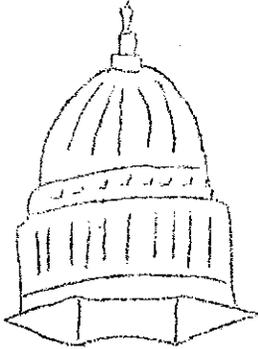


WISCONSIN FACTS

WISCONSIN'S STATE CAPITOL

Prepared by Wisconsin Legislative Reference Library, March 1956

LOCATION AND HISTORY Located on an isthmus formed by 2 large lakes, Wisconsin's Capitol building lies at the heart of the City of Madison and is its commanding feature. The present Capitol completed almost



40 years ago is the 4th to be constructed. A frame building located at Belmont in Lafayette County housed the 1st territorial legislature in 1836. Construction on the 2nd Capitol at the present site in Madison began in 1837 and when this became too small a 3rd building was constructed between 1857 and 1869. The need for more space again arose in 1903 and the question of whether or not to expand or rebuild was unexpectedly settled when the Capitol was largely destroyed by fire on February 27, 1904.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE FOURTH CAPITOL The construction of the 4th and present Capitol took about 10 years from October 1906 until the building was completed and occupied in 1917. No formal dedication of the building was ever held. The architectural firm, George B. Post and Sons of New York, planned and designed the building. The cost was \$7,203,826 which included ground work, decoration and furnishings. Building materials were carefully selected and many fine pieces of marble were imported from France, Norway, Italy, Algiers and Germany. The exterior of the building is made from white Bethel Vermont granite, a stone which compares favorably with marble in color and durability. Contrasting colors of marble and granite were used in the interior for such features as columns, panels and floors.

The Wisconsin Capitol measures 285.9 feet high from the esplanade to the top of the statue on the dome. The dome was intentionally designed to be several inches shorter than the Capitol dome at Washington, D.C. The combined length of the North-South and East-West wings is over 538 feet and the ground area of the building covers 2.42 acres.

THE DESIGN AND EXTERIOR The Capitol is an example of Roman Renaissance architecture. The building is designed in a cruciform with the 4 wings extending 125 feet outward from the core of the building. Corinthian columns are used in the porticos which mark the East, West, North and South entrances to the building. Group statuary by distinguished American sculptors adorn the pediments in each of the porticos.

Probably the most striking feature is the great white dome which is visible for miles when illuminated with floodlights at night. The dome is formed of granite blocks anchored to a huge steel framework weighing about 2,500 tons. It is one of the few granite domes in the United States.

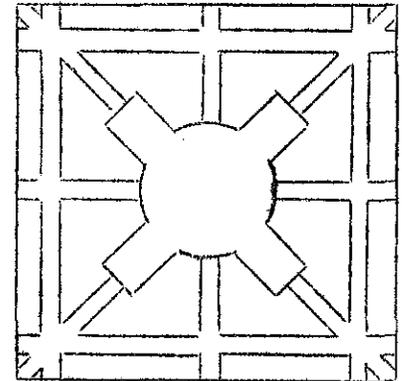
An imposing bronze gilded statue commonly known as "Miss Forward" stands on top of the dome. Measuring 15 feet and 4 inches in height and weighing over 3 tons, "Miss Forward" stretches the right arm forward and upward and balances in the left palm a globe surmounted by an eagle.

THE INTERIOR The classical lines of architecture are also carried out in the interior, with a large rotunda from which the painting on the crown of the dome 200 feet above forms a central point of interest. The subject of the painting is "Resources of Wisconsin" and it is nearly 34 feet in diameter. The artist, Edwin Howland Blashfield, described the work as follows: "The design for the dome crown is a symbolization of Wisconsin enthroned upon clouds and wrapped in the folds of the American flag. She holds the escutcheon of the State with the coat of arms of Wisconsin upon it, and in her right hand a scepter of wheat." Female figures clustered below her hold specimens of the products of the state.

The 4 wings leading off from the rotunda are opened by immense arches. Grand stairways in each wing lead up from the ground floor to the 1st and 2nd floors and are arranged so as not to obstruct the view from one wing to the end of the opposite wing.

PRINCIPAL ROOMS AND OFFICES The 5 principal rooms in the Capitol have been decorated with special care: the Reception Room in the Executive Chamber, the Supreme Court Room, the Senate Chamber, the Assembly Chamber and the Hearing Room. Large mural paintings on the walls of these rooms depict symbolic and historical scenes, such as the signing of the Magna Carta, the signing of the U.S. Constitution, a Roman court, pioneers and Indians.

While many of the state offices are located in the State Office Building and elsewhere, the Capitol accommodates the offices of the constitutional officers: the Governor's office and his staff, offices such as budgeting, personnel and engineering, the Legislature, Supreme Court, State Treasurer, Secretary of State, and the central offices of some of the largest state departments, such as the Department of Public Instruction, Office of the Attorney General, Department of Public Welfare, Department of Agriculture and Insurance Department.



CAPITOL GROUNDS The grounds of the Capitol occupy the center of the downtown square, and are landscaped with shrubs, trees and flower gardens. The main approaches are lined with shrubbery broken only by wide semicircular stone seats. The Capitol Park is composed of 13.4 acres or 4 square city blocks.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION An article on the history of the Wisconsin state capitols appears in the Wisconsin Blue Book, 1948, entitled "Four Wisconsin Capitols", pp. 127-40. This is a reprint from the 1923 Wisconsin Blue Book, pp. 41-52. The "Wisconsin Capitol Guide Book" containing a detailed description with colored illustrations of the present Capitol may be purchased for 25 cents from the Bureau of ~~Purchase~~ State Capitol, Madison, Wisconsin.

Engineering,