Seventy-seven years ago, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art was organized, one of the founders wrote that it would be a function of the Museum to teach the art of history as well as the history of art. This intention was never closer to realization than it is today in the educational program of the Junior Museum.

When the Junior Museum opened in 1941, it was the first time that special provision had been made for the more than 300,000 children who come annually, either in groups or individually, to the Metropolitan Museum. Five large sunny galleries were set aside as a center for their activities, with facilities, including lunchroom and cloakroom, especially designed for their comfort and convenience. Here, through exhibitions, a library, gallery talks, music, movies, and demonstrations, the collections of the Museum are interpreted for boys and girls of the elementary and junior high school age.

Studies of children’s tastes have shown that artistic awareness and discrimination are best developed by intelligent exposure to what is good, rather than through efforts to instill a conscious “art appreciation.” Many parents of today’s school children, looking back on their early trips to museums, remember their incomprehension and fatigue during tours conducted as though the young visitors were being run through a cultural sheep-dip. Children who come to the Museum today are shown what they are capable of digesting. Emphasis is on the society and conditions that produced the work.

Above: A scene in the Junior Museum. Captions for the following illustrations are adapted from labels in the exhibition E Pluribus Unum.
of art rather than on its aesthetic qualities. That the material chosen for exhibition combines a high standard of artistic quality with its teaching value is the essence of the Museum's educational contribution. The Junior Museum thus becomes the primary school and interpreter of the whole Museum. In the galleries of the Metropolitan Museum, works of art are ordinarily identified by brief labels, allowing each visitor to interpret the object as he pleases; but in an expository show for children, informative labels are used with pictures and objects chosen primarily for their ability to illustrate a point, to teach or to tell the story.

One of the most important functions of the Junior Museum is its collaboration with the Board of Education in the enrichment of the curricula of the city's schools, through expository shows designed to supplement and illustrate the work of the classroom. A museum such as ours, whose collections contain a record of some five thousand years of civilization, is an unexcelled source of visual material for the illustration of the subjects taught at school. Nowhere are we better equipped to help than in the field of history and social studies, and particularly in the history and social evolution of our own country, with material drawn from the American Wing, and with paintings, prints, and textiles from other departments and from the Costume Institute. Other museums, libraries and historical societies are generous and cooperative when it is necessary to borrow items not available in our own collections.

The Junior Museum's first special exhibition illustrating American history was on Paul Revere and the period of the Revolution. Such was the success of this project that the Board of Education was enthusiastic when the Museum offered to follow it with *E Pluribus Unum, 1783-1800*, taking up the history of our country in its succeeding phase.

At this time, when every thinking person is aware of the importance of vitalizing and re-
stating the ideas and ideals that shaped our country, it seemed especially appropriate to try to bring to young Americans something of the reality and the poignancy of our early struggle for unity and of the difficulties that attended the framing of our Constitution and the Bill of Rights during the first years of our independence. Arnold Toynbee, the English historian, has compared the chaotic condition of our country at the end of the Revolution and its need for “a more perfect union” with the present world situation and the necessity for union among the states now laboring to make the United Nations a reality. The motto “Out of Many—One” from the Great Seal of the United States was chosen as the title of the new exhibition because it perfectly describes the fusion of our many racial strains and the transformation of the thirteen original colonies into the United States of America.

The outline for *E Pluribus Unum* having been approved by Dr. Elias Lieberman, Superintendent of Junior High Schools, a meeting of his department heads and Museum staff members was called to discuss suggestions and questions from the teachers. Thus *E Pluribus Unum* was developed with a clear understanding of the needs of the schools.

The exhibition begins with the difficult year 1783, when the Revolutionary War had been won but “a more perfect union” still had to be developed. By means of maps, prints, and paintings it shows how the physical factors—the bad roads and the lack of bridges, of canals, and of ferries tended to keep the thirteen states separate in their interests. Examples of the diverse
George Washington’s inauguration, April 30, 1789. Engraving by Amos Doolittle after a drawing by Peter Lacour. Reproduction courtesy of the New York Public Library. For this occasion Washington wore only American-made clothes. Doolittle’s engraving, the only known contemporary view of the ceremony, does not show the great crowds that assembled in the streets below.
The buildings occupied by Duncan Phyfe, the cabinetmaker, on Fulton Street. Water color drawing by an unidentified artist, about 1820. Rogers Fund, 1922. From left to right the buildings are the workshop, the showroom, and the warehouse.

currencies issued by the individual states and the foreign coins used as a substitute for the scarce native “hard money” illustrate the difficulties of carrying on trade at home or abroad which led finally to the collapse of national credit. In their portraits we meet the men whose leadership revived a sense of solidarity within the nation, the Federalists and the outstanding delegates to the Constitutional Convention, and by contemporary evidence we follow the events that led up to the acceptance of the Constitution and ratification by the states. Prints and broadsides tell the story of Washington’s election to the Presidency by acclamation, his triumphant journey from Mount Vernon, and his arrival, amid scenes of rejoicing, for his first inaugural in New York City.

Cartoons reveal the bitterness of feeling occasioned by the political horse trade Alexander Hamilton made with the southern members of the Congress to gain their consent to the funding of the national debt. The price was the agreement that moved the nation’s capital to Philadelphia for ten years after only a year in New York. The exhibition closes in 1800 with the American ship of state finally moored on the banks of the Potomac. From L’Enfant’s map we see how the city of Washington was planned and laid out on ten square miles of farmland, woodland, and swamp ceded to the govern-
Dr. William Thornton's design for the national capitol. Reproduction courtesy of the Library of Congress. Thornton's drawing, one of many submitted in the competition for a design for the capitol building, was, in the words of Jefferson, "simple, noble, and beautiful."

ment by the states of Maryland and Virginia.

A special effort has been made to provide this exposition of America's early political growth with a background of the social and economic developments that affected the daily lives of the citizens. Pictures and models show the ships that daring American skippers sailed around the world. The variety of the things they brought back in exchange for American exports are to be seen in porcelains, silks, ivories, lacquers, and tea from China and the Far East; watches, printed cottons, pottery, dress goods, and other manufactured luxuries from England and the continent.

Tastes that expressed the aspirations and ideals of the new republic are reflected in our first public buildings and in the changing styles of furniture and clothes. The tendency of the founding fathers to relate the new state to the classical civilizations of Greece and Rome is made evident by reproductions of Dr. Thornton's winning design for the nation's capitol, Jefferson's Virginia state capitol, and the public buildings of Benjamin Latrobe, while engravings by Piranesi and Clériesseau show the more immediate sources of the architect's inspiration. A contemporary colored drawing shows the workshop where Duncan Phyfe produced furniture in the new classic style for fashionable New Yorkers.

We see that many artists of the period were inventors and craftsmen as well. In their portraits such artist inventors as Robert Fulton and Charles Willson Peale show us what their contemporaries looked like and how they dressed; in their inventions and scientific studies we find the beginnings of industries and institutions which are of vital importance today.

The exhibition, which fills two galleries and a corridor opposite the Junior Museum library, is arranged in numbered sections following the chronological sequence of events. Each section is painted red, white or blue, the alternating colors helping to separate the incidents of the story. Above each panel titles in large raised letters read as a continuous legend.

During the hours the Board of Education allots to schools for museum visits the Junior Museum seethes with activity. Each group, before making the tour of the exhibition, sees a motion picture called "A Servant of the People." This excellent film by M.G.M., the story of the period E Pluribus Unum covers, helps the children to recognize the scenes and persons the show depicts. At the end of the tour each child is given a Quiz Guide, a measuring device with none of the terrors of the examination paper. What the individual child gets out of the museum experience is shown by the high average of correct answers in these quizzes.

Although the exhibition was designed especially for children, it has had a wide appeal for their parents. Many adults will find fresh interest in objects removed to this new context from their more familiar locations in other galleries. One grown-up visitor, in a burst of candor, said that she loved children's exhibitions because she could learn from them without shame those things that she had always pretended to know about American history.