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0521841178 - Berlin - Washington, 1800-2000: Capital Cities, Cultural Representation,
and National Identities

Edited by Andreas W. Daum and Christof Mauch

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Berlin – Washington, 1800–2000

CAPITAL CITIES, CULTURAL REPRESENTATION, AND NATIONAL IDENTITIES

This collection examines the urban spaces of Berlin and Washington and provides a comparative cultural history of two eminent nation-states in the modern era. Each of the cities has assumed, at times, a mythical quality and has been seen as a collective symbol, with ambitions and contradictions that mirror the nation-states they represent. Such issues stand in the center of this volume. The authors ask what these two capitals have meant for the nations and explore the relations among architecture, political ideas, and social reality. Topics range from Thomas Jefferson's ideas about the new capital of the United States to the creation of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, from nineteenth-century visitors to small-town Washington to the protesters of the 1968 student movement in vibrant West Berlin. This lively collection of essays speaks to diverse audiences: to historians and urban sociologists as well as to architects and readers interested in cultural studies, in city developments, and in what Walter Benjamin once described as the art of the flaneur: the walking through and sensual experience of modern cities.

Andreas W. Daum is Professor of History at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York.

Christof Mauch is Director of the German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., and Professor of History at the University of Cologne.

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Edited by

ANDREAS W. DAUM

University at Buffalo, State University of New York

CHRISTOF MAUCH

German Historical Institute and University of Cologne

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Contributors

Carl Abbott, Portland State University

Lucy G. Barber, California State Archives, Sacramento

Kenneth R. Bowling, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

Andreas W. Daum, Professor of History, University at Buffalo, State University of
New York

Belinda Davis, Rutgers University

Walter Erhart, University of Greifswald

Ulrike Gerhard, University of Würzburg

Martin H. Geyer, University of Munich

Brian Ladd, University at Albany, State University of New York at Albany

Alan H. Lessoff, Illinois State University

Christof Mauch, German Historical Institute, Washington, D.C., and University
of Cologne

Dietmar Schirmer, Free University of Berlin

Janet Ward, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Preface

This volume has its origins in a conference that posed a series of deceptively simple questions: What sets capital cities apart from other cities? What functions do capital cities perform? What meanings do capital cities hold for the nations they represent? As a step toward answering these questions, the German Historical Institute invited scholars from several disciplines to take a close look at two capital cities that, in many respects, could hardly be more dissimilar: Berlin and Washington, D.C. Berlin's origins are a matter of educated guesswork, and its status as the capital of a German nation-state is a comparatively recent (and complicated) development in an urban history stretching back more than eight centuries. Washington, by contrast, is a purpose-built capital. A history of German literature or painting, finance or industry, theater or film, science or scholarship must take note of the prominent part Berlin has played for at least the past two centuries. Washington's role in American cultural and economic life has been decidedly more circumscribed. But as different as they may be as cities, Berlin and Washington as capitals command the attention of German and American citizens in ways that other cities in the two nations cannot. A demonstration in New York's Central Park does not have the same resonance as a march on the National Mall. A fireworks display above Munich's Marienplatz does not have the same symbolic import as one above the Brandenburg Gate or Unter den Linden. Elucidating this point of commonality between Berlin and Washington without losing sight of their particularities was the goal of our conference.

Andreas Daum and I have accumulated many debts of gratitude in the years since we first discussed the idea of convening a conference on the nature of capital cities. We want to thank all the conference participants for three days of fascinating and fruitful discussion. The contributors to this volume graciously agreed to revise their papers to take account of that

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discussion. They have been unfailingly responsive to our requests and have displayed heroic patience during the long process of preparing the manuscript for publication. We would like to thank Frank Smith, our editor at Cambridge University Press, and to acknowledge the useful criticism offered by the two anonymous readers who reviewed our manuscript for the Press.

From the outset of this project, Andreas Daum and I have depended on the staff of the German Historical Institute. Organizing an international conference with nearly three dozen participants is a formidable undertaking, and we would have been lost without the talents and good graces of everyone at the GHI. On this project, like so many others, I have relied heavily on Christa Brown and Bärbel Thomas: my debt to them both grows by the day. Finally, I want to give particular thanks to David Lazar, the GHI's senior editor, for his critical input and help in revising the manuscript of this book for publication.

Christof Mauch
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