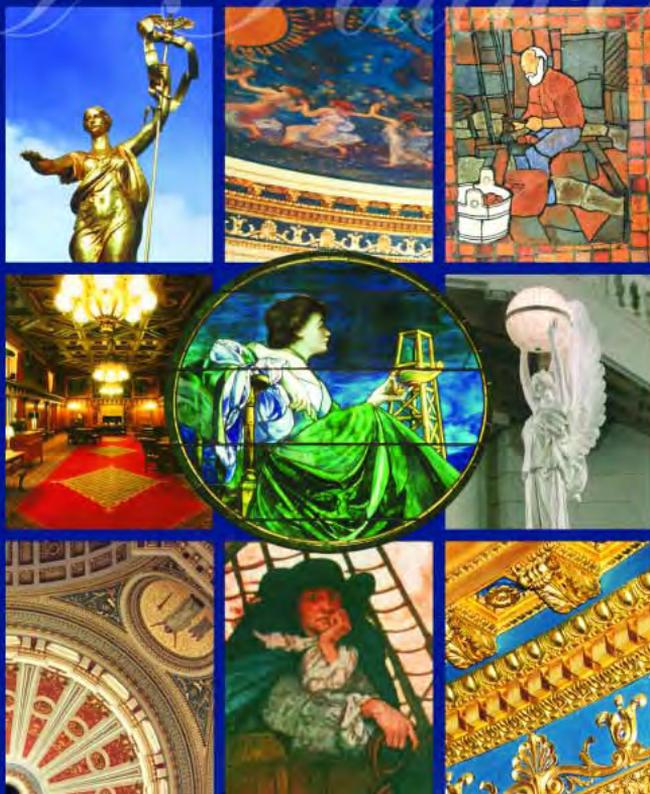


A Palace of Art



PENNSYLVANIA'S STATE CAPITOL *A Palace of Art*

On October 4, 2006 the Pennsylvania State Capitol Building at Harrisburg will celebrate its 100th year of service as the Commonwealth's official state house. Dedicated on October 4, 1906, the 13-million-dollar-structure was the pride of a Commonwealth at its commercial and industrial peak, and was lauded throughout the nation as a "palace of art."

For the past 25 years, the building, which had fallen into disrepair and seen numerous modifications over the course of the 20th century, has been under-going a massive restoration campaign meant to conserve this gem of history, art, and architectural magnificence for all citizens of the Commonwealth. This edition of the Pennsylvania Manual traces the evolution of Harrisburg as Pennsylvania's seat of government and celebrates the restoration and rededication of one of the most beautiful state capitols in America.



1785 1799 1812 1822

In 1785 the village of Harrisburg was nothing more than a small collection of houses along the eastern bank of the Susquehanna River. John Harris, Jr., son of the founder of Harrisburg, was so convinced that the tiny hamlet would someday be the capitol of the Commonwealth, that he offered a gift of four acres of ground for the permanent use of the state, with the stipulation that they locate the seat of government there.

The General Assembly in Philadelphia was planning a move westward from its original home of Independence Hall, but after much debate on suitable locations, it instead chose Lancaster over Harrisburg, largely because of its size. It in turn moved to the Red Rose City in 1799. Most members of the Assembly knew, however, that the move to Lancaster was only a temporary solution and for the next 11 years they debated subsequent moves, to more adequately center the seat of government among the spreading population. Some of the locations considered were Northumberland, Wrightsville, and Pittsburgh, with discussion always returning to Harrisburg.

Finally in 1810, they acted and passed a measure to move the governmental seat to Harrisburg in 1812. In addition, they hired master builder Stephen Hills to renovate the Dauphin County Courthouse for the use of the Assembly and to build two office buildings on a small rise just north of Harris' original grant. The Assembly actually moved to Harrisburg in April of 1812, about six months ahead of schedule due to the early completion and renovations completed by Hills.

The Assembly, which was still meeting in the Dauphin County Courthouse, knew that the growing Commonwealth would need a proper state house. Due largely to the War of 1812 and financial constraints it was not until 1819 that an architectural competition was held to determine



Dauphin County Courthouse

the best plan for the new building. It chose the plan designed and submitted by Stephen Hills and construction began immediately.

By January of 1822, the building was complete and on an uncharacteristically warm January day, a procession of dignitaries led by Hills and his workmen walked toward the new building where the keys were officially turned over to the governor and legislature. The new structure was a red brick, Federal-style building—the first state house in America to architecturally represent the function of democratic government.

The Hills Capitol had a large portico on

the west side, a cupola with clocks facing each direction, balanced houses, and a small central rotunda.

Though small when compared to the size of the modern Capitol, it dominated the agrarian landscape around Harrisburg for most of the 19th

century. The Hills Capitol saw numerous dignitaries within its halls, from Charles Dickens to the Prince of Wales, to Daniel Webster and Abraham Lincoln. The Hills Capitol entertained numerous nineteenth century notables.

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Hills Capitol

1893/1897

Capitol Complex aerial view. Highlighted area is the original Executive Library and Museum Building.

By the 1880s and '90s, the legislature had outgrown the Hills Capitol, and several upgrades and additions were made to accommodate the larger body. In addition, 1893 saw the Commonwealth build the Executive Library, and Museum Building (the present Speaker Matthew J. Ryan Legislative Office Building) to house the growing state bureaucracy. This Capitol Annex was a fortunate expansion because of an event which took place three years after the Annex's construction. On February 2, 1897 the Hills Capitol caught fire and burned beyond repair. The legislature, which was then in session, moved across the street to temporary quarters at Grace Methodist Episcopal church. There, they debated whether to rebuild the old Hills structure or to completely raze it and start anew.

Largely because of pressure and proposals to move the seat of government to Philadelphia or Pittsburgh, they passed a bill to build a new structure in

Harrisburg and

appropriated \$500,000 to do so. The architect for this new structure was Chicago architect Henry Ives Cobb.

Cobb envisioned a brand new Capitol much like the structure he had designed for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, having a white facade and Beaux-Arts architecture. However, the \$500,000 was not nearly enough to complete his design. Therefore, Cobb built as much as he possibly could, which ultimately turned out to be an unadorned, unfinished, several-

story brown brick structure that looked like a factory. The governor and members of the General Assembly were generally appalled at having to meet in this structure, and Cobb pronounced it in one word, simply "ugly." Though the fault was not his, Cobb received some blame for the structure. Cobb was of the understanding that he would have ample opportunity to complete his building as soon as another appropriation was officially made.



Proposed Cobb Capitol Building



Actual Cobb Capitol Building

When a second Capitol Building Commission was formed and the appropriation

granted, amounting to four and a half million dollars for the new building, it included only Pennsylvania architects, which disqualified Cobb from participating. The terms of the competition also dictated that the existing building be incorporated into the newer one, and Cobb seized upon this to sue architects for emulating his plans. Cobb's

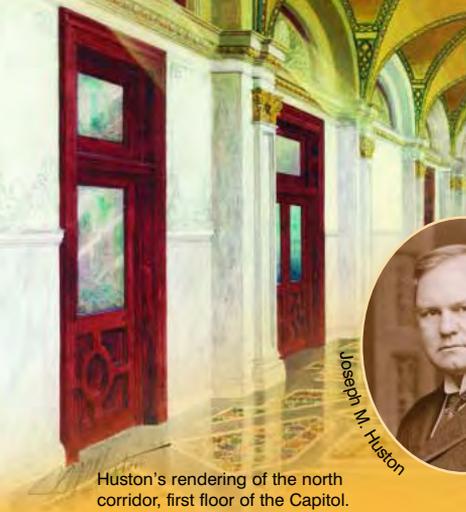
lawsuits were not successful and the Commission continued with the selection of an architect.

Picking from a pool of nine entrants, the Building Commission chose 35-year-old architect Joseph M. Huston of Philadelphia to build the Capitol. The structure that Huston envisioned would be centered exactly where the old Hills Capitol had sat,

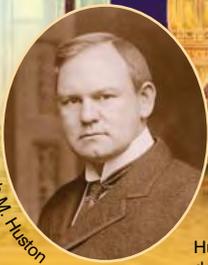


Henry Ives Cobb

1902 1904 1905 1906



Huston's rendering of the north corridor, first floor of the Capitol.



Joseph W. Huston



Huston's rendering of dome and rotunda.

facing the Susquehanna River to the west with the axis of State Street bisecting its dome. However, Huston's building would be 520 feet long and 254 feet wide, much larger than Hills' structure. In addition, the top of the dome would rise some 272 feet into the air. Huston would model the dome of Pennsylvania's Capitol on that of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, and the grand staircase with a triple arcaded gallery was an idea taken from Charles Garnier's 1868 Paris Opera House. Each of the main chambers would be ornamented in different architectural styles or periods. The Governor's Reception Room would reflect Tudor influences, the House Chamber—Italian Renaissance, the Senate Chamber—French Renaissance, and the Supreme Court adorned in Greek and Roman styles. His building would stand as a unification of art, artisanship, and architecture—all guided by the overarching vision its architect, Joseph Huston.

Groundbreaking for the Capitol was unceremoniously held on November 7, 1902 and production moved swiftly. On May 5, 1904 the cornerstone for the new building was laid, and work progressed steadily toward the spring of 1905, when the large gilded statue of *Commonwealth* was hoisted upon the dome. The exterior of the building was largely finished by January 1905, but the legislative session superseded the

completion of the interior sections. In addition, Governor Samuel W. Pennypacker called a special legislative session in January 1906, which further forestalled the actual completion and dedication of the building until later in the year. Finally on October 4, 1906, almost four years after ground was broken, the brand new Capitol was dedicated, with Theodore Roosevelt as the keynote speaker at the ceremonies. For months afterwards visitors took special excursion trains via the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroads to come to Harrisburg and examine the building in person.

At about the same time as the dedication ceremonies, news of the fact that the building had gone excessively over budget, costing nearly 13 million dollars instead of four and a half, broke in the newspapers. The Commonwealth's then archaic and confusing system of purchasing had allowed contractors, with complacency on the part of some state officials, to

defraud the Commonwealth of approximately eight and a half million dollars. The graft scandal and trials would last until 1912, with eventual incarceration for those implicated, but neither seemed to concern those people who came

to see the new Capitol.

Though the building itself was finished and usable by 1906, much of the interior and exterior artwork was

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1906-1970s 1920s-1980s

not completed in time. Violet Oakley's murals for the Governor's Reception Room were not installed until November 1906, and Abbey's Rotunda murals would not be completed until 1908. The House murals were installed in 1911, as were the Barnard statue groups outside the west entrance. The Senate Chamber was completed by 1920 and the Supreme Court in 1927 with the installation of Violet Oakley's murals in each of these ornate rooms. The last murals installed in the building were painted by Vincent Maragliotti in the north corridor lunettes in the early 1970s.

After the completion of the Main Capitol, the Commonwealth's bureaucracy would quickly

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This was followed by the North Office in 1928 and the Education and Finance Buildings in 1936 and 1940, respectively. Soldiers' and Sailors' Grove, Fisher Plaza, and the expanded State Street Bridge were all completed in the 1930s and '40s. The last piece of the Brunner plan was the 1980s' completion of the Capitol East Wing, giving the Capitol

Complex its current look.

The Main Capitol Building held and still holds a unique place in Pennsylvania history, because it stands as a publicly accessible mammoth work of art, but also meets the challenge of being the state's primary office building in every successive decade since its dedication. For this reason, almost from the date of its dedication, it has been modified and upgraded to accommodate the legislature's changing needs. Some of



A—Ingen Stained Glass Window; B—Barnhard Statue; C—Oakley Mural; D—Mercer Tile; E—Maragliotti Mural; F—Oakley Mural; G—Abbey Mural

outgrow even this spacious building, which had over 500 rooms. They began to buy up land to the east of the structure and hired famous New York architect Arnold W. Brunner to design an expansion of the buildings and park areas. In the early 1920s, the Commonwealth completed the South Office Building (currently the Speaker K. Leroy Ivis Office Building).



A—South Office Bldg.; B—North Office Bldg.; C—Forum Bldg.; D—Finance Bldg.; E—Capitol East Wing; F—Soldiers' & Sailors' Grove; G—Fisher Plaza

1981-1994



Carpet installation in House Chamber

these modifications were necessary and sensitive to the buildings' historic fabric, while some were expedient, harmful, and in some cases, irreversible.

By the end of the 1970s, many would agree that the building had lost much of its original splendor through years of use, modification, and poor maintenance practices.

In 1981 a committee was set up under law to oversee the restoration work on the Capitol building and to protect its historic integrity for future generations. The Capitol Preservation Committee began to undertake projects concerning the fine and decorative arts within the building. The first such project the Committee undertook was preservation of the state's collection of historic

"...the handsomest building I ever saw."

Theodore Roosevelt

the West entrance, granite work was josted and re-pointed, gold leaf and chandeliers were re-gilded or conservation cleaned, and the Mercer tile floor was restored and new tiles installed in various places. The statue of *Commonwealth* on the dome was removed and completely restored. The Committee also assisted the Department of General Services in their campaign of Life Safety upgrades, to ensure that after sprinkler heads and fire suppression systems were placed, touch-ups of decorative artistic areas would be as sensitive to the historic fabric as possible. For the past 25 years the staff of the Capitol Preservation Committee has worked to ensure that the building remains as beautiful for Pennsylvanians as it was when Theodore Roosevelt came to the dedication in 1906. We hope that all visitors to Pennsylvania's historic "palace of art" will be as impressed with it as Roosevelt when he pronounced it "the handsomest building I ever saw."



A—House Chamber; B—Jean paints chandelier;
C—Placement of *Commonwealth*; D—House Chamber

Civil War battle flags, which were then housed in the Main Rotunda cases. After this project, conservation work on the Main Rotunda murals, and the cleaning of the marble, which had yellowed over the years, was conducted.

Since 1981 the Committee has assisted directly or indirectly in most every restoration project within the Main Capitol building. By 1994 all of the fine artwork, primarily the murals within the building, which had seen various campaigns of restoration, had been uniformly restored. The Barnard statues that had seen years of harmful acid rain and exposure to the elements, were re-pointed and reset on the pediments outside

