

### III. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

#### BACKGROUND

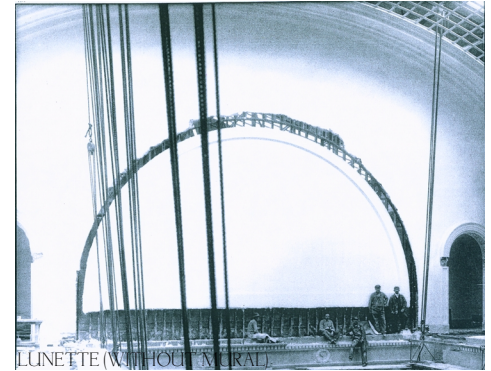
The Utah State Capitol is reminiscent of other state capitols by intention. The original Capitol Commission and architect Richard K. A. Kletting researched and visited other capitols nationally with the intent of extracting from them the most useful design concepts and integrating them into the Utah Capitol. As a result, both the floor plans and the exterior and interior appearances are reflective of traditional capitol designs, yet executed with native materials and custom-designed ornamental features that give the Utah building its own unique character. Other factors influencing the capitol design included the architectural program needed to accommodate the functions of state government, a need for cost efficiency which led to extensive value-engineering, and a desire for a "fire proof" building.

Contrary to previous reports which had the building being erected in two years, the Capitol actually was built over a 3-1/2-year period beginning in May, 1913 and finishing in October, 1916 when it was dedicated. Moreover, certain additional improvements, such as some of the murals, statues and finishes, were installed as much as a year or more following the dedication and occupancy.

#### ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

At the time the Capitol was designed and built, it was described by contemporaries as being "classical Corinthian." This description was apt then and it is consistent with today's modernized architectural taxonomy which considers the building "Neo-Classical Revival." Like most classical revival architecture, the Capitol is symmetrical in its exterior elevations, stately and formal in its expression, and reliant on an eclectic classical decorative vocabulary taken from ancient Greek, Roman and later Renaissance sources.

Its centrally located colonnades of tapered Corinthian columns resembles those of the national capitol and many other state capitols. Likewise the dome, cupola, balustrades, pediments, cornices, upper colonnade, and other exterior ornaments are patterned after classical precedents. Classical detailing also permeates the Capitol's impressive interior where we find a grand, lofty rotunda and atrium with two levels of mezzanines sup-



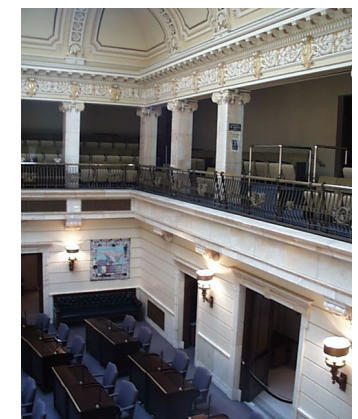
EARLY EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE CAPITOL FROM THE  
SOUTHEAST



WASHINGTON D.C.



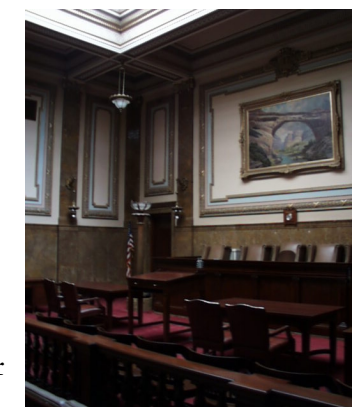
INTERIOR OF THE ROTUNDA AND  
ATRIUM 1916



SENATE CHAMBER



HOUSE CHAMBER



SUPREME COURT CHAMBER





ANOTHER, MORE ELABORATE COMPETITION ENTRY

ported by monolithic polished marble columns in the Ionic order. Interior atrium cartouches, corbels, arches, balustrades and cornices continue the classical theme.

The influence of Beaux Arts Classicism is apparent in the richly designed House, Senate and Supreme Court Chambers and the Gold Room (State Reception or International Room). Myriad classical motifs are employed in these rooms, whether in arched ceiling and beams, fireplaces, door and window trim, ceiling murals, wall ornament, light fixtures, mirrors, railings, frontispieces, or furnishings.

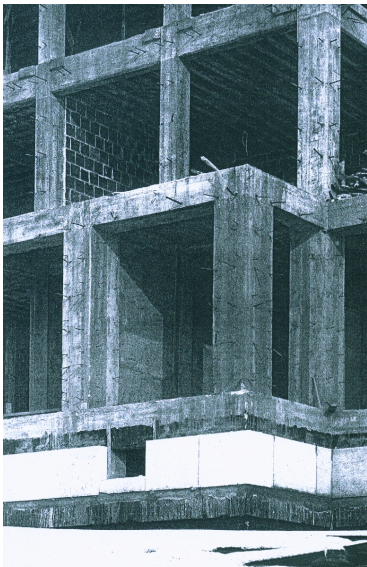
Not as decorative or flamboyant as some other state capitols, Kletting's design was considered to be the most straightforward, simple and dramatic of any presented in the architectural competition. This was considered a virtue then and it remains so today. In a poll taken to rank the nation's most picturesque and attractive capitols, Utah's ranked near the top.

### STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

While much of the interior of the Capitol has been altered in an effort to house an increasing number of government officials, staff and support personnel, the Capitol's structure, exterior and the interior of the major assembly chambers and public spaces remains largely intact. As designed and built in 1913-16, the Capitol has a steel-reinforced concrete structural frame with concrete footings, foundation walls, upper skeletal wall frame and floors. Infilling the spaces of the skeletal frame to create solid walls are blocks of hollow clay tile, sheathed on the exterior by a veneer of massive granite blocks and covered on the interior by lime plaster. Steel beams and connections exist in such areas as the rotunda where the two levels of mezzanines are supported by twenty-four monolithic granite columns. Other metal connectors pin and secure the stone



DOOR DETAIL, FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR



HOLLOW CLAY TILE INTERIOR WALLS AND CONCRETE FRAME



SUPREME COURT ATTIC SPACE, ABOVE THE SKYLIGHT

walls and ornament in place. The roof structure consists of metal trusses which join together at the top in a trussed ring which also supported the cupola.

Parts of Kletting's structural specifications are extant, including desired strengths for the concrete and steel. His architectural drawings, including a revised and marked-up as-built set located in the state's remote archives building, also are highly useful in understanding the structural system. The drawings include sections drawn through the building, wall and structural details. They also include beam and reinforcing bar schedules. What is not known is to what extent the structural design was modified, especially to cut costs. It appears that most of the cost-reducing changes were done near the end of the project, suggesting that most of the structure, at least in the main, five-level building, was constructed as designed, with only the changes (such as new and revised beam schedules) shown on the as-built plans. The building section through the dome was redesigned and redrawn as late as June 8, 1915, however, and the dome's final design was clearly modified from its original intent. For example, the first plans called for twenty columns in the colonnade supporting the dome. The 1915 plans increased the number of columns to twenty-four, the number actually installed.

Built before seismic-resistant engineering and building codes were extant, the structural non-ductile structural system was nonetheless state-of-the-art for its time and it has successfully withstood all forces acting upon it over the past 85 years without any signs of structural failure or significant stress, deterioration or fatigue. Fortunately, no major earthquakes have occurred in the area during this period to test the building's seismic-resisting capacity.

## FLOOR PLANS

**Basement:** The Capitol is a five-level building, including a basement which was originally intended to be unfinished but which was made taller during construction and converted into habitable space over the ensuing years. Although partitioned into a large number of rooms, the basement spaces never achieved the high quality level of design or finished materials found in the four levels above. Much of the basement is used for mechanical and storage space. The basement's floor level changes through a series of ramps running east-to-west with the highest ceiling on the west and the lowest on the east, reflecting the slope of the grade outside the building.

**Ground Floor:** The second level or Ground Floor is the first finished floor in the building. It is also the floor entered when using the exterior stairs at the east and west ends of the building. In addition, there are entries from the south from under the portecochère or carriage drive-through, and from the north from what is now the parking garage. On the interior, stairways in each quadrant provide access to the floors above and below. When first built,



DOMES UNDER CONSTRUCTION



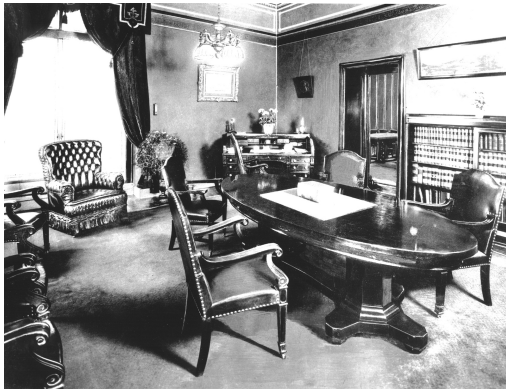
BASEMENT HALLWAY



GROUND LEVEL SOUTH ENTRANCE UNDER GRAND STAIR



### III. BUILDING DESCRIPTION



GOVERNORS OFFICE 1916

the Ground Floor was mostly occupied by a vast, central exhibit space which spanned the length of the building, included the central area under the rotunda. In each of the corners of the four quadrants were offices for various state agencies (as noted on the 1916 plans that follow this description).

**Main Floor:** Accessible through the front vestibule via the monumental southern staircase as well as from the plaza to the north, the Main Floor is the first level of the three-story-tall rotunda/atrium area. It also houses the executive branch of state government including the Governor's formal and working offices, Governor's Board Room, Lieutenant Governor's Office, and State Reception Room (Gold Room). These functions and locations are original to the building. In addition, the office suites of the Attorney General, State Auditor and Treasurer occupy this floor as they did historically. Even though the Main Floor's historic uses are largely intact, each area, especially the perimeter offices and meeting rooms, have been altered to accommodate changing staff needs. Unaltered are the two grand staircases to the east and west, and the marble-clad floor and walls of the elegant rotunda/atrium area. It is on this Main Floor that most of the Capitol's statuary is displayed, as documented in the Monuments and Art section (VIII.) of this report.



GRAND MARBLE ATRIUM STAIR

**Second Floor:** This is actually the fourth level of the building. Its main features are the wide, public mezzanine and colonnade surrounding the entire, open rotunda/atrium area, and the impressive Senate, House and Supreme Court Chambers in the north, west and east wings, respectively. Wrapped around these three major spaces along the building's perimeter are large lounges and suites of support offices and meeting rooms for the Senate, House and Supreme Court. These less monumental spaces have been largely altered in size and finish.

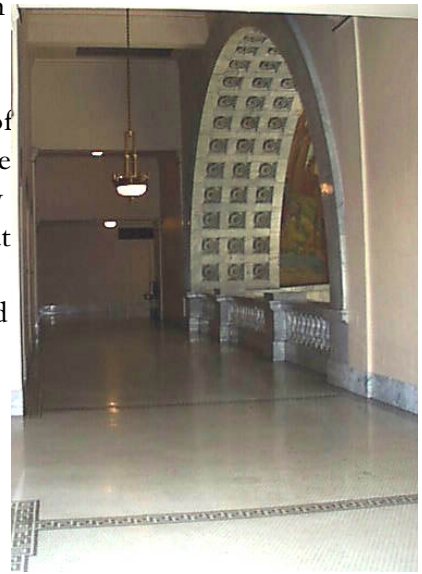


HOUSE LOUNGE 1916

**Third Floor:** The so-called Fourth Floor is the fifth and final level of the Capitol. Its four-sided mezzanine provides access to the balcony levels of the Senate and House Chambers. The Supreme Court Room has no balcony but rather a high, open ceiling space at this level. The original arts exhibits areas on this floor have been removed in favor of small offices. As on the lower floors, most of the perimeter rooms on this level have been significantly modified, although the central rotunda/atrium area remains intact.



HOUSE LOUNGE 2000



ARCH TO ROTUNDA FROM FOURTH FLOOR



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## EXTERIOR DESIGN

Displaying the typical characteristics of Neo-Classicism, the State Capitol is bilaterally symmetrical, horizontal, formal, and dignified in its expression, and employs classical design motifs in its detailing. The 404'-7-1/2"-long front and rear facades are similar in design, as are the shorter two side facades. The long elevations feature projecting entry porticos, each with massive colonnades supporting an entablature and Greek-styled pediment. Likewise the side elevation entries are articulated by identical, classical porticos. Each of three major entrances are accessed via monumental stone stairways, the south (front) being especially impressive.

The predominant exterior material is stone: technically called quartz monzonite, a variety of granite quarried locally. As the concrete foundation walls of the basement level project above the ground, the first courses of stone are a band of massive, smooth-cut blocks that cover the exposed, upper sections of the basement level. The next horizontal stone band, placed on the exterior of the ground level walls, is of equally massive, heavily rusticated stone blocks. This single story band is terminated at the top by a simple cornice of curved and square, smooth-cut stone. The next three levels of the exterior walls are covered with smooth stone laid in stretcher bond coursing. On the east, south and west sides, the walls of the three upper levels are recessed back from the perimeter of the ground and basement floors (causing the three upper floors to have slightly less area than the two lower floors).

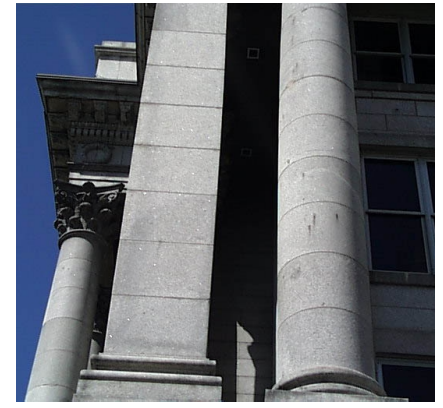
These upper wall recessions are articulated by tall colonnades featuring segmented, tapered stone columns with Corinthian capitals. Including the square columns (or posts) on the corners, there are thirty columns across the front (south) facade, of which eight are supporting the central, projecting portico. Across the identical east and west facades are fourteen columns, of which eight again support projecting porticos. The rear or north elevation differs from the others in its use of engaged, square pilasters on a non-recessed wall, in lieu of free-standing columns. There are twenty-eight pilasters across the elevation, eight of which are on the narrower, slightly projecting central entry portico.

Crowning the colonnades and pilasters all around the building is a tall, classical entablature topped by a heavily molded, projecting cornice. The traditional elements of ancient classicism are present, including the architrave, architrave molding and frieze (with a wreath centered over each column), all of smooth stone, in the entablature. Similarly, the cornice features bands of dentils, egg and dart, and brackets, along with crown molding—all typical of ancient Greek and Roman temples.

Gracing the top of the cornice and recessed back to the vertical plane of the walls below is a classical balustrade parapet which runs around the entire perimeter of the building, interrupted only by the sloping roofs of the entry porticos. The balustrades include massive, paneled pedestals at the corners plus smaller pedestals



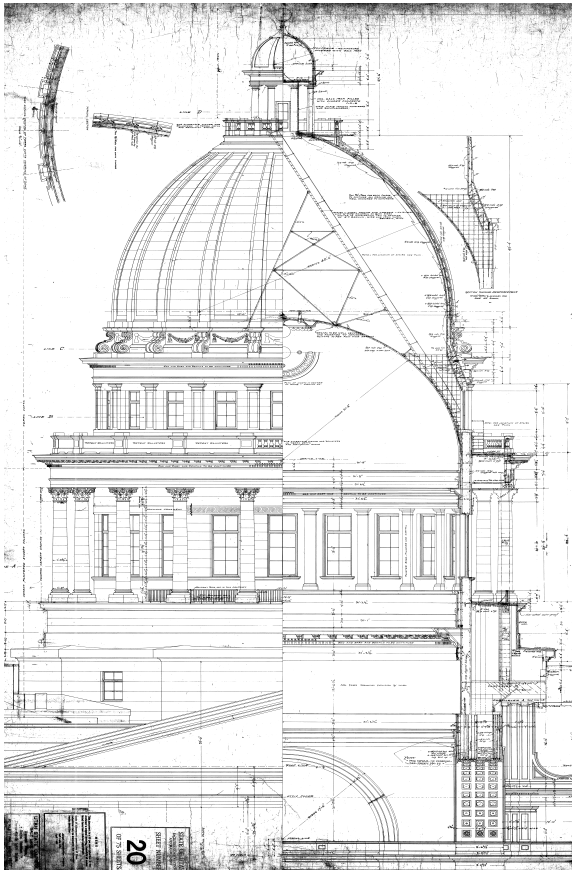
ENTABLATURE, INCLUDING ARCHITRAVE, FRIEZE, DENTILS, AND CORNICE



SEGMENTED GRANITE COLUMNS AND POSTS



PARAPET BALUSTRADE MEETING ENTRY PORCH PEDIMENT



positioned over each column. In between the pedestals are stone railings supported by multi-curved balusters, all of which are standing on a small stone curb.

Counter-balancing the pervasive horizontality of the exterior composition are regularly spaced rows of tall, paired windows. The original windows have been replaced by mill-finish aluminum units which detract somewhat for the otherwise unaltered main block of the exterior. The lower level windows and basement wall penetrations are smaller and less conspicuous, and are less visually significant.

To valley viewers of the Capitol, its most distinctive and easily seen feature is its magnificent, copper-clad, hemispherical dome and its crowning cupola. The top of the cupola rises 285 feet above the main floor and 301 feet above the ground level floor. Thus the central dome is three-quarters as high as the entire building is wide. As in the nation's capitol and other Neo-Classical state capitols, the Utah State Capitol dome is designed in several tiers, each getting narrower and more detailed as the dome reaches toward the sky.

The lowest tier is the square, box-like base or pedestal that supports the lower, rounded drum wall. Both the base tier and the lower drum are sheathed in a veneer of terra cotta, colored in varieties of stippled, light-to-medium gray to imitate the stone exterior below. The square base is capped by a simple cornice which includes a plain dentil course. Similarly, the top of the lower drum wall terminates in a cornice. It has no dentils but features a crown molding. Rising directly above the lower drum wall is the primary dome colonnade with its 24 Corinthian columns. Although contemplated at one time to be veneered in matching terra cotta, these columns were instead made of concrete and plastered. The same is true of the recessed, middle drum wall and its raised window trim, segmented lintel arches, and entablature.

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'SYNERGY' PLASTER ON THE ROTUNDA DRUM

Although the original architect's final plans called for the plaster to be finished in "imitation granite," the result was apparently either unsatisfactory visually, or of poor quality physically, or both. It was covered over, most recently in 1995 with a stucco product called "Synergy," together with a silicone-based sealant. Airborne pollution readily and permanently adheres to the sealant, giving the columns, recessed dome wall and window trim their present dirty, overly-mottled, unfinished appearance. Unburdened by the new stucco and sealant are the original terra cotta balustrades, located between each of the columns, and the capitals of each column, all of which remain intact.

The colonnade and its balustrade protect a walkway which circles



around the entire lower drum. Supported by the dome's colonnade is another massive entablature, the architrave and frieze of which are plastered, but the cornice trim of which is of terra cotta. The cornice consists of bands of dentils, egg and dart and brackets beneath an eave with a crown molding on the fascia. Above the cornice and recessed back to the plane of the entablature below is a continuous, circular balustrade similar in design to the ones below. It provides a railing for a walkway around the shorter, upper drum wall.

The upper drum wall and its engaged pilasters and window sills have been replastered with the same unsightly new plaster used on the drum and colonnade below. Between the pilasters are pairs of multi-paned windows, all shorter than the larger twenty-pane windows topped by eight-pane transom assemblies in the drum wall below. Because this upper drum wall is both shorter and recessed, it creates an illusion of even greater height. Above its pilaster is a proportionately smaller and simpler entablature and cornice, done in terra cotta, atop of which is a final, tall ornamental band of terra cotta motifs highlighting the transition between the vertical planes of the drums walls and the curvilinear dome roof above. The final band includes large, curving consoles, swags, and acanthus leaf finials, all of terra cotta.

Looming above the final, light-colored drum is the much darker, patinating copper roof, its elegant hemispherical shape curving upward to the uppermost balustrade and cupola—the final elements in the Capitol tower. Although relatively new, the copper replacement roofing is still changing colors, its lower third being dark brown with the lighter upper two-thirds slowly making the transition to its eventual light blue-green. This process will continue for decades before the final color is realized.

The metal dome is topped by a balustrade made of the same Utah-mined sheet copper. Its railing protects the uppermost walkway, accessible only by climbing the steep metal ladder through the center of the dome's interior. Contrasting with the dark dome roof is the stark white-painted metal cupola. It features eight metal buttresses with tall, round-arched openings between each. It is through these open-air arches that the sounds of the Capitol's carillon bells peal. Atop the buttresses is a molded copper cornice capped with white metal ball finials. The cupola has a small, hemispherical, metal roof, atop of which is a white light globe held in place by an ornamental metal frame. The light from this globe is a beacon which can be seen at night for many miles around in all directions.



ROOF INTERSECTION OF PARAPET BALUSTRADE.



SHEET COPPER PATINIZING (OXIDIZING)  
ON THE ROOF OF THE DOME



WHITE PAINTED METAL ON LANTERN,  
ABOVE DOME



VIEW THROUGH THE ROTUNDA AND ATRIUM AREA



VIEW UP INTO THE ROTUNDA



SENATE GALLERY, WITH CREAM UTAH ONYX

## INTERIOR DESIGN

The unifying element of the interior is the vaulted, central rotunda and atrium space which communicates both vertically and horizontally with the three upper levels of the Capitol. The centerpiece is the central rotunda with its dome looming 165' above the main floor. The dome is supported by four marble-clad, coffered arches which rise up from four triangular bearing structures. Flanking the dome to the east and west are massive, vaulted skylights which allow pleasant, filtered, natural light to illuminate the great interior volume of space. Running around all four sides of the open atrium are two mezzanines, both supported by twenty-four monolithic, Ionic-style columns of polished marble. Likewise, the grand "flying" staircases to the east and west, the balustrades, floors and walls on the main floor are of variegated gray "picture" marble from Georgia. Other stone used throughout the interior includes the cream-colored Utah onyx in the front vestibule and the Senate Chambers, Birdseye (Golden travis or travertine) marble in the House and Supreme Court Chambers and State Reception (Gold) Room. On the Ground Floor, oolitic limestone from Sanpete County, most of it now painted, sheathes walls and posts.

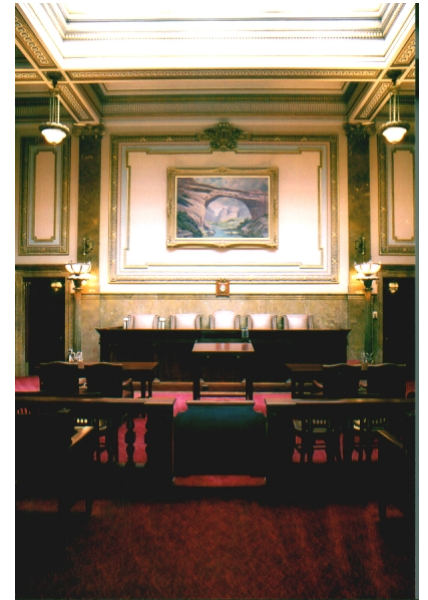
Neo-Classical and Beaux Arts eclecticism is apparent throughout the interior design. Classical ornamental motifs in the form of moldings, cartouches, figurines, plaques, arches, foliated decoration, and much more add beauty and visual interest to the interior composition, especially in the public spaces. A variety of art pieces adds to effect. These include the painted sky and clouds on the interior dome, the murals in the semi-circular lunettes at each end of the atrium, the set of murals in the rotunda pendentives and frieze, plus several statues, individual paintings and a wide variety of exhibits placed throughout the building.

Aside from the rotunda/atrium area, the most architecturally significant rooms in the Capitol remain the Senate, House and Supreme Court Chambers and the State Reception Room, more commonly known as the Gold Room. While the three large chambers are distinguished by their vaulted ceilings, second level mezzanines (except for the Supreme Court), elaborate frontispieces, and rich materials, the smaller, one-story Gold Room is the most ornate.

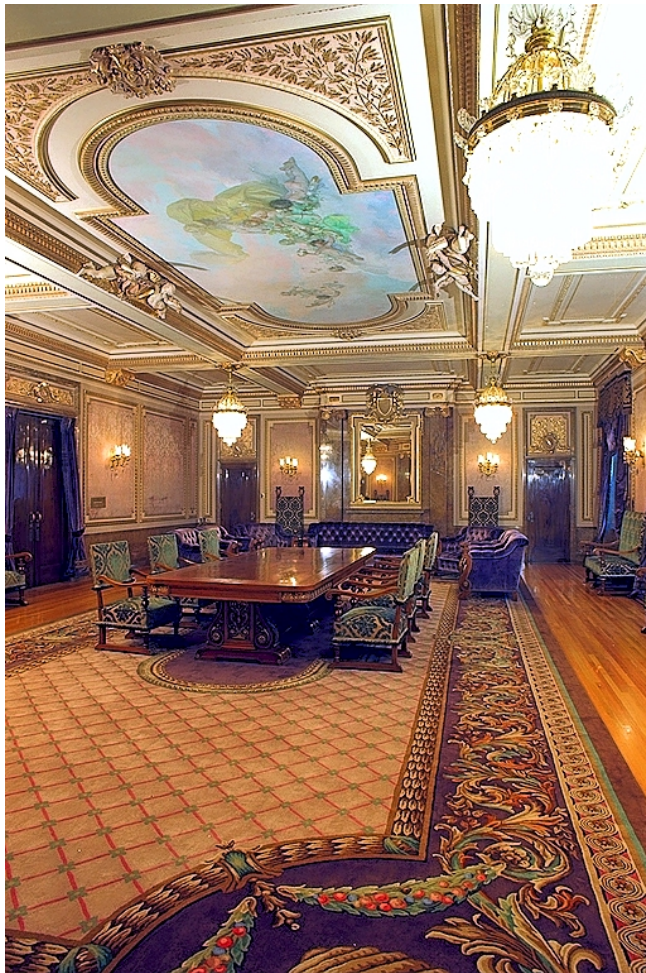
The Gold Room is the formal reception room for the governor and is reserved for special occasions and important visitors. Also known as the International Room, furnishings for the room were gathered in from around the globe. Golden travis marble quarried near Birdseye, Utah was used as the accent stone. The classically influenced plaster wall and ceiling ornaments are painted or gold-leafed in sixteen different colors, complimenting the gold, brown, green, and pink found in the marble. The wood flooring is mostly covered by a 22 by 48-foot British-made rug with a beehive motif, replicating the original Chenille rug made in Glasgow.



The furnishings in the Gold Room came primarily from Europe. The large, center table is made of Russian Circassian walnut trimmed in 23-carat gold leaf. Gold leaf, at least once restored, also covers elements of the other furniture, drapes and moldings. The love seats are upholstered in purple Queen's Coronation Velvet from England. Italian brocade is intertwined with gold leaf on other furnishings. At each end of the room are large mirrors of double-beveled French plate glass framed in gold and silver mined locally. The chandeliers are also French and contain a thousand pieces of crystal-cut glass. The ceiling mural, "Children at Play," was painted over a three month period by New York artist Louis Schettle.



SUPREME COURT CHAMBER



GOLD ROOM



HOUSE GALLERY BALCONY



GOLD ROOM CEILING

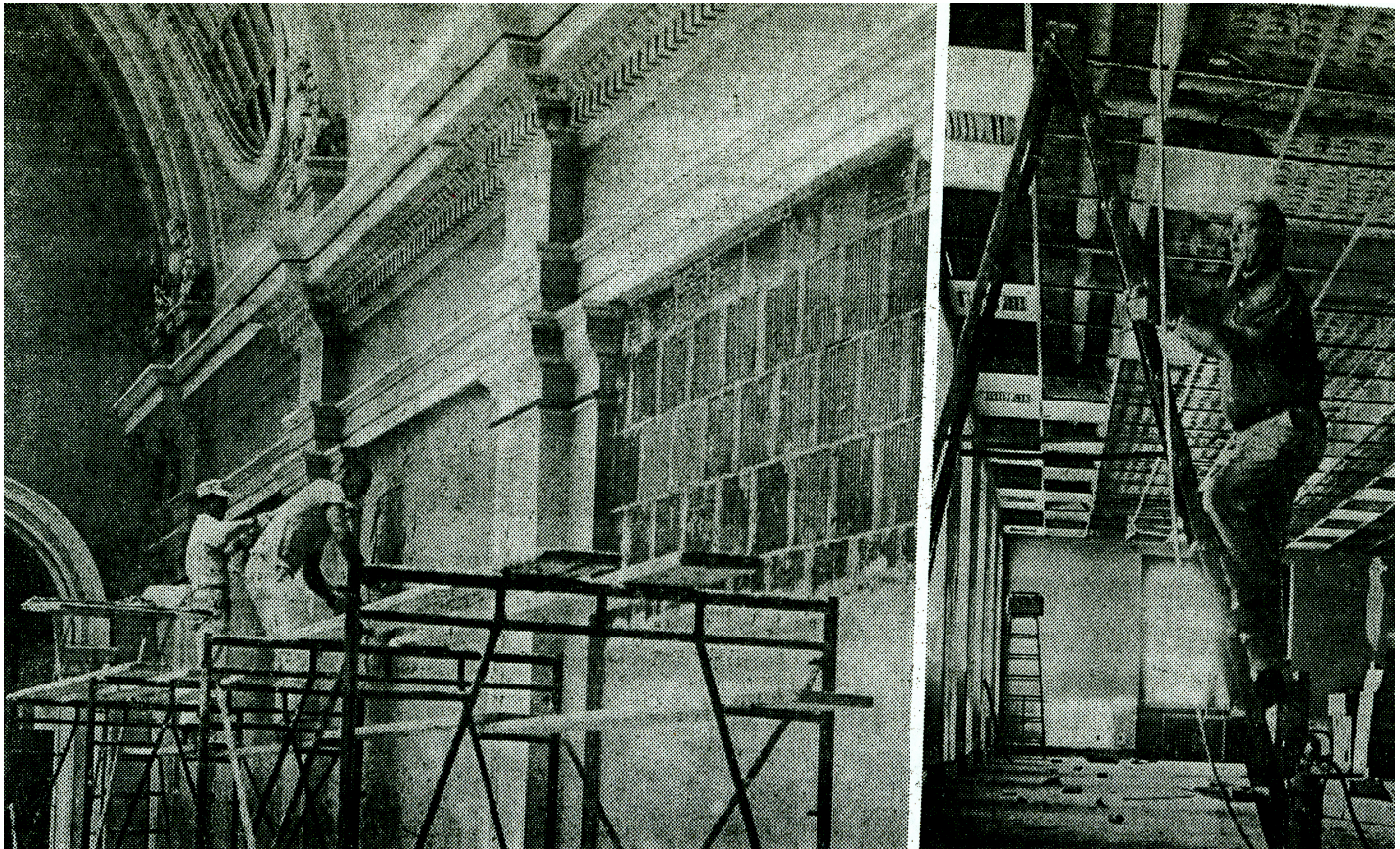




### LATER ALTERATIONS

**Exterior:** Aside from minor deterioration caused by weathering, the main, five-level exterior block has been altered relatively little. The monumental stone stairways have been re-built in keeping with the original design. The original windows have been replaced with less compatible metal units in a style more modern than the originals. The original lights in the ceiling recessed behind the colonnades have been replaced with modern, visually incompatible fixtures. The most serious exterior alteration has been the application of an unsightly "Senergy" coating over the plastered walls and columns of the drum of the dome, leaving these surfaces with a dirty, unfinished appearance. The replaced copper roof matches the original appearance. Other alterations such as repairing and repainting the upper, wooden windows and metal cupola trim are cosmetic in nature and easily reversible, should further research suggest a return to more original finishes or colors.

SENERGY STUCCO



THE FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR COLONNADE BEING WALLED-IN AND NEW SUSPENDED CEILINGS IN THE OFFICES, 1962



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**Interior:** The modifications to the basement are not significant in that the basement was never intended to be a highly finished, architecturally distinguished space.

The Ground Floor was significantly altered by the conversion of major amounts of original exhibit spaces to offices. In addition, the original, translucent glass block "skylight" in the ceiling of the central rotunda area has been painted over below, and covered above with terrazzo at the Main Floor level. This condition is reversible through restoration.

The Main Floor level retains its historic appearance in many respects, especially in the grand rotunda/atrium area and such major spaces as the Gold Room. Despite their importance, the Governor's Board Room and formal Governor's Office have been altered, the former by being reduced in size by one-third and remodeled, and the latter by the addition of newer, modern finishes. Some of the originally important rooms such as the two large Business Offices in the north wing have been altered by having their curving, vaulted ceilings covered by lowered ceilings. Many if not most of the perimeter rooms have been altered, however, by changes in size, lowering of ceilings, removal or covering of original floor, wall, and ceiling finishes, loss of details, etc., as documented in greater detail in other sections of this report. Changes in the main public spaces are mostly cosmetic and limited to repainting in colors not original to the building.

The upper two levels have experienced the same kinds of changes as on the lower floors, i.e., changes of finishes and colors. More importantly, most of the perimeter office and meeting room spaces have been altered by addition, subtraction, elimination or destruction of character-defining elements including walls, ceilings,

original finishes and details. Some important rooms such as the Senate and House Lounges have experienced major remodeling, the latter more sensitively than the former. The original, large Library in the northeast corner has been completely subdivided into more than twenty smaller rooms. The Senate and Supreme Court Chambers have been little altered. The House of Representatives Chambers has been repainted in colors quite antithetical to the historic palette. On the top floor, the original Art Exhibit space has been converted into enclosed hallways and small office spaces.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CHAMBER WITH MODERN COLORS

In section IX. Architecture C. Floor Plans Analysis and Recommendations of this report, we describe the original 1916 walls and the current, year 2000 walls and analyze the meaning of the changes in terms of functional and preservation needs. Likewise, our exterior and interior survey forms and photographs document the physical changes to all parts of the building. Refer to these for greater detail.

