>> Imagine winning an anonymous art competition, knowing you were judged strictly on talent. Only on what you made, not who you are. It wasn't about politics. It wasn't about race. It wasn't about who you know. The art stood for itself. Now, imagine it's 1870s America, and you're a woman.

[Music]

You're listening to Shaping History, Women in Capitol Art, produced by the Capitol Visitor's Center. Our mission is to inform, involve, and inspire every visitor to the United States Capitol. I'm your host, Janet Clemens.

[Music]

The National Statuary Hall Collection began in 1864, when Congress invited each state to send two statues to be displayed in the Capitol, honoring individuals illustrious for historic renown, or distinguished civil or military service. Anne Whitney became the first female artist to make a statue for this collection when she was asked by the state of Massachusetts to create a statue of Samuel Adams. While working on the statue of Samuel Adams in the 1870s, Anne Whitney also entered an anonymous competition to create a statue of Charles Sumner. There were not many female sculptures at the time, and when her anonymous entry was discovered to be by a woman, the commissioners considered the moral implications of a woman sculpting a man's legs. It was thought to be indelicate for a female artist to outline the contours at the lower limbs of a man's body. So, Anne Whitney didn't get to make the statue of Charles Sumner after all, but her Massachusetts statue of Samuel Adams arrived in 1876 at the Capitol. He's on display in the Crypt. You can see him there today, and he has legs.

[Music]

I'm here with Jacki Musacchio, Professor of Art History at Wellesley. Professor Musacchio, welcome to the podcast.

>> Thank you. Very good to be here.

>> So, we're standing in the Crypt of the Capitol, which is a room with sandstone columns and groin vaulted arches, and tour groups are coming through here, because in this room, we have displayed 13 statues from our National Statuary Hall Collection, and as is obvious to most folks, the reason there's 13 is, it's one from each of our 13 original colonies. We're standing in front of a statue Samuel Adams. It was made by Anne Whitney in 1876, representing the state of Massachusetts in our National Statuary Hall Collection. Professor Musacchio, what can you tell us about this statue?

>> Well, the statue was a commission from the state of Massachusetts, that was not awarded to Whitney, by the way. She had to compete for it with two other artists. We're actually not sure who the other two artists were, though we certainly expect they were men. And the three of them made models, and they were judged, and hers was apparently judged best. So, in 1873, she started to turn her small scale model into a larger scale clay, and then cast it into plaster, as the final model, which would then be carved into stone.

She's working on this from about 1872 to 1875, when she leaves for Italy, to have it carved in marble, in the studio of Thomas Ball. The statue itself is actually an incredibly interesting statue to think about today, in particular, because if you look around the side, on the pedestal, there's a date on it, and the date is March 6, 1770, which is 250 years ago, and the idea is that Whitney was representing Samuel Adams at the moment where he's confronting the British governor, who is charge of Massachusetts and causing all kinds of problems in Massachusetts, that have led to the Boston Massacre, which happened the day before. And Adams goes to confront him, and demands that the royal troops leave Massachusetts. And it's a sort of pivotal moment in the Revolutionary War, and one that Massachusetts was very proud of, to have stood up to the royal power in that way. There's a painting by John Singleton Copley that represents a similar moment, and somehow that painting sort of disappeared. People weren't entirely aware of it until Whitney was further along in designing her statue, and she got a photograph of it, and she adjusted the facial features to accommodate what she saw in the Copley. How accurate Copley actually was, we don't know, obviously. But she's clearly thinking about how she can best represent this Massachusetts patriot, and how she can have him sort of conform to this image of a revolutionary war hero. So, she has him in, what in the late 19th Century, when she's carving, would have been recognized as 18th Century costume. Certainly not anything that people [inaudible] at the time were wearing. She -- all through her career, she studied very carefully historical costumes. She was very much aware of details and the importance of details, to conveying a narrative and a message. And so the costume that you see here, with the long waistcoat, the carefully delineated buttons, the clasp on his shoes, the slightly sagging stockings that you can see on his legs. All of this was meant to sort of evoke the sense of life and vitality in this figure, who's standing there with his arms crossed, kind of staring out, apparently at the British governor, you know, saying, "You need to withdraw your troops from Boston now."

>> Yeah, he has a defiant look on his face and kind of a thousand-yard-stare, I would say. And he's in a very -- I would say forceful and dramatic pose.

>> He has a really tense posture here. Right? His arms are folded over his upper chest. He's clenching the paper and scroll, so you can see sort of the way it's squeezed by his fingers. And his feet are planted very firmly. Right? They're both these weight-bearing legs, and he's making a statement, and she's making a statement, with the way that he's positioned here. And it's an over-life-size figure, too, and it's set up originally, as it is today, on a pedestal. So, it's meant to be this kind of monumental type of representation, that really makes you ponder what had happened. It makes you understand history in a different way.

>> He's got his arms crossed, in front of his chest. He's clutching a sheet of paper in his hand, and he's not just holding it. He's really kind of squeezing it in his fist, I would say. And then you've got this late 18th Century outfit, a long coat and a long [inaudible], and then the knee breech is buckled, and Whitney has really paid attention to the details -- the buttons, the button holes, the breeches, and even the wrinkles and seams in the fabric.

>> Even down to things like the embroidery along the edges of the seams and the way that the costume comes together. She's very concerned with making it as naturalistic as possible, from all sides, really. So, you walk around it, you can see, she's taking a great deal

of care on the way the drapery folds fall and everything else. And she's very eager to show that she's capable of carving this sort of monumentally scaled standing male.

>> And when you sculpt marble, this tall especially, the weight does become an issue. And so in order to kind of like prevent it from tipping over, I guess, the sculptures have to work in some kind of -- usually some kind of support near the leg, to kind of bolster it a little bit. So, I notice, we have something a little unusual on this one.

>> Yeah, the -- going back to classical antiquity, you'll get statuary that has these sort of little blocks or posts or tree trunks or something, to help stabilize one or both legs of a statue, because of course, those are the most fragile parts of it. And so in this case, we have a sort of a claw foot cable.

>> Yeah, there's a suggestion of a ball and claw foot.

>> With drapery over it. And what's really interesting too, if you look closely at that, and if you walk around or put your head around a little bit, to the back of the statue, you can see the marble grain. And she had a lot of trouble getting marble for this statue. When she first got to Italy, the quarries were on strike. She couldn't get to work right away, when she wanted to, and she couldn't find a perfect block of marble. And so she was very, very concerned about what this marble would look like, and Thomas Ball in his studio, who were carving it for her, were sort of sending her letters, as she was -- as they were going through the process, and they keep talking about the sides and the front are fine, but around the back, there's a little bit of trouble. So, she was very, very worried about the back. When she finally did come back to Florence to see what they had done, she was happy to see that all of the color was only on the back.

>> Yeah, luckily for Anne Whitney, the statue is displayed with its [inaudible] wall. So, at this point in time, no one's really seeing it, but there is kind of a grayish mark, down the marble on the back.

>> And she even says, "He's not going to turn his back on anyone," in one of her letters. So, he's not going to turn his back, so on one will ever see --

>> She's not that worried about it.

>> No. I think she was just so relieved that she finally got the marble, and she was able to get the carving started, that having a little bit of darkness on the back was acceptable for her.

[Music]

>> To further discuss the journey of Anne Whitney, as an artist, we sat down with Professor Musacchio in a less public environment.

[Music]

>> Anne Whitney was much better known in her own lifetime than she is today. She was born in 1821, and she dies in 1915, which is a very long life for that time period. She was one of seven children, in a very progressive, Unitarian family that was outside of Boston,

and she was part -- she and her family were part of these very important social circles in the Boston Area, intellectual circles, economic circles, political circles, literary circles, and artistic circles. She, like most women of her time period, didn't have any real formal education. She spent a year at a sort of girl's academy in Maine, and that qualified her to start her own school in Salem, Massachusetts. And she was very interested in literature, and poetry, in particular. So, she published her first and only book of poems in 1859, but while she was sort of wrapping up that book, she somehow got it in her head that she wanted to be a sculptor. She didn't have very much formal training, at any point in her life, but she took the initiative to meet various sculptors, in and around the Boston area, and practiced. She set up a shed in her backyard, and she apparently modeled busts of her parents, which we no longer have. One of her very earliest efforts actually is a bust of a small child named Laura Brown, and that's in the Smithsonian Museum, and she spent a lot of time trying to understand what she would need to do to be a successful sculptor. She took some classes, informally, at the Pennsylvania Academy. She studied anatomy in the Hospital at Brooklyn, and eventually, she decided to go abroad, which is where most people who wanted to study art at that time period, men and women, had to go, and she spent a total of almost five years, from 1867 to 1871, and then again from 1875 to 1876.

>> You mention that sculptors -- or artists more generally -- but sculptors maybe in particular sought to go to Europe to further their work, to obtain some experience, to find material to work with, but also because there was sort of a different environment there. Can you talk about that a little bit?

>> Sure. I think that, in Whitney's case, and in many of the female artists who also traveled abroad at the same time as she did, both sculptors and painters too, to a certain extent, they just didn't have access to either the original works of art in the United States -- this is an era before public museums, and even an era before many private collections -- and they didn't have the ability to be trained properly either, because women and men weren't trained together, and very few artists were willing to train women. So, going abroad, given the opportunity to see new things, to actually get their hands on original works of art, especially from classical antiquity and from the Renaissance era, which were considered the most important eras by many of these people, and they were able to have these great experiences, that enabled them to sort of transfer that knowledge into their own works of art, when they came back home, or while they were still abroad, if they remained there for an extended period of time.

>> Sure. So in the United States, there aren't that many art schools for them to attend, and then for the women, there's barriers to getting into those schools, and then even once you're there, studying, you don't get to go to live drawing classes. They won't let you study the bodies. They won't let them go even to the morgue, to look at the cadavers, to learn anatomy that way. And so there's this sort of imagined threat to their modesty, I think, that maybe was a bit different when they went to Europe.

>> I think the social restrictions that were in place from the middle to the end of the 19th Century, and actually beyond that too, but during Whitney's lifetime, the social restrictions were really important, and issues of decorum were really important. A woman shouldn't be looking at a male nude and drawing from the male nude, especially in a co-ed situation, but

even with other women around her, a women shouldn't be doing these things that would take her away from her primary duties, which were, of course, taking care of the house, marrying, having children, taking care of her parents, doing all of these domestic duties that were the accepted path for almost every woman during this time period. And people like Whitney, women like Whitney, were kind of striking out against that, and they had a lot of roadblocks along the way, when they were doing it. But they were also incredibly determined to do it, as well.

>> So, Anne Whitney made the move from teaching poetry. She moved into sculptor kind of late in her life, quite late in her life, actually, which I find kind of surprising. I wish I knew more about what sort of motivated her to do that. There's sort of a more or less contemporary legend that talks about her being out in the backyard of her house and, you know, upturning a flower pot and seeing the sort of wet dirt, and then molding something out of it. Right? And realizing, you know, this is something I can do and that I'm good at and that I want to learn more about. Undoubtedly rather apocryphal, but on the other hand, you can sort of imagine her doing that. And she knew -- or she got to know a lot of the artists around the Boston area, but a lot of them were painters. A lot of the female artists were painters, and painting was a little bit different. Right? Painting is something that a proper woman could learn as part of her social graces. She would do china painting, or she would do watercolors. If she did oil painting, that was sort of another step beyond, but that was still relatively accessible to her and acceptable to the general public. If you're doing sculpture though, you're working with heavy, dirty materials. You've got equipment. You have expenses that are much bigger than, you know, buying china blanks and painting on them. You need clay. You need plaster. You need marble or wood, or you need these expensive tools, and you have to exert yourself to actually do anything with them. So, sculpture was sort of a step beyond what was acceptable. And that is, I think, why many of the early women sculptors in the United States ended up going abroad for their training.

>> There's something to it, I think also about sort of taking up space, that painting is something that you can do in the comfort of your own home, that you can study from examples, without being out in public. Right? But the idea that, if you're going to sculpt, if you're going to make any kinds of figures with any kind of scale to them, you do need like a dedicated space.

>> Sure. You need a dedicated space, and you also need -- you need people to allow you to have that space. And Whitney was very fortunate. She was from a very progressive family, and she had a rather large back yard apparently, and set up a kind of a shed there and, you know, set that up as her studio. But throughout her life, following that, she's always talking about where am I going to work. I need a studio with this kind of lighting, and I need a studio that can accommodate an eight-foot tall figure, and those were hard things to get. And, you know, the materials, the space, the willingness to do all of this was really a major challenge for her, but she was still able to overcome it, which is what's really impressive about her, I think.

>> There's also I think a moment historically, where we're talking about people having the ability to safely travel abroad and to get kind of from place to place. You know, they're still very much influenced by the weather obviously, but you have things like railroads and

steamships, and there's sort of just generally more mobility within the United States and then also more people that are sort of able to make that jump across the pond.

>> Yeah. This is a period sort of that -- the time period of Whitney and this other group of artists, that they're not really a group, but this number of artists who are working at the same time, they are taking advantage of the fact that both right before, during, and after the American Civil War, you have an increased number of steamships and steamship lines, and they take you across the ocean. But you also, in Europe itself, have an increasing number of steamships there, and increasing railroad systems. And eventually, you're going to get tunnels under the Alps, as well. And once you have that, you have so much greater mobility. But still, if you leave from a port in Boston, in Anne Whitney's time, in 1867, when she first leaves for Europe, she gets on her boat, sails for two weeks, ends up in Northern France, and then it takes her more than a week more to get down to Italy from there. She stopped along the way, so it actually took her quite more than a week more, but overall, her travel time. So, it's almost a good month, from your home in Boston to your new home in Rome. And in doing so, you're taking various modes of transportation, everything from a steamship to a horse-drawn carriage, when you're going over the Alps. You can going to do it, as you were saying, with weather. You can't go over the Alps from sort of October to March, because there's snow, and you don't have access to the roads, and you can't count on having access. And then you have to somehow make your way through a variety of different currencies, borders, customs agents, languages, and negotiate all of this. And to do that as a woman in this time period was just astonishing, if you think about it. This kind of intrepid nature that you have to have in order to put up with this level of discomfort -- because it was a level of discomfort. Whitney writes in great detail about how awful the steamship was and, you know, it's tossing her to and fro, and she's feeling sick, and they haven't eaten in days, and everything's disgusting, and she doesn't know what to do. This took a lot out of you. You'd have to really want to do this. And then you have to somehow get back home too, once you're there. So, you have to kind of factor on a month of travel, on either end, and that's a lot of time and effort.

>> And by our standards, even everyday activities would be uncomfortable during the 19th Century. So, I mean, there's a baseline level of discomfort that the women are experiencing, just with what they're wearing and the quality of hygiene and food and kind of all these other factors too. So, I mean, I don't think we can understate the boldness and the willingness to be kind of out of your comfort zone, that they showed. But I think the pay-off is huge because, as you mentioned, you know, they don't just go straight to Rome. You know, you're going to stop along the way, and you're going to stop in Paris and look at original works that you maybe have only seen copies of. Right? Paintings.

>> For many people, the first time you see an original work of art is going to be at the National Gallery in London or at the Louvre in Paris, and these are just things that they'd heard about, they'd read about, but it's also before you get widespread printing and photographs and books. So, they've seen maybe line engravings of some of these things, or read descriptions of them. But when you're actually confronted with something for the first time, it must have been just mind-blowing. And many of them write about it in that way, you know, here I am, and I'm looking at Rubens. Or here I am, and I'm looking at Raphael, and Raphael, in particular, who was extraordinary popular then. So, trying to put yourself

back into that time, and the reactions that these women would have had in front of original works of art is really very evocative, and gives you a sense, I think, of what their experience was like.

>> And the inavailability of like high quality images. You know, we're so inured -- like high quality images are available to us at any time, and so it seems like, when you do produce a work of art, if it is described or reviewed by another person, that those words are going to travel far more widely than the actual visual. Right? And so, it seems like, in that context, a poor review of your sculpture is really going to be damaging, potentially.

>> I think that Anne Whitney actually suffered from that a bit early in her career. She had both good reviews and bad reviews from her early work, before she went abroad. And she also had them after she went abroad, as well. But what I find striking too, is that in contemporary newspapers, there is a huge awareness of what artists are doing in that time period. You know, sort of little gossip columns mentions. This artist is doing that. This artist is going abroad. This artist just sent back his sculpture of X. And you realize that people were quite aware of contemporary art, or at least they could read about it, in a way that we don't necessarily have today. So, they might not always see images of it. They might not encounter it in their daily existence, but they can read about it in the daily papers, and that information was widely circulated, and reports would be picked up from newspaper to newspaper, which sometimes makes research difficult, because you find one article, and you find a copy of it here, and you find a copy of it there, and you're thinking you're finding three and getting lots of information, but you're really not. But it shows how widespread the interest was, and how widespread the knowledge was, about what these people were doing.

>> So, there's a tremendous amount of public interest and press interest in artist in general, and then I feel like there's this particular interest in the female artists, that they're treated as like these sort of objects of fascination.

>> Yeah, and I think being an artist -- being a woman and being an artist in this period is a really difficult position to take, because if you're an artist, you're in the public eye, and women weren't supposed to be in the public eye. There's all kind of comments, particular about, for example, painters who go out and copy other paintings in the galleries. And it's sort of scandalous, the language that's used. You know, they're actually out there, in public, wearing clothing that maybe is more practical in some cases than beautiful or acceptable, and people comment on them, and they got as much attention in museums as the art hanging on the walls, in many cases. And many of the critics at the time sort of condemned them, and they appear that way in literature, as well. It's a kind of trope of the female artist abroad, and the negative connotations that come with that, that these women were up against, as well. So, being abroad and working in Europe had huge advantages, for what you're able to do and your awareness of art and what you learn and what you take away from it, but you also had to have a very thick skin, and you had to put up with the fact that people are commenting on you. And, you know, you could be sitting there, making a copy of a Raphael in the Louvre, and you're going to get a crowd behind you, who are maybe looking at what you're painting but also looking at you, particularly, and judging you, in

that way. So, you end up in this kind of fraught relationship with the public at large, and inevitably, that's quite damming for your reputation, and many women suffered from that.

>> Yeah, so we mentioned that Anne Whitney is among this -- it's sort of a group of women -- they're not necessarily consciously connected with one another, when they decide to make the jump to Europe, to study there, but there's this term that's thrown about, that comes to us from literature, which is the White Marmorean Flock. What's that about?

>> Well, the term comes from the early 20th Century, and it's Henry James. And he's writing a biography of a neoclassical sculptor in America, William Wetmore Story, who lived most of his -- well, most of his artistic career in Rome and was really sort of one of the -- one of the pillars of Anglo-American society in Rome. People went to his house, went to his parties. Everyone visited him. Everyone went to his studio. So, he was extraordinarily popular in a social way and also in an artistic way. And James quite a lot of time in Italy too, and he knew William Wetmore Story, and he knew many of these women and men artists who were in Rome or in Florence in this time period. So, Story dies, in the mid-1890s, I believe, and about seven or eight years later, James is writing this book. And in that period, between sort of Story's death and when James is writing, neoclassicism, which is kind of the generic term for the style that we associate with many of these artists, particularly William Wetmore Story. It's kind of going out of favor, and so James kind of talks about Story in, you know, these laudatory terms. He was extraordinarily influential. He writes a two-volume biography of him. He sort of draws in information about all these other prominent Bostonians. He was from Boston, and other American citizens who are friends with or know of or commissioned Story. But then there's also a section in the book, where he talks about other people in Rome at that same time, and he refers to sort of the group of artists, female artists, who are in the circle of Charlotte Cushman, the actress, who really served as another one of these pillars of the Anglo-American crowd. She was extraordinarily popular. She lived in Rome for a great many years, and she supported a lot of the women artists and writers too, who came through the city. And for James, and for many people, Cushman was a little problematic. She was another sort of public figure. Right? She was an actress, and she was out there, and people knew of her, and she put herself out into public in this way that women shouldn't do. And she was wildly successful with it and made a lot of money, which is why she was able to support herself in living abroad for so many years. And for James, he refers to the sort of women that are associated in some way with Charlotte Cushman as a White Marmorean Flock, who sort of settled on the seven hills of Rome, and when you first read that, it's sort of a puzzling phrase. Right? Marmorean, it's referring to marble. He's talking primarily about the sculptors, though there are many painters in this sort of loose group, as well. But then you kind of unpack the rest of it, and he's referring to them as a flock. Right? And they're on all the little seven hills. And you kind of get this image of these sort of birds flitting about, like not doing anything seriously -- not doing anything impressive. But, you know, just sort of hanging out in Rome, and somehow related to marble and marble carving. And he only refers to one of these women by name. He talks about Harriet Hosmer, who was, without a doubt, the best known of these women sculptors who were working abroad in this time period. He refers of most of the rest of them in just a kind of generic groupish kind of way, but he also describes Vinnie Ream, who was quite a

controversial sculptor at the time. He refers to her -- I think he described her appearance. Right? [multiple voices].

>> He refers to some --

>> Her curls. He refers to her hair.

>> Her curls and sparkling eyes or something like that.

>> Exactly. And it was enough that the reader in the know would understand that. He also refers to Edmonia Lewis, who was another really amazing woman who has a fascinating history, who was of mixed race descent, and he refers to the color of her skin, in relation to the color of the marble that she carves, and makes this kind of problematic analogy. And so again, anyone who knew who these people were could pick up on this. But for James, Hosmer was a decent sculptor, but she did things that he didn't agree with. And these other women did things that he didn't agree with, that was all about how they were really coming up against social norms, and they were doing things you didn't expect of women. And so for him, this group became very problematic. And it's a term -- that White Marmorean Flock is a term that we sort of still use today, in many ways, to describe these women. But that kind of denies their individuality. It denies the fact that they're working in all kinds of different subjects, different narratives, in some cases, different materials, different kinds of patrons, and they have very different lives while they're abroad too. But at the same time, most of them knew each other. They overlapped here and there. Mostly in Rome, sometimes further afield, over the Alps in the summer, when it was too hot to be in Rome. They would travel together. So, we know that they knew each other. They hung out together, or they had dinner. They had tea. They went to each other's houses. So, through correspondence and diaries, we actually know quite a bit about them, by piecing together this information. But in no way did these women think of themselves as sort of a unified group, the way that James portrays them. They weren't in this flock. They were these women going out and doing these -- consciously doing these really -- for them -- important things and learning about art and practicing art and producing art in a way that no one -- they had no role models. Right? They had no one doing it before them, that they could model their behavior on.

>> And it's sort of a useful bucket term. I mean, even we -- you look at it through the lens that Henry James didn't necessarily mean it in a complimentary way. But it's easy for us to sort of group together these women that kind of went there for these opportunities, for these sort of relaxed social mores that were on them and this access to materials and access to models that they could work with and also models in the sense of like role models, that there are other artists that are working there. And I just think it's interesting, the idea of the flock settling on the hills. It also implies a lack of permanence in their position, that they [multiple voices]. You can have that invasion of flocks settling on the hills, and then they're just going to -- it's almost alluding to women as kind of flighty, and that this is a momentary diversion for them. They can't possibly be seriously considering this as a career. So, there's a real submissiveness in the term. But we still use it. We still use it to refer to a certain group of folks in that time period, and it's not a super-compressed time period. I mean, we have ladies at the beginning, Sarah Fisher Ames kind of the vanguard, and then, you know,

the Harriet Hosmer era, and Anne Whitney, and Vinnie Ream is a whole generation younger.

>> And really, the vast majority of these women are moving in and out of the city of Rome, sort of in the late 50s through the 70s. And then you get sort of some of them coming back and forth, and you get a few coming toward the end of that, but that major period, when they are a part of that Anglo-American community, and when they set up studios, sometimes on the same street or in the same building, and people would come by, travelers would come by and see what they were working on, and they were getting commissions, and they were producing their art. It does sort of fall into that particular period, and we know the most about what they do then. Once they leave Rome, it's hard to find out more about some of these women too. So, by studying what they do in Rome, we learn an awful lot more about them.

>> So, Anne Whitney moved in a circle in Boston, an intellectual circle and artistic circle. There were a lot of kind of progressive thinkers, and there were a lot of ideas floating around, and she's kind of wrapped up with a lot of people. And one of those people that we have a strong connection with here at the Capitol, is Senator Charles Sumner, who as I understand, it was a family friend of hers?

>> Actually, he went to Harvard with her brother, her brother who had died by this point. And so she did a certain closeness to Sumner, and she felt like Sumner was, not only an important individual for her family, but also, of course, for the state and for the nation as a whole, because Whitney, among the many causes she sort of patronized, was a very, very determined abolitionist, and Sumner's reputation, of course, rests largely on his abolitionist thinking, and so you've got a great deal of interest in Sumner around this time period. I mean, he dies in 1874, and everyone is aware of that. You know, he's such a long standing Senator from Massachusetts, and his ideas were so important at this time.

>> Yeah, so this is an idea that I think maybe doesn't resonate with us quite the same way as a lot of viewers. But someone important dies, and there's this immediate wave of, we've got to get a statue of this guy. Right? So, Sumner passes away, and it's immediately like he needs to be memorialized. We want sculpture. Who's going to make it?

>> Yeah. He dies in early 1874, and it seems like shortly after that, there's a kind of movement to have a competition to make a sculpture that will honor Sumner in some way, for the Boston area. And they set up the rules rather quickly. You had to make a sort of two-foot high model, plaster model of what you wanted to do, and they would be judged anonymously. And so a great many artists, apparently several dozen artists, contributed to the competition, trying to get this really important commission. Anne Whitney's working on her Sam Adams at the time, so she's working on another major commission. But she is very, very interested in winning this competition, because of the affinity she felt with Sumner and because of the family connection she had with him. She kind of thought that her brother, had he lived, would have been someone like Sumner. So, she had this personal connection to him that was really important to her.

>> Yeah, so starting in 1864 is when the United States Congress puts out the call that they want each state to contribute a statue to the National Statutory Hall. They issued legislation

that summer, 1864. And so Whitney was approached by the state of Massachusetts to make a statue for them?

>> She was. It seems that Whitney was one of three artists approached by the commissioners for the Massachusetts statues. We're not exactly sure who the other two were, but we know that, in the end, her model. And she isn't approached until 1872, so Massachusetts took a little bit of time, to get things moving. They were thinking about it. They were propriating money. But the sort of irony, of course, is if they had really been on the ball and done something right away, she would have never gotten this commission, because she wasn't well-known enough as a sculptor at that time. So, in 1872, she sort of makes a model. By 1873, it's being assessed, and she has friends in very high places. So, as good as her model must have been, she also knew that she could count on a certain group of Bostonians to support her, primarily among them James [inaudible] Field and his wife, Annie Adams Fields, who were really kind of promoting what she could do, and her ability to make a statue of Sam Adams and to make it well. And so, she does get the commission. And she starts working on it. She needs to find a studio to work on it. She has a few crises along the way. At one point, sort of 800 pounds of clay for her model falls over in her studio, because she hadn't supported it properly. So, she's working along, and she's trying to develop it, and she's thinking about what she wants to do. And by 1874, she more or less has her full size model in order and plans to get it cast in plaster to make it more permanent, because she's working in clay. So, Samuel Adams' statue is basically nearly done, and then there's this contest to do Sumner. And it's an anonymous contest, and there's tons of people who are submitting design, essentially little mini-sculptors that they've got to pick the best one. And so it's the Boston Art Commission. They've set this up, and so they pick their favorite. They do. Well, the people kind of pick a favorite, it seems, according to the records, and everyone seems to love this one sculpture of a seated Sumner, but then there are a few other little favorites too, a standing one and a couple of others. But somehow word got out -- it was supposed to be anonymously judged. Somehow, word got out, so we know that people were complementing Ann Whitney. And it's a long, sort of drawn out process, and as you said, it happened right at the time when she's finishing up the model for Sam Adams, and she's readying it. She cast it in plaster, and she's readying it to ship to Rome, where it's going to be carved, in the studio of her colleague, Thomas Ball. And she doesn't do it that winter. She doesn't do it in the winter of 74, because she doesn't want to travel in the winter, and I think also because she realizes, oh, this Sumner competition. I need to come up with something for the Sumner competition. So, she spends sort of the winter of 74, 75 kind of tinkering with her model for that, and getting the plaster ready for shipping the Sam Adams. And in the spring, she ships the Sam Adams, and she and her partner, Abby Manning, are going to sail to Paris and then onto to Florence, and monitor the carving of it. At the same time, she's submitting her model to be judged in the Sumner competition. So, because this happens while she's abroad, we know an awful lot about it. Because Whitney wrote to her family with great regularity, every two weeks. She'd write random little pages every couple of days, and then she gathered them all up, usually at the two week mark, stick them in an envelop and send them back home, and her family did the same. And we have a lot of that correspondence, so we know what she was thinking about it, and we know what information was getting to her from her family, who also sometimes sent these paper clippings and actual newspapers too. And it seems

like Whitney's model was one of the top three, and the top three, according to the regulations of the commission, were awarded a $500 prize. And then they sort of didn't have the next step worked out fully. They didn't quite know what was going to happen next, and Whitney had heard from various people, hers was the best. Everyone loved hers. But she's abroad, and by December of 75, she gets word that actually, even though everyone loved hers and it was the best, the so-called immortals, as she described the commission who was in charge of the competition, decreed that the actual commission was going to go to Thomas Ball, her friend, the man who's right then having his workshop carve her Sam Adams from her model, but certainly not the outcome she expected or the outcome she wanted, and there's a great deal back and forth about that, and how she reacted to it, I think, is really important. Her family was so distraught. Her sister, in particular, is just so upset that this isn't going to happen. And Anne's clearly quite upset at the beginning, as well. But then she sort of comes to terms with it, and she writes these great letters about it to her family. In this one letter to her brother, in late November, 75, just as the word is coming out, she writes to him, and she says -- and her brother's very well connected. He's in the government in Boston, and he's very much aware of what's happening. And she writes back and says, "Do not be vexed or troubled about the Sumner affair. Above all, don't put forward any claim for me. It isn't a matter of life and death, and if there is injustice, it is only a part of a larger injustice, which comes to be righted some day, I hope." And for her, she's connecting it to her gender. She is very much aware, from various rumors that have reached her, that the reason she doesn't get the Sumner commission is because she's a woman, and they think that it would be better to give it to a sculptor with allegedly more experience, who has proven himself, and that would be Thomas Ball. Of course, Anne Whitney has done a lot by this point, and she's in the midst of finishing up this Samuel Adams for the National Statuary Hall. So, she's already proven herself, and she feels that she's proven herself. And she's upset about it, but she's aware that the way that things are at this point, she's not going to get anything out of it. This is just -- this is what happened, and she's going to have to live with it.

>> Yeah. From my understanding, it was through her brother that she found out that it came down to the quote, unquote "woman question." And Whitney, she's a firm supporter of various causes, including the Suffrage Movement, and she's very keen to have herself judged alongside men. She's a sculptor. She doesn't have much choice. So, there are relatively few females sculptor in this time period, and things like, at the same time, she's arguing that she doesn't want her work shown at the 1876 Exhibition, in the women's pavilion, which her friend, Annie Adams Field is sort of spearheading, because she doesn't want her work to be shown in part. She doesn't want to be put there and judged only against other women. She wants it to be a broader awareness of what her accomplishments are, and she wants to be seen against the best sculptors, and those would include the men. So, she's quite upset about this, but she decides that she just needs to sort of move on from it. And she does, and in the end, her Charles Sumner actually does get cast, and ends up right in Harvard Yard, in fact. But that's about 25 years later. But for her, it would have been so important to have that commission, because of the personal connection she had with Sumner and her family had with Sumner. So, I think that, you know, reading between the lines in her letters when she talks about it, it must have been a huge blow, no matter how much she tells her brother not to worry about it.

>> And not to say anything on her behalf.

>> Exactly. Not to sort of nudge anyone on her behalf. She goes back and forth about that a bit. First she says she does want him to ask, or to ask Mr. Fields, but then she's like, you know what? This is a done deal, and this is as far as it can go.

>> And I think that's an example of potential that we've seen with many of the artists, but especially an era before suffrage, that the women that are artists are very much reluctant or unhappy with being called a woman artist, with having attention focused on their works, strictly because of their gender. But at the same time, although they may hold views themselves, progressive views and the idea that women need more political and social equity, they're sort of held up as symbols by the suffragist that are advocating for change. It's like well, here's a woman that's doing X, Y, and Z, and you know, that they're sort of kind of forced into this role.

>> Like look what women can do in public life when they're given a chance.

>> But we know with Whitney at least, her ideas were in line with that. Right? She wasn't old enough to be at Seneca Falls, but --

>> She's very -- she knows some of these women, and she carves busts of some of them. She is in dialogue with them. She gives talks at various events around the Boston area that the suffragists supported and attended. But she also wants to make sure that she is judged on her own merits all the time, and she wants to make sure that her work can be seen not just as the work of a woman, but much more broadly.

>> Yeah. So, what a crushing blow, to have this one commission that you know you didn't get, just because of your gender. You know, when you work so hard to eliminate that from the discussion around you.

>> But I think she really did try to come to terms with it, by focusing then on the Sam Adams. Right? Because here's this commission that's going in Washington. It's going in the National Statuary Hall. This is something that's a major, major commission, and that is going to be seen by many people, and is going to have this lasting impact. And so, yeah, there's this group of Bostonians who don't quite get it and who award the Sumner commission to someone else, but she still has this. Right? She still has the Sam Adams.

>> So, it seems to come down to, essentially, kind of the Victorian fear of a woman sculpting a man's legs, that it sort of has to do with anatomy.

>> Which is ironic, of course, because she's already carved men's legs, and she's carving men's legs for the Sam Adams. I mean, he's wearing breeches and sort of stockings. And they're rather form-fitting. So, she can carve men's legs, and other women have carved men's legs. But there's something about her model for the statue that just put off the commissioners, and they decided to use that as the excuse, not to grant her the final commission.

>> So, just like the art students are trying to go into the gallery and look at classical examples to learn from, and they're not being allowed in until the nudes are draped or

covered with fig leaves. You know, there's the same kind of resistance. She doesn't get this major job, because of this kind of squeamishness around women sculpting male anatomy.

>> And the women being sculptors or being in the public eye in general, or issues of decorum that come with that, and how she's not conforming to those expectations.

>> It's just one little kind of outrageous pin-point of a whole host, a whole constellation, of things that are against her making a success of herself in this field.

>> And against most of the other women sculptors too at this time. I mean, I don't think that she's the only one that this excuse was sort of used to deny a commission. And remember, while this is all happening, Whitney's Samuel Adams is being carved from a marble block in Ball's studio, and she makes a comment at one point, in a letter back home, saying, yes, his assistants are carving this for me now, and they're doing this in a little building off to the side, which is good, because she doesn't want anyone that she's Thomas Ball's student. Right? She wants to be known as the artist herself. She doesn't want anyone to think that Ball has to help her with what she's doing. But all sculptors at this time hired these trained Italian artisans to carve their work for them. And then they'd come in and do the finishing touches, but the larger part of the carving and the sort of heavy duty kind of work would have been done by these well-trained men -- almost exclusively men, I'm sure -- who are able to come in and put the time and effort needed into it. Then Whitney made plans, towards the end of the process -- she was constantly in touch with Ball about it -- to go and put the finishing touches on it. But so while this is happening, he's getting the commission she really wants. And they remain friends for the rest of their lives. They're still close. She's still working with him. But that had to be a difficult situation for her. Right? He's getting this commission, and he's helping her by, you know, using his workspace, so that she can pay these artisans to carve out her Adams. But that must have been incredibly difficult to deal with.

>> And we see echoes of this in the debate that breaks down in the Senate, about Vinnie Ream getting the commission of the statue of Lincoln. This idea of the women are inexperienced, and that they don't have the skill. And this again, this allegation is alluded to that, you know, they don't cut the marble themselves. There's -- someone else is doing it for them, and it's really a man behind all this.

>> Yeah, and that became a real sort point for a lot of this women artists, some of whom actually did do some of their carving themselves.

>> And so we talked earlier about how the press is following kind of breathlessly all of these kind of updates about the lives of the sculptors and what they're working on and where they're going. You know, when this event happened, this wasn't just a private thing between, you know, Anne Whitney. And it's not even just the city of Boston is abuzz with this idea. This is something that's happening --

>> It's something that people are very much aware of, from these social columns and things like that, but also from common knowledge. Right? These sculptors do become sort of the heroes, in a way, and it's something that people understand and are aware of. There's a great sort of poem that Lidia Maria Child publishes in a New York newspaper, that

describes this -- setting it up almost as a competition, right, between Boston and New York, New York being very avant-garde and willing to breach decorum in that way, and Boston being much more prim and proper and not letting the women carve men's legs, and not seeing that as appropriate. And so through information like that, and the dissemination of information like that, you really have a much wider public who are aware of what to Whitney was a really sore point, and she's getting a lot of sympathy for it and a lot of appreciation for it, but it had to hurt, to see this constantly being brought up again and again in the news.

>> Yeah, and the poem -- going back and forth, Boston to New York -- maybe we can read a little snippet. She publishes it in the New York Evening Telegram, and she's publishing it quite late. This is after the fact. It sort of when Ball's sculpture is about to be installed, or it was just installed, I can't remember. And she's acknowledging that Whitney's sculpture is actually really good. And she doesn't name names, but she sets it up as kind of a dialogue between Boston and New York, and she says that Boston says, a man knows himself, how he walks and sits. How every bone in its socket fit. But the laws of human nature show that things like these, no woman can know. And the New York response, yet under the dome of the Capitol stands Samuel Adams, erect and tall, as free as his namesake before the fall. And then though that image was carved by a woman, rarely is marble so grandly human.

[Music]

>> Although Anne Whitney was the first woman to make a statue for the National Statuary Hall Collection, hers is not the first sculpture by a female artist in the Capitol. In our next episode, we'll discuss a woman who is arguably the most controversial artist in the so-called Marmorean Flock.

[Music]

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