay January 29, 1850

THE CAST

Isaac Bassett		Nick Olcott*
Daniel Webster		John Lescault*
Margaret Bayard Smit	h	Dorothea Hammond*
Robert Y. Hayne		John Anthony Ward
John C. Calhoun		Carter Reardon
Henry Clay		Steven Dawn
Millard Fillmore		John Anthony Ward
John C. Breckinridge		John Anthony Ward
Senate Page		Ceri Ellen Peters

^{*}Members of Actors' Equity Association

THE SETTING

Scene I: U.S. Senate Chamber, January 1830

Scene II: U.S. Senate Chamber, January-March 1850

There will be no intermission.

The performance lasts approximately 45 minutes.

ote: In this production, dramatic license has been taken with John C. Calhoun's March 4, 1850 speech. Less than a month from death, Calhoun was too ill to respond to Henry Clay's proposals himself. Senator James Mason of Virginia read Calhoun's defiant words while the South Carolinian sat bundled in a cloak at his deak, "his eyes glowing with meteor-like brilliancy as he glanced at Senators upon whom he desired to have certain passages make an impression."

The Old Senate Chamber has always reminded me of a theater. Its rich, red colors, marble columns, ornate draperies, marvelous acoustics, and intimate size suggest the stirring show it must have offered during the decades before the Civil War. Today, the chamber still evokes memories of the greatest debaters in the Senate's history, and gives modern-day visitors a bridge to the legislative world of Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John C. Calhoun. The "great triumvirate" personified the Senate's tradition of unlimited debate. They spoke thoughtfully and eloquently for hours, or even for days, to seize the issues, shape public opinion, and direct the course of the Union. Sometimes allies, sometimes adversaries, they gave voice to both regional concerns and national aspirations during the dramatic growth and turmoil of our young nation.

The first theatrical presentation ever staged in the Old Senate Chamber, In This Chamber recreates the sights and sounds that greeted gallery visitors more than a century ago. I am especially pleased with the historical accuracy of the script, which has been drawn from original sources: the letters of Margaret Bayard Smith, the papers of Isaac Bassett, and the debates as they were recorded in the Congressional Globe. The words of history are heard once again in the chamber where they were originally spoken.

Robert C. Byrd Chairman Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Senate

May 1990

THE DEBATES

THE WEBSTER-HAYNE DEBATE OF 1830

Sectional tensions triggered the most electrifying debates in the Senate's early history. Washington hostess Margaret Bayard Smith compared the debating senators to gladiators of ancient Rome, fighting in the arena of the Senate chamber. Mrs. Smith was among those in the galleries who closely followed the famous clash between South Carolina's Robert Y. Hayne and Massachusetts's Daniel Webster in January, 1830. Seizing on a bill that would limit the sale of western land, Hayne tried to use the occasion to forge a political alliance between southern and western states. He defended states's rights and assailed the growing powers of the federal government. During this address, Daniel Webster entered the chamber and leaned against one of the columns to hear Hayne castigate the whole range of policies that Webster and other northeastern senators had been promoting. The following day, Webster responded with a short speech that attacked southern sectionalism—particularly its defense of slavery—and criticized those who disparaged the Union.

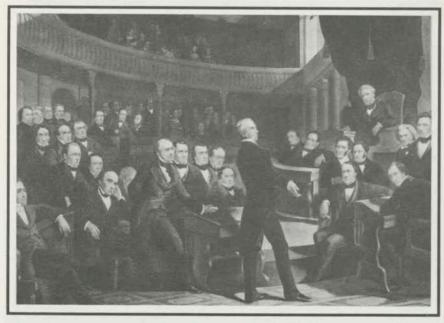
When it became known that Hayne would reply to Webster's criticism, the Senate galleries filled to capacity. In a sarcastic speech, Hayne mocked the inconsistencies in New England's own record of federalism, defended the slave system, and promoted the idea of state



Webster Replying to Hayne, George P.A. Healy, 1851.

nullification of federal laws on the grounds that the states had created the national government. Webster then rose to deliver one of the most eloquent speeches in the Senate's history. In his reply to Hayne, Webster argued that the Constitution was the supreme law of the land. The nation would not long survive if the states could decide at will whether to obey or disobey federal laws. Webster concluded with the ringing words, "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable!" Webster's eloquence, combined with President Andrew Jackson's determined leadership, put an end to the doctrine of nullification, but not to the underlying sectional discontent which caused it.

THE COMPROMISE OF 1850



The United States Senate, A.D. 1850, Robert Whitechurch after Peter F. Rothermel, 1855. Henry Clay presents his program of compromise to the Senate, presided over by Vice President Millard Fillmore. John C. Calhoun appears to the right of the vice president and Daniel Webster is seated left foreground, head in hand,

For twenty years after the Webster-Hayne debate, Congress struggled to suppress sectionalism. But when vast new western territories were added after the Mexican War, the issues and tensions could no

longer be avoided. The Senate was evenly divided between free and slave states, and any new addition would tip the balance. Anti-slavery senators opposed the spread of slavery into the territories, while pro-slavery senators argued that slaveholders were owed a share of the territories that had been acquired "by the blood and treasure of the whole nation."

Kentucky's Henry Clay took the lead in seeking a compromise between the conflicting forces. Clay proposed an omnibus bill that would bring California into the Union as a free state, allow residents in New Mexico to determine whether to permit slavery in that territory, end the slave trade in the District of Columbia, and enact tougher fugitive slave laws, requiring free states to return runaway slaves to their owners. Failure to enact his compromise, Clay warned, would lead to dissolution of the Union and a bloody civil war.

In a speech that he was too ill to deliver himself, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina opposed Clay's compromise. He insisted that the South must have equal access to the new territories, and that the North must cease agitating the slave issue. However, the debates's most memorable remarks were once again those of Daniel Webster. On the 7th of March 1850, Webster placed his own political standing in jeopardy by embracing the compromise, even with its unpopular fugitive slave provisions. "I wish to speak to-day, not as a Massachusetts man, nor as a northern man, but as an American.... I speak to-day for the preservation of the Union. 'Hear me for my cause.' " After extensive debate and parliamentary maneuvering, the Compromise of 1850 was eventually adopted, and the Union was preserved-for another decade.

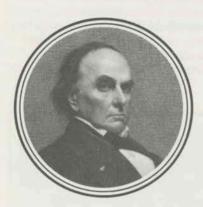


A mortally ill John C. Calhoun listens as his defense of the southern position is read to the Senate, March 4, 1850.

THE PRINCIPALS

DANIEL WEBSTER,

a representative from New Hampshire and a representative and senator from Massachusetts, was born in Salisbury, New Hampshire on January 18, 1782. Webster first gained national fame as counsel representing his



alma mater, Dartmouth College, before the U.S. Supreme Court. As U.S. senator from Massachusetts, he championed the constitutional theory of federal sovereignty over the individual states, most notably in his famous reply to Senator Robert Havne of South Carolina. Webster again gained prominence in 1850, when he delivered his eloquent "Seventh of March" speech in support of Henry Clay's compromise proposal. Webster was an unsuccessful Whig candidate for president in 1836; he also served as secretary of state under Presidents Harrison, Tyler, and Fillmore.

I have seen men taller than Webster; I have seen men larger; but I never saw anyone who <u>looked</u> so large.... The head, the face, the whole presence of Webster, was kingly, majestic, godlike.

-- Oliver Dyer, American journalist

HENRY CLAY,

a representative and senator from Kentucky, was born in Hanover County, Virginia on April 12, 1777. Clay practiced law in Lexington, Kentucky, and later was elected to complete the term of a resigned U.S. senator. At 29, Clay was constitutionally underage for Senate office, but no one challenged his credentials. After a short time in the Senate, Clay was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. On his first day in office he was chosen speaker of the house; a post he held for six of his seven terms. Clay was appointed secretary of state by President John Quincy Adams, and served from 1825 to 1829. He came back to the Senate in

1831, serving for eleven years, and acting as the Whig leader. After his third defeat for the presidency in 1844, Clay returned for one last term in the U.S. Senate, and initiated the Compromise of 1850.

I don't like Clay. He is a bad man, an impostor, a creator of wicked schemes. I wouldn't speak to him, but, by God! I love him.

- John C. Calhoun



JOHN CALDWELL CALHOUN,

a representative and senator from South Carolina and vice president of the United States, was born near Calhoun Mills, South Carolina on March

18, 1782. Calhoun held numerous public offices during his lifetime; he was a state representative, a U.S. representative and senator, secretary of war, secretary of state, and vice president under both John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson. As vice president, Calhoun presided over the Senate during the Webster-Hayne debates of 1830. Although he was unable to actively participate in the proceedings, Calhoun's sympathy for the states's rights cause was wellknown. Calhoun and Webster clashed again in 1850, with Calhoun bitterly opposed to Henry Clay's compromise.

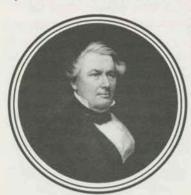


Mr. Calhoun, the cast-iron man, who looks as if he had never been born and never could be extinguished....

- Harriet Martineau, English essayist

MILLARD FILLMORE,

a representative from New York, vice president and president of the United States, was born in the Finger Lakes region of New York on January 7, 1800. As a moderate four-term member of the U.S. House of Represen-



tatives, Fillmore was chosen to balance the 1848 presidential Whig ticket headed by slaveholder Zachary Taylor. During the Compromise of 1850 debates, President Taylor died and Fillmore ascended to the presidency, where he signed into law the very bills he had heard debated as vice president.

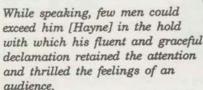
... [Fillmore is] a good-tempered, cautious, intelligent man, with whom it is pleasant to transact business. He is very diligent, and what he does not know he quickly learns.

- Daniel Webster

ROBERT YOUNG HAYNE,

a senator from South Carolina, was born in the southeastern part of the state on November 10, 1791. He was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1822

and served for ten years, earning a reputation as a skilled orator. During the 1830 debates, Hayne spoke with the approval and assistance of his mentor, Vice President John Calhoun. Two years later, Hayne resigned his seat to allow Calhoun to return to the Senate.



-- Assistant Doorkeeper Isaac Bassett



ISAAC BASSETT,

a page, messenger, and assistant doorkeeper for the U.S. Senate, was born in Washington, D.C. on August 4, 1819. In 1831, Senator Daniel Webster

appointed young Bassett to be the second page in the institution's history. During his 64 years with the Senate, Bassett was promoted first to messenger and later to assistant doorkeeper. Despite a lack of formal education, Bassett recorded his observations about the Senate in his later years, hoping to publish a memoir. While he never completed the project, his thousands of handwritten pages form a unique chronicle of the 19th century Senate.



In all the mutations of parties no attempt was ever made to disturb him [Bassett]. Surely, no higher tribute could be paid to his fidelity, and his integrity than that he has been so long and so satisfactorily identified with the history of the Senate.

-- Senator David Davis

MARGARET BAYARD SMITH,

an author and early chronicler of Washington society, was born in Philadelphia on February 20, 1778. In 1800 she married Samuel Harrison

Smith and moved with him to Washington, where he founded the National Intelligencer newspaper, and she became one of the city's most popular hostesses. Mrs. Smith began writing in the 1820's, focusing on events and personalities in the capital. She is best known today for a series of letters and diary entries written between 1800 and 1841. These observations, collected and published as The First Forty Years of Washington Society, are among the most lively and perceptive of the period.



[Margaret Bayard Smith] judged her fellow man charitably and believed in her country absolutely, and did not participate in any of the party rancor which raged around her.

- J. Henley Smith, grandson

THE CAST

STEVEN DAWN (Henry Clay) has performed regionally at the Kennedy Center, Arena Stage, and Center Stage, as well as the New York Shakespeare Festival. He won the Helen Hayes award for Best Supporting Actor as Jeremiah in Lydie Breeze, and was nominated for Outstanding Lead Actor as Raul in Extremities. Other performances include Tom in The Glass Menagerie which played London and Yugoslavia, Puck in A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Horst in Bent. Mr. Dawn's training includes Ireland's Abbey Theatre and the American Repertory Theatre Acting Institute at Harvard.

DOROTHEA HAMMOND (Margaret Bayard Smith)

was last seen in Horizons Theatre's Reckless and Eleemosynary, both directed by Leslie Jacobson. She recently appeared as Harriet Stanley in Arena Stage's The Man Who Came to Dinner. Among Ms. Hammond's many Arena Stage credits are Death of a Salesman, The Skin of Our Teeth, Inherit the Wind, and The Three Sisters, all directed by Zelda Fichandler; as well as Enemies, Our Town, All the Way Home, The Cherry Orchard, The Front Page, On the Razzle, House of Blue Leaves, and Long Day's Journey Into Night. She has also performed at Long Wharf Theatre, the Papermill Playhouse, and Olney Theatre. Ms. Hammond researched and wrote Eleonora Duse, a one-woman show that she performed at New Playwrights' Theatre and the National Theatre in Oslo, Norway. She lives part of the year in Italy with her husband.

JOHN LESCAULT (Daniel Webster) most recently appeared in Horizons Theatre's production of Reckless. Lately, his roles have included parts in Common Pursuit and Principia Scriptoriae, a two-play repertory at the Studio Theatre. Other local appearances include work in productions at the Washington Stage Guild, New Playwrights' Theatre, Olney Theatre, and Arena Stage.

NICK OLCOTT (Isaac Bassett) has appeared extensively at area theatres, including Horizons, Arena Stage, the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, and the Washington Stage Guild. He adapted Henry James's Turn of the Screw for the Washington Stage Guild, for which he received a Helen Hayes nomination for Outstanding New Play of 1989. His other performances include the classics at Shakespeare Festivals from Vermont to Virginia, and musical comedies in summer stock from Philadelphia to Fredericksburg.

CERI ELLEN PETERS (Page) is a research assistant presently earning her master's degree at The George Washington University, where she recently portrayed Billie in Women of Manhattan. She has also performed with the Maine Acting Company, touring New England as Lucy in The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Other acting credits include Emma in Curse of the Starving Class and Dolly in Bad Habits, both at Bates College, where she earned a B.A. degree.

CARTER REARDON (John C. Calhoun) is a native of Washington and has worked at several of the area's theatres. He has appeared in Execution of Justice at Arena Stage, Looking Glass at Woolly Mammoth, and in the Gardenia/Lydie Breeze cycle of plays at New Playwrights' Theatre. Mr. Reardon was a company member in the Boston Shakespeare Company, and most recently an instructor of theatre at the Interlochen Arts Academy in Michigan.

JOHN ANTHONY WARD (Robert Y. Hayne, Millard Fillmore, and John C. Breckinridge) is a composer, pianist, and music director; he is making his acting debut here in the Old Senate Chamber. Recently, Mr. Ward concluded a run as onstage music director of Cole at Alden Theatre. Other credits include the original score and sound design for Reckless at Horizons Theatre, and musical direction of The Decameron, currently in production at The George Washington University. He also frequently performs on the piano as a soloist and in chamber music ensembles.

THE STAFF

LESLIE B. JACOBSON (Playwright and Director) is the Artistic Director and founder of Horizons Theatre, now in its 13th year of producing. She has written over 15 scripts which have been produced in Washington, Boston, and Pennsylvania. Ms. Jacobson has written the script for the Helen Hayes Awards ceremony for two years, and has received three Helen Hayes nominations for Outstanding Direction. This season, she has directed A Shayna Maidel for Olney Theatre, and Reckless for Horizons. Ms. Jacobson is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at The George Washington University, and has served as the President of the League of Washington Theatres.

CARL F. GUDENIUS (Lighting) is Professor of Lighting Design/Technical Director at The George Washington University. His recent designs include Dennis the Menace at Olney, Reckless at Horizons, and art director and scenic designer of Showtime Comedy. He is the resident designer at the Washington Stage Guild where he designed sets for Figaro's Marriage, Busman's Honeymoon, Terra Nova, and A Turn of the Screw, and lights for A Turn of the Screw. Mr. Gudenius is also Technical Director and Designer for the Spanish Dance Society, and has performed in many technical capacities at Olney Theatre, USA TODAY: The Television Show, ABC News, and GWU-TV Showtime Productions.

WILLIAM PUCILOWSKY (Costumes) received his MFA in Design from Boston University, and is currently the resident costume designer at The George Washington University Department of Theatre and Dance. Locally his most recent designs include Eleemosynary at Horizons; Anything Goes, A Flea in Her Ear, and Do Patent Leather Shoes Really Reflect Up? at Petrucci's Dinner Theater; and The Constant Wife for the Washington Stage Guild, for which he received the 1989 Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Costume Design. Earlier this season he designed The Guild production of Blithe Spirit.

JOHN ANTHONY WARD (Sound and Music), see Cast for Mr. Ward's biography.

ERICA M. WELZENBACH (Stage Manager), a native of the Washington area, is happy to be back in her hometown after an absence of twelve years. Ms. Welzenbach most recently stage managed Horizons's Reckless; prior to this she was living and working in Charlotte, North Carolina, where she stage managed and directed for the Charlotte Shakespeare Company, and stage managed and assistant directed for Charlotte Repertory Theatre. She has also worked with Opera Carolina, Theatre Virginia, Children's Theatre of Charlotte, and the Palo Alto Players. Production credits include A Walk in the Woods, Hamlet, Measure for Measure, Another Part of the Forest, Scapino, The Nerd, Carmen, and Rigoletto.

This project was coordinated by the Office of Senate Curator:

James R. Ketchum, Curator Diane K. Skvarla, Associate Curator Mary F. Phelan, Registrar John B. Odell, Registrarial Assistant Scott M. Strong, Museum Specialist Richard L. Doerner, Curatorial Assistant

Special thanks go to Donald A. Ritchie, Associate Historian of the U.S. Senate, for his ideas and suggestions. Additional assistance has been provided by Marsha Berry, U.S. Senate Appropriations Committee; Ginger Moss and Angela C. Welsh of Horizons Theatre; and the staffs of the Senate Sergeant at Arms and the Architect of the Capitol.

United States Senate

COMMISSION ON THE BICENTENNIAL

Press Release

(For immediate release)

IN THIS CHAMBER

Theatrical Production in the Old Senate Chamber U.S. Capitol Building

As part of the 200th anniversary of the United States Senate, the Commission on the Bicentennial of the Senate is sponsoring a theatrical production in the historic Old Senate Chamber in the Capitol Building, Washington, D. C.

The dramatic Senate debates of 1830 and 1850, featuring the impassioned oratory of Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and John C. Calhoun, will be reenacted. It was in the Old Chamber that many of the fundamental issues affecting the young republic were first debated, and visitors flocked to these memorable proceedings.

Other historical figures appearing in the production, *In This Chamber*, will include Assistant Doorkeeper Isaac Bassett, a Senate employee during the 19th century for over 60 years, and noted Washington hostess Margaret Bayard Smith. Both recorded their observations and opinions of these events and people, and their writings form a unique and colorful record of the time. Unlimited debate is one of the most cherished tenets of the United States Senate, and the actual debates of 1830 and 1850, as entered in the *Congressional Globe*, form the basis of this production.

Ten performances, each lasting approximately 40 minutes, are planned from May 14th through the 25th. By invitation only.

For further information contact the Office of Senate Curator, (202) 224-2955.

SENATOR BOB DOLE

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

'IN THIS CHAMBER'

OLD SENATE CHAMBER

MAY 22, 1990

AS VICE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION ON THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE UNITED STATES SENATE, I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU ALL FOR COMING TONIGHT TO SEE THIS MEMORABLE PRODUCTION. FROM 1810 TO 1859, THIS WAS THE U.S. SENATE. DESIGNED BY BENJAMIN HENRY LATROBE AND CHARLES BULFINCH, IT WAS RESTORED TO ITS ORIGINAL SPLENDOR IN 1976.

DURING ITS RESIDENCE HERE,
THE SENATE GREW FROM A
SMALL ADVISORY COUNCIL OF
34 MEMBERS, TO THE PRIMARY
FORUM FOR THE GREAT
NATIONAL DEBATES OF THE

MID-19TH CENTURY. HERE, IMPASSIONED ORATORY RESOUNDED, DRAMATIC CONFRONTATIONS FLARED, AND HISTORIC COMPROMISES WERE FORGED —— THE WEBSTER— HAYNE DEBATE OF 1830, AND THE COMPROMISE OF 1850, TO NAME JUST TWO. AND IT WAS THE SCENE OF FIERCE PERSONAL

CLASHES, INCLUDING THE DRAWING OF A PISTOL BY SENATOR BENTON ON SENATOR FOOTE, AND THE CANING OF CHARLES SUMNER. BY THE TIME THE SENATE TOOK LEAVE OF THIS CHAMBER IN 1859, 64 MEMBERS MET IN ITS CROWDED INTERIOR.

AND AS THEY DO TODAY, VISITORS FLOCKED TO THE SENATE. BUT AT THAT TIME, IT WAS SEEN AS THE BEST SHOW IN TOWN. THEY CROWDED INTO THE GALLERY, ONTO THE FLOOR, AND EVEN INTO THE MEMBERS' CHAIRS! THEY CAME TO SEE THEIR 'FAVORITE' SENATOR, OR TO SEE WHAT THIS NEW

DEMOCRACY WAS ALL ABOUT.

IT WAS AN AGE WHEN THE HIGH LEVEL OF DEBATE DISTINGUISHED THE GROWING REPUBLIC. ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE WROTE, 'THE SENATE IS COMPOSED OF ELOQUENT ADVOCATES,

DISTINGUISHED GENERALS, WISE MAGISTRATES, AND STATESMEN OF NOTE, WHOSE ARGUMENTS WOULD DO HONOR TO THE MOST REMARKABLE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES IN EUROPE.'

CHARLES DICKENS WAS ALSO
IMPRESSED BY THE SENATE'S

DECORUM -- ESPECIALLY COMPARED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES -- BUT HE WAS APPALLED BY THE USE OF TOBACCO IN THE CHAMBER. HE COULD NOT BELIEVE -- QUOTE -- 'THE STATE TO WHICH THESE CARPETS ARE REDUCED BY THE UNIVERSAL DISREGARD OF THE SPITTOON' -- END QUOTE -

- AND CAUTIONED AGAINST
VISITORS EVEN LOOKING AT THE
FLOOR OR PICKING ANYTHING
UP WITH AN 'UNGLOVED HAND.'

AND BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THE
PRESS WERE AS UNRULY AS
EVER. NEWSPAPER
CORRESPONDENT JANE
SWISSHELM, THE FIRST WOMAN

ADMITTED TO THE SENATE PRESS GALLERY IN 1850, WROTE OF THE DISGRACEFULL BEHAVIOR IN THE SENATE GALLERY. 'I WOULD RATHER FORCE MY WAY THROUGH A CROWDED HORSE— MARKET AND SIT ON THE AUCTIONEER'S BLOCK,' SHE SAID, 'THAN GO INTO THE GALLERY AGAIN.'

AND, OF COURSE, IT WAS HERE THAT 'THE GREAT TRIUMVIRATE' -- DANIEL WEBSTER, HENRY CLAY AND JOHN C. CALHOUN -- FIRST CAME TOGETHER IN 1832, AND THE 'GOLDEN AGE' OF THE SENATE WAS BORN.

WATCH AS THESE GREAT MEN
COME TO LIFE AND REENACT
SOME OF THE MEMORABLE AND
DRAMATIC DEBATES OF THE
YOUNG UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA.

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