

THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME SEVEN | NUMBER TWO | JUNE 2015

Have a Seat: Governor's Hearing Room Chairs

The designers of the Nebraska State Capitol used many different architectural styles to convey stately dignity in the preservation spaces of the Capitol, such as the Legislative Chambers and the Court Chambers. The finest finishes and furnishings were placed in the Governor's Suite creating a rich and gracious setting for the activities of the executive branch of government. Designed in an Italian Renaissance style, the suite is furnished with museum-quality period furniture. In 1932, the Governor's Hearing Room held a semi-circular conference table with 7

counselor chairs and 48 gallery chairs. The conference table and chairs were custom designed using old world techniques. The chairs featured polychrome embossed leather with turned spindles and legs. In the 80 years since the Capitol's completion the Governor's Hearing Room has been the site of news conferences, special hearings, bill signings, and meetings with visiting dignitaries and constituent groups. Thousands of people have used the fine furnishings and after years of daily use the chairs were in various states of disrepair and in need of restoration. The very ornamental counselor's chairs had been removed from service to preserve the original leather and detail, while the gallery chair seats were reupholstered and in continual use in the hearing room. When the gallery chairs again began to show the wear and tear of daily use, the Office of the Capitol Commission began a project to restore and return all the hearing room chairs to service. The OCC Furniture Shop has been hard at work on the restoration of the chairs and has returned the first group of gallery chairs to service. These beautiful chairs are ready to serve Nebraskans for many years to come.



Capitol Administrator Bob Ripley and Preservation Architect Matt Hansen place restored chairs in the Governor's Hearing Room. Inset shows restored chair with replicated polychrome embossed leather.



Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

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Governor
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College of Architecture, UNL

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Stan Meradith
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Jim Cudaback
Congressional District 3

Robert C. Ripley
Administrator
Office of the Capitol Commission
Secretary



OCC AT WORK

Experience and Service

The People of the OCC Office of the Capitol Commission

ADMINISTRATION

Bob Ripley, *Administrator*
Tom Kaspar, *Preservation Architect*
Matt Hansen, *Preservation Architect*
Mark Tonjes, *Capitol Manager*
Tammy Honnor, *Facilities
Construction Coordinator*
Cecilia Curtis-Beard,
Administrative Assistant

ARCHIVE

Karen Wagner, *Archivist*

CARPENTRY

Brett Daugherty, *Shop Supervisor*
Roger Frink,
Hardware Conservator
Dawn Hickmon,
Furniture Conservator
Steve Janssen, *Furniture Finisher*
Phil Lagoni, *Mason*
Mike Marshall, *Cabinet Maker*

CUSTODIAL

Perry Shuman,
Capitol Conservation Supervisor
Richard Mallam, *Custodial Leader*
Rich Naber, *Custodial Leader*

GROUNDS

Don Pracheil, *Mechanic*

MAINTENANCE

Michael Jordan, *Shop Supervisor*
Kent Bonebright,
Sheet Metal Fabricator
Tahir Karimi, *Electrician*
John MacKichan, *Plumber*
John Steele,
Maintenance Technician

TOURS

Roxanne Smith,
*Tourism Supervisor/
Special Events Coordinator/
Public Information Officer*
Daniel Hutt,
Tourism Aide
Gloria Witherspoon,
Tourism Aide

Dawn Hickmon found her dream job when she wasn't really looking. Hickmon was applying for a Game and Parks Housekeeper Supervisor position, when she noticed the furniture conservator opening in the Capitol Carpentry Shop. On a whim she applied for that position too. Upon interviewing Hickmon, OCC managers learned she had worked with her step-father in his construction business in Missouri. Then in Nebraska she found the YWCA Jobs Training Partnership Act program encouraging women to train and work in non-traditional jobs. During a two week construction course put on by the YWCA, Lincoln Homebuilders Association, Lincoln Public Schools and JTPA, Hickmon found she enjoyed working with wood and had always had a knack for fixing things. OCC managers were impressed with her willingness and desire to learn and her attention to detail. Hickmon had worked for over ten years with local contractors learning finish carpentry, installing tile and cabinets, painting, doing warranty work and repairing

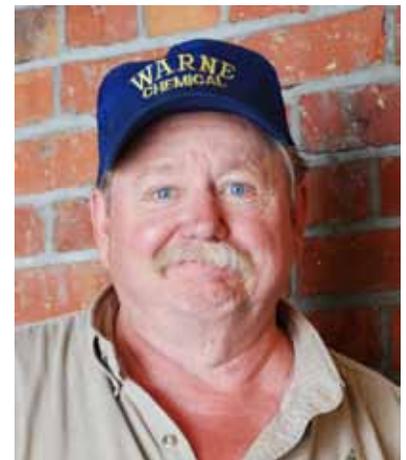
furniture when she went to work for the Nebraska Department of Corrections. As a Detail Corporal she helped establish the detail worker custodial program at the Nebraska State Office Building.



Since joining the OCC, Hickmon has restored office chairs, tables, and desks learning the conservation techniques and procedures required for the restoration and preservation of the Capitol's most significant furnishings. She is involved with the repair and restoration of the counselor's chairs, part of the project to return the original furnishings to the Governor's Hearing Room. In a short time Hickmon has become an experienced and valuable member of the team. 

OCC Groundskeeper Retires

The Office of the Capitol Commission thanks Capitol Groundskeeper Mike Hoppmann and wishes him well in retirement. Hoppmann, a licensed arborist, worked on the Capitol's landscape for 23 years. His duties included care for the Capitol's trees and shrubs, and the maintenance of the irrigation system on the lawn. 



CONSERVATION PROJECTS

In the Italian Renaissance Style

Nebraska's Italian Renaissance Style Governor's Suite includes an ornate mural vaulted public reception room and a hearing room for the Governor's news conferences and special meetings. The Reception Room and Hearing Room were furnished with seating for the public waiting to see the Governor or attending a news conference or meeting. The furniture used in the Governor's Suite and these spaces is based on period museum pieces and are quite elegant. The Reception Room banquettes are custom upholstered with velvet mohair and the hearing room chairs are hand tooled, hand stenciled leather. The seating was intended to be beautiful and functional. It is a testament to the high quality of the seating, that after 80 years of use it is still in service.

The Reception Room banquettes were restored five years ago. The Hearing Room's gallery chairs have now been restored and returned to service. Leather, like most natural materials, has an expected useful life. In the late 1950's, when the original leather seats were no longer servicable, the seats were reupholstered in a vinyl which approximated the original color. About ten years ago their second life was coming to an end. The internal seat structure was failing and the original leather backs were starting to tear. At that point Office of the Capitol Commission staff began a project to replicate the original leather and restore all the chairs in the Hearing Room. Seven counselors chairs and one audience chair had been removed from service in the early 70's to preserve the leather which was worn but intact. Using the retired chairs as examples, staff worked with a consultant to find a custom leather fabricator willing to replicate the designs to the preservation architect's specifications. A company in Belgium was found making leather items using centuries old techniques.

OCC preservation architects sent samples of the original leather with extensive photo-documentation of the scale and size of the chair's upholstery. The manufacturer copied the original patterns and supplied the leather. Once OCC's furniture conservation staff restored the frames, the new custom leather was applied. Furniture staff also developed a stronger more rigid seat structure to replace the original cotton webbing. With the new seat structure and the new leather, the Governor's Hearing Room Chairs are in excellent condition and will serve Nebraskans for many years to come.



Left, Hearing Room gallery chairs before restoration had worn and torn leather and the seat structure had failed causing the seats to bottom out. Below, disassembly and a sample seat structure modification. Below left, a pattern is made for the leather manufacturer.



Right, OCC staff begins the restoration process by removing material from the chair. Below, all chairs are numbered and the removed upholstery materials placed in assigned boxes, here stacked behind the chairs. Bottom, the ornamental tacks which will be reused are cataloged by chair and position on the chair.

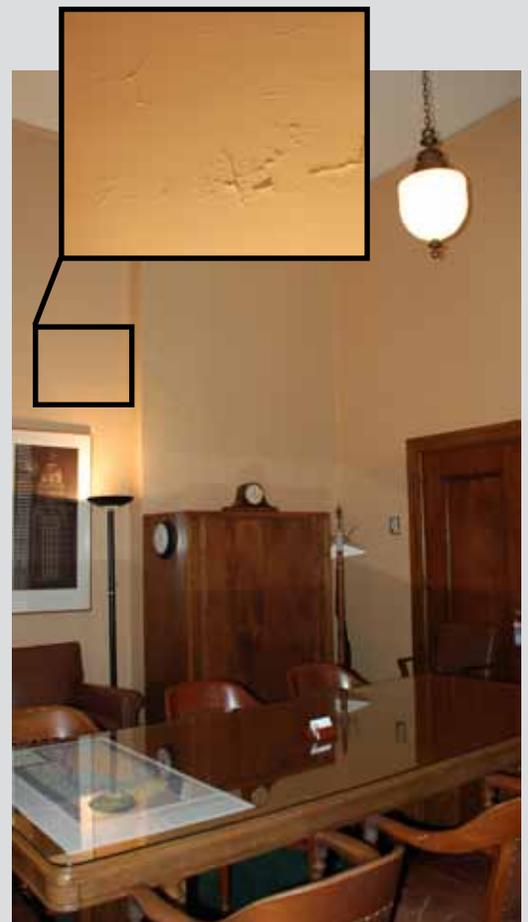


Office Renovation Continues

Capitol architect Bertram G. Goodhue designed a monument for the citizens of Nebraska and a functional house of government. Since 1932, many of the office spaces, made for adaptive uses, have been changed and modified. Office walls were repainted many times in many colors. During the late 1950's and early 1960's original chain hung chandeliers were replaced with fluorescent lighting; lowered lay-in ceilings were installed and plaster walls were covered with paneling. The first major office restoration in the Capitol began in 1989 following construction of the current Data Processing Center and the clearing of a major portion of the east side of the ground floor. This office renovation project included paint analysis and repainting walls back to original colors.

The Office of the Capitol Commission has since learned there is a limit to the number of layers of paint a plaster wall can hold before the paint layers become too thick and paint starts to crack, peel and fall. OCC now begins each office restoration with paint stripping. Using an annual restoration appropriation, OCC has restored and repainted offices for all three branches of government. This summer the work is moving into executive and legislative offices. Some of the Executive offices have not been touched since their modification in the 1960's and 70's, while others were repainted in later restorations, only to have the new paint crack and fall. The current restorations in the executive and legislative offices will include paint stripping. 

Making changes in Capitol office space.



Above, many offices in the Capitol were 'modernized' in the 1950-60's with the addition of fluorescent lighting and wood paneling. As part of the ongoing restoration and preservation work of the Office of the Capitol Commission, these offices are slowly being returned to original condition. Right, when the Lt. Governor's Office was restored in the mid-1990's the office was repainted the original color. The peeling paint, shown in the inset, indicates the need to strip all the layers of paint from a room before repainting. Once this office is restored it will be outfitted with a custom-made wardrobe to replace the small cupboard and coat tree currently in use, behind the door.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Wardrobe Construction

During the 1922-1932 construction of the Nebraska State Capitol some offices were fitted with wardrobes. Some wardrobes served as coat closets with storage areas for personal items; others held pedestal sinks. In an office building such as the Capitol, in the early part of the last century, it was 'modern' to have these personal conveniences. As times and office functions changed, some of the wardrobes were removed and placed in storage in the Nebraska Capitol Permanent Collection. As the Office of the Capitol Commission restores offices the missing wardrobes are also restored and then returned to their original locations. In some instances, OCC staff has been called upon to install a wardrobe in an office where none existed originally. The skilled craftsmen in the Carpenter Shop are able to custom build and custom fit wardrobes for these office locations.

The wardrobes in the permanent collection and in service provide staff all the information they need to design and create a new piece of furniture. The original wardrobes were constructed in pieces: walls, doors and tops. These pieces were assembled in place with a custom fit for each office. Door and molding details remained the same for each piece. The original wardrobes were walnut and birch construction. The carpentry staff works with walnut and walnut stained birch to create the new pieces. Door and molding detail are copied from the examples in the collection. Most recently, OCC staff created a custom wardrobe, shown below, to meet the needs of the Lieutenant Governor.

Nebraska's Lieutenant Governor's office was originally behind the Senate Chamber. After the Unicameral Legislature was adopted, the Lt. Governor's office was moved. The new office space did not contain a wardrobe. To meet the Lt. Governor's need for storage, a small cabinet was brought into the office area. Now that the Lt. Governor's office is on the list for restoration, OCC determined it was appropriate to upgrade the office with the installation of a custom fitted wardrobe. Because the space available for the wardrobe was limited, staff built a shallower version which will be custom fit to the plaster walls once the office is restored.



Some Capitol offices were outfitted with wardrobes during original construction period 1922-1932.



Above and right, the new wardrobe during construction in the Carpentry Shop.



Above, the new wardrobe cabinet is narrower than an original to fit neatly behind the door in the Lt. Governor's office.



The finished wardrobe in storage. OCC returns original pieces to service, or makes new pieces as needed to accommodate changing office needs.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Collections Aid Restoration

The Nebraska Capitol Collections include the Capitol Archive and the permanent and circulating collections. The Archive houses the documents associated with the construction of the Goodhue Capitol, including correspondence, Capitol Commission meeting minutes, and architectural drawings. It is open by appointment for scholarly research. The Nebraska Capitol Collections permanent and circulating collections house objects associated with the construction, ongoing maintenance and original furnishings purchased for use in the current Capitol. The permanent collection is a repository of selected original furniture in exceptional condition and other original materials which have been removed from service so they can be used to guide current and future caretakers in the preservation and restoration of similar items. The examples in the permanent collection are used by staff to restore and replicate Capitol original furnishings. The Governor's Hearing Room counselor's chairs were placed in the permanent collection when they were removed from service in the 1970's. In storage for over 40 years, the chairs are now being restored and returned to service.

Also included in the permanent collection are samples of doors, wardrobes and lavatory cabinets originally installed in Capitol offices. During the modernization of the Capitol in the 1950-60's some wardrobes and cabinets were removed from offices and the parts stored. As offices have been reconfigured and renovated many of these wardrobes and cabinets have been returned to their original locations. Door, wardrobe and lavatory cabinet parts in the collection are used by OCC carpentry staff as they replicate details in the construction of new units for renovated offices. Supporting information is available in the Archives, items such as furniture catalogs, requests for bids from the original construction period, commission notes and meeting minutes. Through research in the archive and from examining pieces in the permanent collection staff members learn historically appropriate techniques to repair or replicate the Capitol's fine quality furnishings. The information available in the Nebraska Capitol Collections for current and future staff research enhances the knowledge and skill of the caretakers of the Nebraska State Capitol. 



The Governor's Chair, left, and the Counselors Chair, right, photographed in storage, are now in the Office of the Capitol Commission Furniture Shop undergoing restoration. These original museum quality pieces were removed from service in the 1970's to preserve the remaining original leather backs. Using these samples, OCC preservation architects had leather fabricated to match the original. As staff removes the original upholstery they place all original materials in labeled boxes, below, to identify the exact chair from which the material was removed. These materials become part of the Capitol Collections and record the types of batting and fill used as well as tack spacing.



CAPITOL EVENTS

Cornhusker Girls State

June 4, 2015

The American Legion Auxiliary brings Nebraska high school students to the Capitol for their 2:00 p.m. 2nd floor Rotunda government inauguration ceremony.

Cornhusker Boys State

June 5, 2015

The American Legion's annual program brings high school students to the Capitol at 1:00 p.m.

Girl Awards Ceremony

June 6, 2015 2:00 p.m.

The Spirit of Nebraska Girl Scouts Homestead Service Center will hold a 2nd floor rotunda program to honor Gold and Silver Award winners.

Teacher Exchange Recognition

June 22, 2015

Nebraska Department of Education Program at 10:00 a.m. in the 2nd floor rotunda recognizes teachers from Mexico who participate in the Nebraska Bi-National Migrant Education Teacher Exchange.

Pretrial, Probation and Parole Supervision Week Display

July 13-17, 2015

The Nebraska Association for the Education of Young Children are sponsoring this 1st floor rotunda display.

Illuminating Lincoln Display

August 1-17, 2015

The Nebraska Arts Council is sponsoring this 1st floor exhibit on the temporary light bulb sculpture in Lincoln and the Lighthouse.

Feeding America Campaign

September 4, 2015

The Capitol will be lit orange to raise awareness of Hunger and promote September as Hunger Action Month.

Jr. Duck Stamp Exhibit

September 14-25, 2015

The U.S Fish and Wildlife Service display of student artwork in the 1st floor rotunda.

Bar Induction Ceremony

September 22, 2015

The Nebraska Supreme Court inducts new members of the Nebraska Bar Association in the 2nd floor rotunda at 10:00 a.m.

Hispanic Heritage Month Exhibit

September 28 - October 9, 2015

The Nebraska Latino-American Commission will sponsor the exhibit in the 1st floor rotunda.

NDCS Annual Awards Program

October 1, 2015

The Nebraska Department of Correctional Services will recognize employees in the 2nd floor rotunda at 2:00 p.m.

Hispanic Heritage Month Ceremony

October 9, 2015

The Nebraska Latino-American Commission will host a ceremony at 3:30 p.m. in the 2nd floor rotunda to commemorate Hispanic Heritage in Nebraska.

World Diabetes Day

November 14, 2015

The Capitol will be illuminated with blue light in honor of World Diabetes Day.

Gettysburg Address Commemoration

November 14, 2014

The Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War will have a program in the 2nd floor rotunda at 10:30 a.m.

Prematurity Awareness Month Display

November 16 - 20, 2015

The March of Dimes is sponsoring this 1st floor display with information on healthy babies.

Commissioner's Recognition for Excellence in Career Education

November 23, 2015

The Nebraska Department of Education will honor students in Career Technical Student Organizations in the 2nd floor rotunda at 3:00 p.m.

The Governor will sign Proclamations at 10:00 a.m. in the Warner Chamber on June 10, July 8, August 12, September 9, October 14, November 18 and December 9. For proclamation information please contact Danielle in the Governor's Office at (402)471-2256.

All events at the Nebraska State Capitol are free and open to the public. 

Nebraska State Capitol

Guided Tours are offered *Monday-Friday hourly from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, except at noon. Saturday and Holidays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm, except at noon and Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Please call 402.471.0448 or visit www.capitol.org for more information.* 

In observance of the July 4th Independence Day holiday, state offices will be closed on Friday July 3, 2015. The Nebraska State Capitol will be open holiday hours, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., on Friday July 3 and Saturday July 4, 2015. Free guided tours will be offered at 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. and at 1:00, 2:00, 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. both days. Please call the tour office at (402)471-0448 for additional information.



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*Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924*

In this issue:

- RESTORATION 3
- RENOVATION..... 4
- NEW WARDROBE 5
- COLLECTIONS..... 6
- CAPITOL EVENTS..... 7

C-SPAN Features Lincoln

Cable news channel C-SPAN was in Lincoln the first week of May filming for their C-SPAN2 Book TV and C-SPAN3 American History TV channels. C-SPAN's 2015 Cities tour will include Lincoln. The summer tour will feature the literary life and history of selected cities. Lincoln's weekend on the public affairs network will be June 6-7, 2015. Short segments of the program will air all weekend and a block of back to back episodes will air on AMERICAN HISTORY TV on *Saturday June 6 at 9:00 a.m. CT on C-SPAN3* and Lincoln's full block of *BOOK TV programming is Saturday June 6 at 5:00 p.m. CT on C-SPAN2*. The film crew spent time visiting the Capitol's Archive and filmed in and around the building. Once the programs have aired, they will be available for viewing on the C-Span website, www.c-span.org, check the Series listing for Book TV and American History TV. 

The Capitol Sower, published by the Office of the Capitol Commission, is available on line at www.capitol.org. Contact the Tourism Supervisor at [<roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov>](mailto:roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov) for more information.

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