Twitter Thread by Shaila Dewan

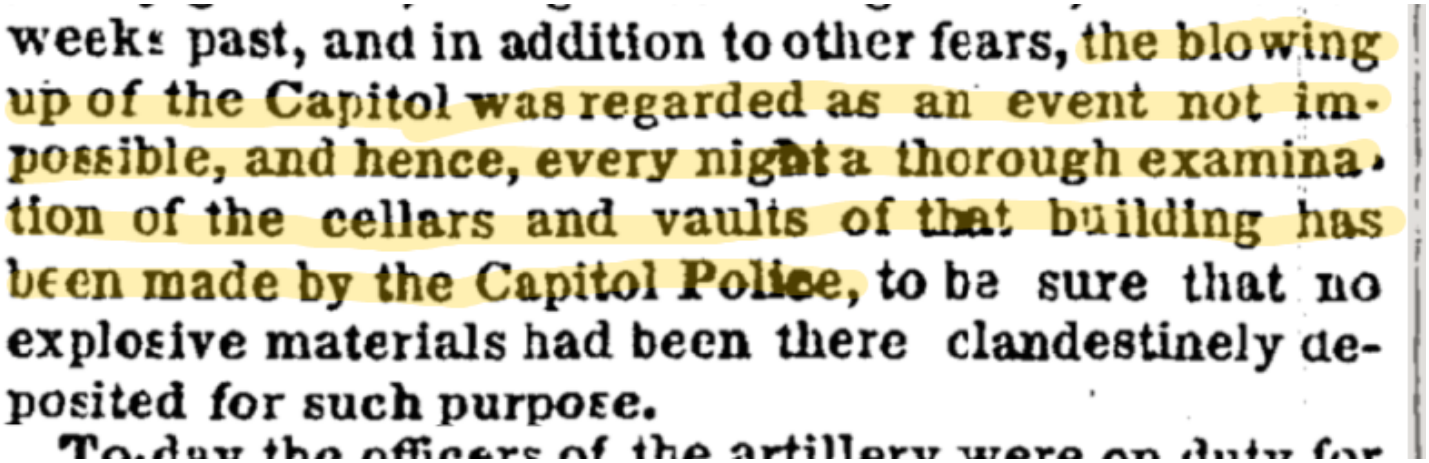


Shaila Dewan
@shailadewan

For our story today on the Capitol Police, I went on a fascinating tour of our archives, full of bomb threats, assassination plots and forgotten causes. (Imagine a Congressman getting arrested today in a Capitol men's room on sodomy charges...) Here's a sampling: 1/

The 1st mention of the Capitol Police involved the certification of Lincoln's election in 1861. “A few weeks ago many freely predicted that the counting of the electoral votes would never be peacefully accomplished.” 2/

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weeks past, and in addition to other fears, the blowing up of the Capitol was regarded as an event not impossible, and hence, every night a thorough examination of the cellars and vaults of that building has been made by the Capitol Police, to be sure that no explosive materials had been there clandestinely deposited for such purpose.

To-day the officers of the artillery were on duty for

The Vice-President finally announced that Lincoln and Hamlin had been elected, calming fears of unrest. 3/

and courtesy.

WISE PRECAUTIONS.

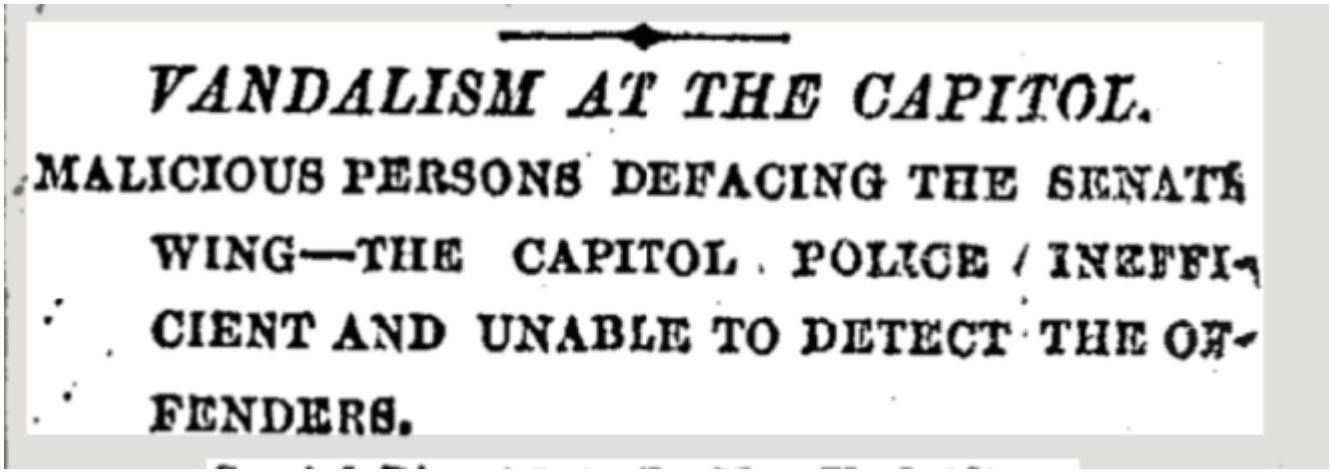
Thus has vanished one of the supposed points of danger to the public peace, and the public pulse beats freer. There really has been so much apprehension that many families left town. Such fears are now dissipated, and people are flocking to town in crowds. True, we hear occasional foolish rumors of plots to take the city, blow up the public buildings, and prevent the inauguration of LINCOLN, but they disturb nobody. Neverthless, there need be no doubt that to Gen. SCOTT'S wise precautionary measures for the protection of the city against lawless violence are we indebted, in a great measure, for the prevailing good order.

When it came time for the inauguration of Lincoln, the object of an assassination plot, the Capitol Police said they would "admit no strangers except ladies." 4/

THE PLOT TO ASSASSINATE THE PRESIDENT ELECT.

Information is before the proper authorities tending to prove that an organized band of five hundred men have sworn that Mr. LINCOLN shall never sleep in the White House. A detective, who joined them, says the plan is as follows: The entire band are to occupy a position as near to the President, on Inauguration Day, as they can obtain. One of their number, standing in the centre of them, is to shoot Mr. LINCOLN with an air-gun, when the crowd of men around the assassin will so hide him as to render detection impossible.

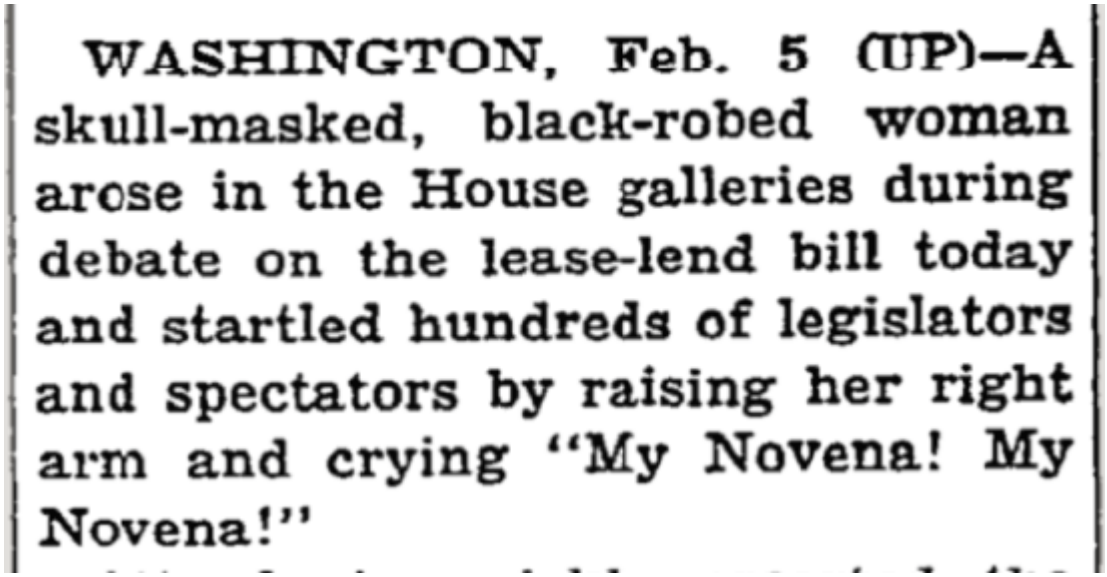
The Capitol Police were often mocked. After someone defaced the building with oil and “a large quantity of blue ink,” they were faulted for not being able to catch the person. The Times said, “The Lieutenant devotes his time to the sale of lemonade and cake in the dome.” 5/



VANDALISM AT THE CAPITOL.

MALICIOUS PERSONS DEFACING THE SENATE WING—THE CAPITOL POLICE INEFFICIENT AND UNABLE TO DETECT THE OFFENDERS.

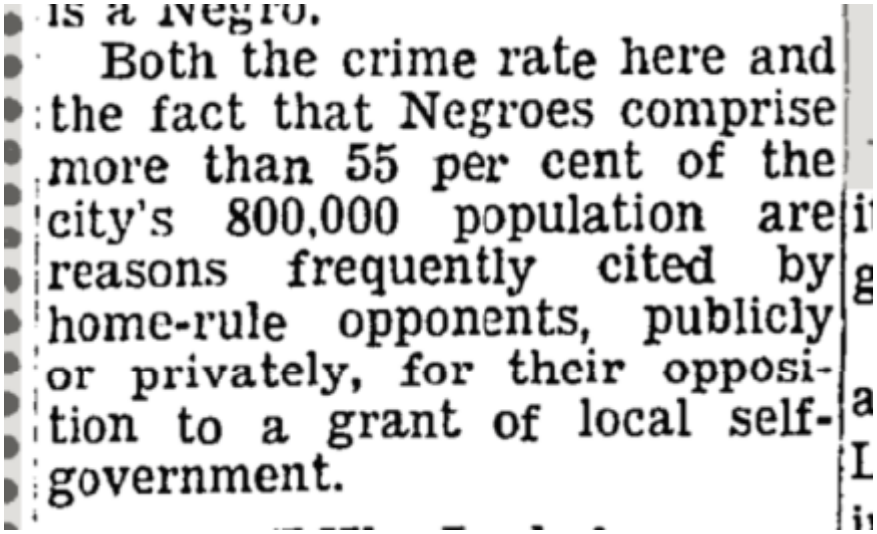
A woman donned a "skull mask" for a 1941 anti-war protest. A doorkeeper said he could not recall letting this woman in though “he had kept an eye on her for two days.” 6/



WASHINGTON, Feb. 5 (UP)—A skull-masked, black-robed woman arose in the House galleries during debate on the lease-lend bill today and startled hundreds of legislators and spectators by raising her right arm and crying "My Novena! My Novena!"

After the GOP won control of Congress in 1952, the chief warned that the patronage system allowed them to fire the entire department en masse. Two years later, after Puerto Rican terrorists shot five lawmakers from the Ladies' Gallery, Congress professionalized the force. 7/

But in the '60s the knifing of a Rep. by a janitor renewed calls to reduce patronage. Also, the janitor's race was openly cited as a reason to deny home rule to the District of Columbia. 8/

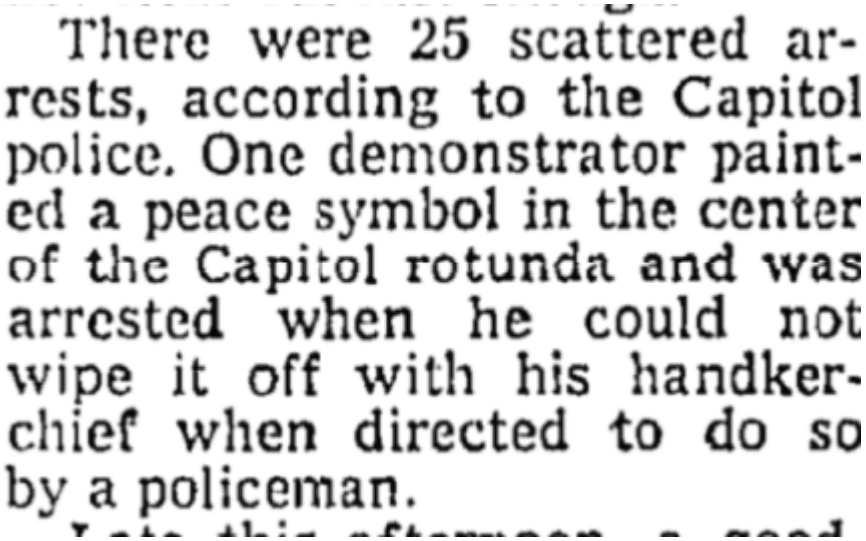


is a Negro.

Both the crime rate here and the fact that Negroes comprise more than 55 per cent of the city's 800,000 population are reasons frequently cited by home-rule opponents, publicly or privately, for their opposition to a grant of local self-government.

1971: At an anti-war protest on the Capitol steps, the chief said giving protesters a chance to leave peacefully "would be unfair" to those that had already been arrested. The Capitol Police arrested 800 people and were later found to have violated their Constitutional Rights. 9/

Also 1971, a peace symbol painted in the Rotunda: 10/



There were 25 scattered arrests, according to the Capitol police. One demonstrator painted a peace symbol in the center of the Capitol rotunda and was arrested when he could not wipe it off with his handkerchief when directed to do so by a policeman.

And this:



to prison.

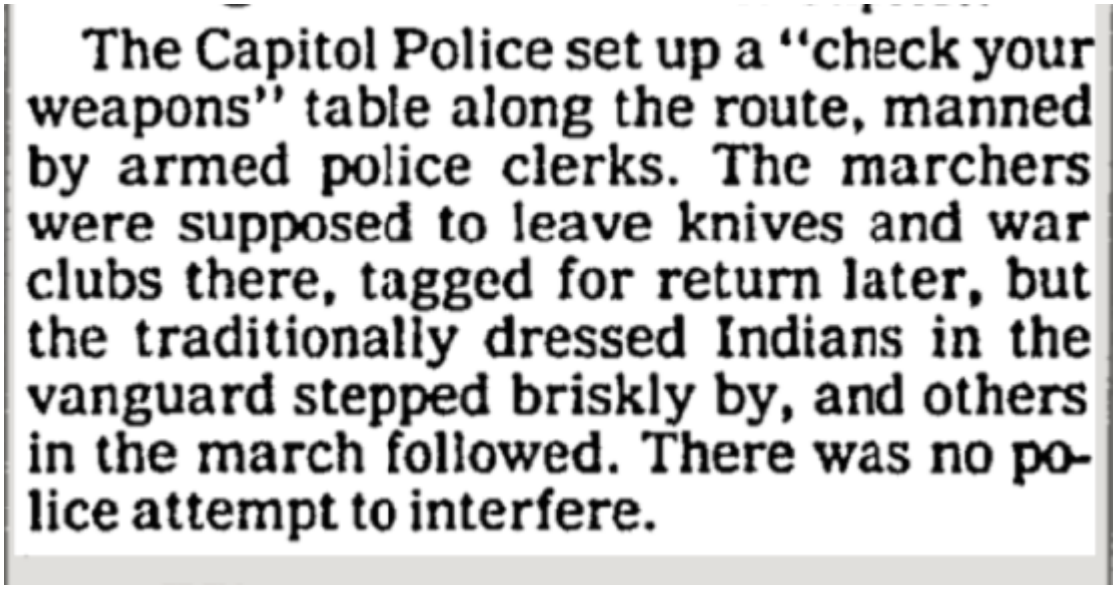
Four years ago, [redacted] of the American Nazi party, wearing blackface makeup and black leotards, dashed onto the House floor shouting racial epithets. He was arrested.

In a story about the Watergate break-in, I found a nugget about two stooges arrested for beating anti-war demonstrators:

"They were quickly released when a mysterious 'man in a gray suit' explained that they were 'good men' and 'anti■Communists.'" 12/

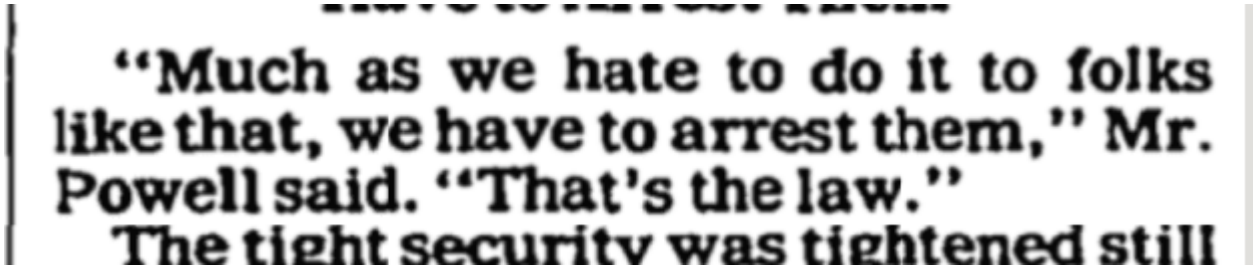
The 70s and early 80s a period of bombs and bomb threats, and metal detectors were installed at the Capitol. The chief warned that the building was vulnerable to takeover by armed groups like the Hanafi Muslims, who had taken over government buildings the previous year. 13/

1978: Native Americans protesting a so-called “Red backlash” just ignored this “check your weapons” table: 14/



The Capitol Police set up a "check your weapons" table along the route, manned by armed police clerks. The marchers were supposed to leave knives and war clubs there, tagged for return later, but the traditionally dressed Indians in the vanguard stepped briskly by, and others in the march followed. There was no police attempt to interfere.

1983: The Capitol Police bemoan having to arrests tourists who carried guns because they were afraid of "rampant crime" in D.C. 15/



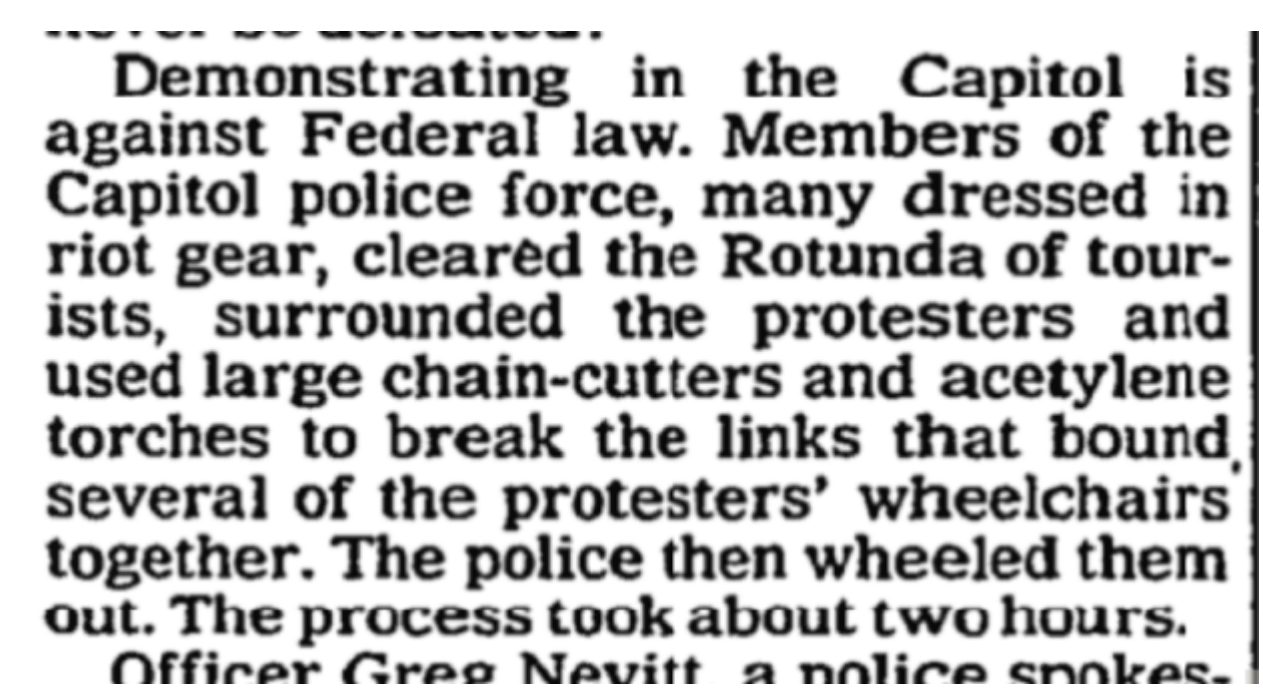
"Much as we hate to do it to folks like that, we have to arrest them," Mr. Powell said. "That's the law."

The tight security was tightened still

1985: Officer duties include watching video to learn to recognize the majority whip's Belgian sheepdog: 16/

1989: A syndicated news columnist smuggles in a gun and bullet to illustrate security lapses, and is accused of damaging the trust between the Capitol Police and the press. 17/

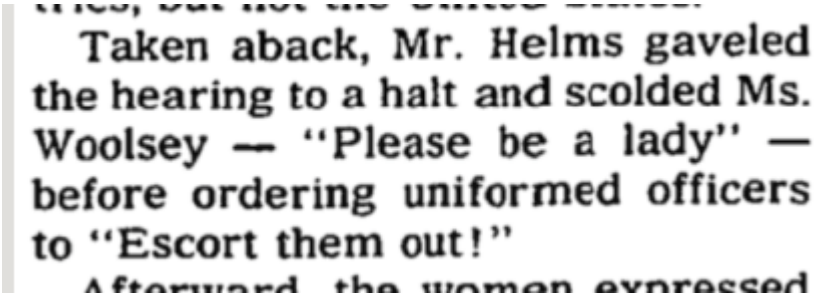
1990: wheelchairs were locked together at a civil rights protest for people with disabilities: 18/



Demonstrating in the Capitol is against Federal law. Members of the Capitol police force, many dressed in riot gear, cleared the Rotunda of tourists, surrounded the protesters and used large chain-cutters and acetylene torches to break the links that bound several of the protesters' wheelchairs together. The police then wheeled them out. The process took about two hours.

Officer Greg Nevitt, a police spokes-

1999: Jesse Helms orders the Capitol Police to remove 10 female House members, including Nancy Pelosi, who were trying to hand him a letter supporting an international treaty against for women's rights that had been ratified by 165 countries, but not the U.S. 19/



Taken aback, Mr. Helms gaveled the hearing to a halt and scolded Ms. Woolsey — "Please be a lady" — before ordering uniformed officers to "Escort them out!"

Afterward, the women expressed

■■In 2006 the Capitol Police requested an arrest warrant for Rep. Cynthia McKinney (remember her?), who said an officer had racially profiled her after she bypassed a metal detector without wearing her pin. (Many lawmakers routinely refused to wear their pins). 20/

The police said she had punched the cop. 21/
https://t.co/EwDe3IBYfK

According to Wikipedia, McKinney is now a professor in Bangladesh. 22/

And here's today's story, with @AliWatkins and @jeligon
https://t.co/76KaQU2lIg 23/

If you're wondering what happened to the poor guy who was arrested in the men's room, Rep. Jon Hinson, he resigned, came out and became an LGBTQ activist. 24/24 https://t.co/a91nGWqTUp