

Pringle Slight

(11 Apr 1790 – 27 Nov 1860)

Slight. On Wednesday morning the 28th instant, Pringle E. Slight in the 70th year of his age. His funeral will take place on Thursday, 29th instant from his late residence on Half street between Virginia avenue and G street Island at 2 o'clock where his friends are invited to attend.

Allen, William C., *The Dome of the United States Capitol, An Architectural History*, Washington, DC: U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1992, p. 26.

Pringle Slight

1790-1860



Photograph ca. 1858

M.C. Meigs Papers, Library of Congress

A master carpenter, Slight was employed in January 1825 by Charles Bulfinch, who was just finishing the Capitol's first dome. He subsequently became the Capitol's "handyman," performing such jobs as fixing sticking desk drawers for the Senate, repairing clogged gutters for the Commissioner of Public Buildings, and installing shelves for the Clerk of the House of Representatives. When Walter came to the Capitol to begin construction of the extensions he appointed Slight the foreman of carpenters.

Slight's years of experience proved invaluable when it came time to dismantled the old wooden dome. Having maintained the dome for years, he knew it well. The copper covering on the outer dome, for example, had been replaced by Slight, who advised captain Meigs on how it could be economically removed using curving ladders he had devised for its installation. Slight also warned Meigs of the weak spot in the center of the rotunda floor—a circular opening he had helped close in 1828 to prevent rising damp air from ruining Trumbull's paintings. Meigs designed the tripod scaffold to stand clear of the former opening. Slight and his men built the scaffold as well as the temporary wooden roof that protected the rotunda during construction of the new iron dome. Ironically, his son Robert, a rigger on the new dome, slipped from the scaffold and was found dead on the temporary roof. Slight died in 1860 after 15 years of helping to build, maintain, improve, dome and redome the Capitol.