
THE CAPITOL SOWER



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Architectural Masterpiece



Since humans first began to live together in groups, architecture has played a role in how we organize ourselves in communities and how we represent ourselves to others. Upon completion of the Nebraska State Capitol, in their final report to the Nebraska State Legislature on January 1, 1935, the Nebraska Capitol Commission stated,

“It is difficult for Nebraska to realize what it has done, but the people of your nation know, and they look to you for careful preservation of what has become a jewel among Historic Monuments.”

Nebraska achieved and preserves its monumental Capitol through the hard work and dedication of architects. Frank Lloyd Wright, perhaps the best known architect in America, described architecture as the mother art, “Without architecture of our own we have no soul of our own civilization.” The Nebraska State Capitol provides an architectural soul for Nebraska.

Nebraska’s first two state capitols were designed by Chicago architects following the standards of the time: columns, pediments, domes. They were designed to be reminiscent of the nation’s Capitol. It was leading Omaha architect, Thomas R. Kimball, FAIA, and president of the American Institute of Architects, who set the stage for Nebraska to have in Wright’s words “an architecture of our own”. As architectural advisor to the Nebraska Capitol Commission, Kimball wrote the program statement for the competition which allowed New York architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue to exercise all his talents and create the nation’s first truly vernacular statehouse. The Nebraska State Capitol truly represents Nebraska, its landscape and its people.

The opening words of Kimball’s competition statement emphasize the importance of architecture and architects.

“The Capitol of a State is the outward sign of the character of its people. Their respect for its traditions and history, their belief in its importance and worth, and their love of its fair name; all find expression in its Capitol. Of Nebraska highway of progress, provider of man’s necessities, battle-ground of freedom, distributor of learning, home of the volunteer let the new Capitol be a symbol. Rome’s greatest basilica is not the only legacy left by the architects of St. Peter’s. Michelangelo’s dome was chosen, but to the designs of San Gallo, Bramante, and other unsuccessful competitors, the world owes many of its greatest monuments! Beside a noble Capitol for Nebraska, may not this competition yield to Architecture a wider heritage?”

Architect Bertram Goodhue used the opportunity to design something very new and original, a landmark for all Nebraska. Thematic consultant Hartley Burr Alexander explained the goal of Goodhue’s design, that everyone who entered the Capitol would feel blessed for having passed through. Fine architecture has the ability to achieve that goal. 

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The People of the
OCC
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Experience and Service

Capitol Administrator

Robert C. Ripley, FAIA, Administrator of the Office of the Capitol Commission first visited the Capitol as a small child and returned frequently as he grew up in the neighborhood. Achieving his architectural degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Ripley first came to work at the Capitol in 1975 as a graduate architect. During that time the Nebraska State Office Building was completed and agencies moved out of the overcrowded Capitol. Much of his early Capitol work involved cleaning up and removing modifications to the original fabric of the building. Following his initial Capitol work, Ripley returned to private architectural practice for eight years. Historic preservation was a new field at that time and in 1983 the opportunity to return to the Capitol and manage a restoration and promotion program specific to the building was presented. Ripley took the job and has since been a conscientious caretaker of the building, overseeing the Capitol's

first major interior office renovation and restoration project in 1989, the 1990 restoration of the Court Chambers, the 1995 restoration and upgrade of the East (Warner) Legislative Chamber and the 2004 West (Norris) Legislative Chamber restoration project. Ripley supported and led the 1998 Exterior Masonry Restoration project and is now preparing for the Capitol's first major heating, ventilation, and air conditioning upgrade in 50 years. Throughout his career at the Capitol, Ripley has developed the Office of the Capitol Commission Restoration program into one of the top programs in the nation with a state of the art Archive to support and document OCC's historic preservation work. At the 2015 national American Institute of Architects convention in Atlanta, Ripley was inducted into the prestigious College of Fellows for his contributions to historic preservation and his care of the Nebraska State Capitol. 



Left, Robert C. Ripley, FAIA, Capitol Administrator, receives his Fellowship Award and Medal from incoming American Institute of Architects President, Elizabeth Chu Richter, FAIA, and Albert W. Rubeling, FAIA, Chancellor of the College of Fellows, at a ceremony in Atlanta's historic Ebenezer Baptist Church. Ripley's Fellowship award during the AIA 2015 National Convention recognizes his care of the Nebraska Capitol and his contributions to historic preservation on a national level. Photo: AIA

Experience and Service

OCC Preservation Architects

Thomas L. Kaspar, AIA, began his career in architecture at the firm established by Ellery Davis, a Lincoln competitor in the design competition for the current Nebraska Capitol. After studying drafting at Southeast Community College, Kaspar apprenticed with Davis, Fenton, Stange and Darling. Working and studying, he took the architect's exam and became a registered architect. In 1977 he came to the Capitol and began his preservation career. As Kaspar watched numerous pieces of Capitol original furniture leave the building with the move of agencies to the new state office building he initiated a program to bring those pieces back. This recognition of the significance of the furnishings to the historic integrity of the building formed the basis of the Nebraska Capitol Collections which includes all furnishings purchased for the Goodhue designed building. Kaspar was instrumental in the development of a state of the art archive to house the thousands of documents, including architectural drawings and

correspondence associated with the construction of the Capitol. In his role as preservation architect Kaspar has overseen the replication of carpet for the East and West Legislative Chambers, glass globes to replace ones broken through the years, custom upholstery for Governor's Office and Legislative Lounge furniture and the original paint scheme for Capitol offices and corridors. He has been involved with all renovation and restoration projects in the Capitol since his arrival, including the restoration of the 12 murals on the second floor. Kaspar's knowledge of the Capitol and his dedication to precise conservation and restoration of the Capitol's furnishings has helped the Office of the Capitol Commission become a model for historic preservation in the nation. 



Tom Kaspar, AIA, on the steps of the Capitol.

Matthew G. Hansen, AIA, LEED, graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Architecture in 2000 with a Master of Architecture degree. At UNL his interest in historic preservation led him to intern with the City of Lincoln Historic Preservation Planner for three summers, and to intern for one summer with Capitol preservation architects. Upon graduation, Hansen worked with the architectural firm Bahr, Vermeer and Haecker. During his eight years at BVH he specialized in historic preservation and worked on projects across the United States. Because historic preservation and green building go hand in hand, Hansen studied and took the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design exam to become LEED certified.

After two years with a South Dakota architectural firm, Hansen, became a registered architect and returned to Nebraska to take a position at the State Capitol. Since returning to the Capitol in 2010 Hansen has managed projects for OCC. In this capacity he creates design drawings, specifications and bid documents for office restoration projects. He uses his knowledge and experience in historic preservation to research manufacturers, methods and products compatible with the preservation focus of the Office of the Capitol Commission. 



Matt Hansen, AIA, LEED in the OCC office.



Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue



Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, FAIA, is one of the least known American architects of the 20th century, yet his influence on American architecture is still seen today. Born at Pomfret, Connecticut in 1869, to parents with Mayflower ancestry. Goodhue studied at home in his youth and as a teenager went to Manhattan to apprentice with architects Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell. At age 21, Goodhue won his first design competition and moved to Boston where he eventually partnered with Ralph Adams Cram. Together they developed a neo-gothic architectural style which became very popular for church design. Goodhue was a partner in Cram, Wentworth, and then, Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson. His early work with these firms involved designing many East Coast churches and cathedrals including the Neo-Gothic West Point Chapel and St. Thomas' Church. Goodhue revived the Byzantine style for St. Bartholomew's Church in New York. Goodhue was a very creative designer and talented draftsman. In addition to architecture, Goodhue developed typefaces and contributed to the publication of an Arts and Crafts quarterly, *The Knight Errant*. Cheltenham, his most famous typeface, was used by the *New York Times* and the *Omaha World Herald* for decades.

Throughout his life Goodhue traveled the world studying architecture. Once he established his own firm in 1915, Goodhue expanded his architectural vocabulary to include Spanish Colonial and Middle Eastern influences. He joined the design team for San Diego's Panama-California Exposition of 1915 and helped establish Spanish Colonial Revival as the vernacular architectural style of California. On his own Goodhue designed major public projects such as the Master Plan for the California Institute of Technology, the Honolulu Academy of Arts in Hawaii, the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego,

the Los Angeles Public Library, the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. and the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.

Many see the Nebraska State Capitol as the crowning achievement of Goodhue's career. The Capitol design competition provided Goodhue the opportunity to create a masterpiece showcasing his ability to combine classical architectural forms in a modern way. Goodhue's simplification of classic forms into their basic geometry, and his simplification of ornament were in keeping with the growing movement toward a more modern architecture for the 20th century. Unfortunately Goodhue did not live to see his most important work completed. Goodhue died suddenly, of a heart attack, on April 23, 1924, just two years after ground was broken in Lincoln. His team of staff architects, Francis Mayers, Oscar Murray and Hardie Phillip, formed the Goodhue Associates and completed Goodhue's unfinished work. Involved with many of Goodhue's other projects, the Associates gave Thematic Consultant Harley Burr Alexander and artists Lee Lawrie and Hildreth Meiere the freedom they needed to complete the decorative interior of the Capitol in the way Goodhue intended, with art and architecture integrated in design. Even with many creative hands at work, the Nebraska Capitol retains Goodhue's vision.

Recognized as an accomplished architect during his life, Goodhue receiving an honorary Doctor of Science from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut in 1911. In 1925, one year after his passing, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue received the American Institute of Architects highest national award, the Gold Medal. He was honored for his innovation and long lasting contributions and influence on American architecture. 

BEHIND THE SCENES

Thomas Rogers Kimball

Given the task of building a third state capitol, the Nebraska Capitol Commission commissioned nationally prominent Omaha architect Thomas Rogers Kimball, FAIA, as its advisor. It was Kimball's experience as national president of the American Institute of Architects (1918-1920) which provided him the knowledge to write the program and the prestige to ensure that top national architects would compete for the opportunity to design the Nebraska State Capitol. Born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1862, he moved to Omaha with his parents and graduated from high school in 1878. After studying architecture at the University of Nebraska and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and art at the Cowles Art School in Boston, he went to Paris and studied art with Henri Joseph Harpignies, a noted landscape painter. He returned to Boston for a brief time, married and moved back to Omaha in 1892. He was lead architect for the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha and designed the Hall County Court House in 1904. Kimball designed many of Omaha's most significant structures, the Omaha Public Library, St. Frances Cabrini Church, St. Cecilia Cathedral, the Burlington Train Station and numerous grand residences and smaller commercial projects.

For the Nebraska Capitol competition Kimball developed a program statement and selection process which provided maximum creative freedom to the architects. The competition program provided only the minimum requirements for the new building. His use of a double blind jury selection process eliminated the need for competing architects to design to the judge's preference rather than Nebraska's need. Nationally, the Nebraska competition set a standard of openness and impartiality still in use today. Kimball died in 1934 shortly after the Nebraska State Capitol was completed. His contribution to the advancement of architecture in Nebraska and the nation lives on in the work he influenced. 

William L. Younkin

Once Bertram Goodhue received the commission for the Nebraska State Capitol, his staff went to work. Two staff with Goodhue and the Associates eventually came to Lincoln, William L. Younkin and Harry F. Cunningham.

William L. Younkin, AIA, was born in 1885 in Iowa, attended high school in San Diego and went to Columbia University. He worked as a draftsman for Goodhue from 1915-1917 and 1919-1922. He was sent to Nebraska in 1922 as "Supervising Architect" of construction, served as on-site representative for the Goodhue firm and was later paid by the Nebraska Capitol Commission to serve as "Clerk of the Works" until the landscaping was completed in 1934. That same year Younkin was hired as an architect by the Nebraska Department of Roads and Irrigation where he worked in the Roadside Improvement Unit. He received his Nebraska registration as a professional architect in 1938, became a member of the American Institute of Architects—Nebraska Chapter and served as their Secretary in 1939 and 1941. Younkin worked for Roads until appointed "Capitol Engineer" in 1945. In January 1946 he was appointed Capitol Custodian by Governor Dwight Griswold and he died in December of that year. He is buried at Wyuka Cemetery in Lincoln. 

Harry F. Cunningham

Harry F. Cunningham, FAIA, was born in Washington D.C. in 1888 and completed high school there. After attending Worcester Technical Institute in Massachusetts, he returned to Washington as a draftsman. After serving in WWI he returned home and began practicing architecture. He joined the Goodhue Associates in 1926 and traveled to Lincoln numerous times as project architect during Phase III tower construction of the Capitol. In Lincoln he became associated with the architecture school at the University of Nebraska. In 1930, he was asked to chair the University's new College of Architecture. In 1934, he returned to Washington and served the government overseas during World War II. Cunningham retired to Lincoln in 1948 and taught courses in architecture. He was chair of the 1954 Capitol Murals Commission and saw the first set of murals installed prior to his death in 1959. He is buried in the Soldiers' Circle at Wyuka Cemetery. Cunningham's skill in project development and oversight provided the opportunity for his involvement in the completion of the Nebraska Capitol and the development of the College of Architecture. In 1994, the AIA Nebraska Chapter honored Cunningham by naming the Nebraska Architectural Excellence Medal after him. 

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

The Goodhue Medal



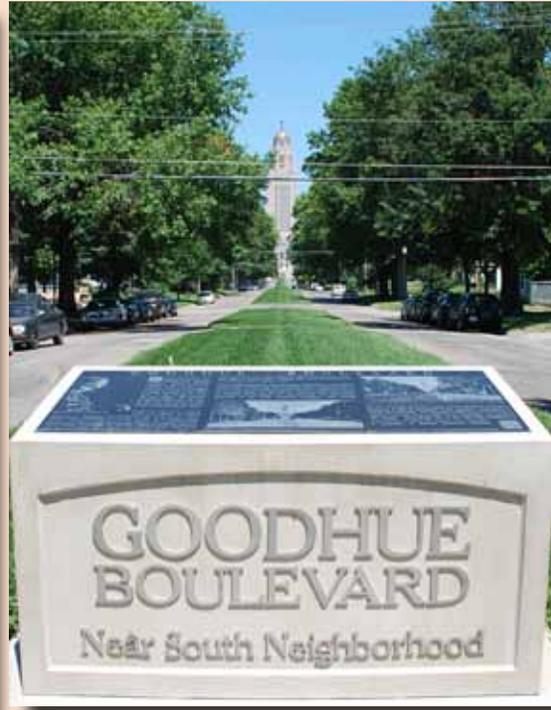
Throughout his architectural career, Bertram Goodhue relied on sculptor Lee Lawrie to decorate his buildings with a unique style of architectural sculpture. Goodhue considered Lee Lawrie an integral part of his design team and in 1921 Lawrie created a medal to celebrate and honor Goodhue's success. The medal features the newly commissioned Nebraska State Capitol along with relief images of other Goodhue buildings. The medal, cast in bronze, was presented to Goodhue on January 5, 1922 during the annual office Twelfth Night Pageant. Additional medals were cast and presented to Goodhue's associate architects, draftsmen and office staff. William Younkin, a draftsman at the firm in 1922, would have received one of these medals. The medal in the Nebraska Capitol Collections is believed to be Younkin's medal, brought to Lincoln when he moved here to become "Supervising Architect" on the Capitol project. The marble base, not part of the original presentation, appears to be made of Verde Antique, one of the types of marble used to decorate the walls of the Capitol's 14th floor Memorial Chamber. 🏛️

CAPITOL EVENTS

Goodhue Honored on Boulevard



Special guests at the Goodhue Boulevard dedication in the 2nd floor rotunda included, l to r. Nicholas Goodhue, grandson, Jill Goodhue Hoeksma, granddaughter, Romy Wyllie, Goodhue biographer and H. Yates Satterlee, grandson.



Architect Bertram Goodhue was honored when the City of Lincoln renamed 15th Street south of the Capitol. As Goodhue envisioned, the Capitol is the dominant feature looking north from A Street.

Since Nebraska's Capitol was completed in 1932, the "Tower on the Plains" has been a dominate feature of Lincoln's skyline. In his program statement, Goodhue recognized, "The site is a square in the heart of the city of Lincoln, the point of intersection of two great avenues; while the surrounding country is generally level." He understood the importance of the site and how to use it to create a landmark seen throughout the city and beyond.

In 1977 the Nebraska Legislature took steps to recognize the Capitol's importance in the Lincoln cityscape by creating the Capitol Environs District. The Environs District includes the four axial avenues leading from the Capitol out into the city. In 1932, only one of the 'malls' or boulevards which currently radiate from the Capitol was in existence; south 15th Street contained center islands which provided a broad open view of the building. In 2007, the Capitol Environs Commission and the City of Lincoln renamed 15th Street from H Street to A Street Goodhue Boulevard. Goodhue's grandchildren came to Lincoln and participated in the 2nd floor rotunda program. In the spring of 2015, Lincoln's Near South Neighborhood received grant money to install a plaque identifying Goodhue Boulevard. The plaque which features historic views of Goodhue Blvd. is located where Goodhue and A Street intersect. The plaque also includes a brief biography of the architect who forever changed the Lincoln cityscape. 



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*Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924*

In this issue:

- OCC ARCHITECTS ... 3
- GOODHUE..... 4
- STAFF ON SITE 5
- LAWRIE HONORS
- GOODHUE..... 6
- LINCOLN HONORS
- GOODHUE..... 7

Goodhue Staff in Lincoln



William L. Younkin, 1885-1946



Harry F. Cunningham, 1888-1959

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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