

THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME EIGHT | NUMBER ONE | FEB 2016

Fountain Project Begins

Nebraskans are very proud to have constructed their Capitol on a pay as you go basis with no debt financing. Completed in 1932, during the Great Depression, fiscally responsible Nebraskans made the choice to delay the finishing touches—wall murals and courtyard fountains. Over a forty year period, Nebraskans commissioned and installed the 20 murals intended to fill the halls of the Capitol. The twelve murals in the second floor's grand spaces were installed in time for the Centennial in 1967. As Nebraska approaches its Sesquicentennial in 2017, the final component of New York architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's landmark Capitol is being installed. The Office of the Capitol Commission has completed the updating of Goodhue's fountain design and contracted with Kingery Construction of Lincoln for the demolition of courtyard sidewalks, installation of plumbing and pumps to operate the fountains, and the placement of the bronze fountains. The project is planned to be one of many commemorations of Nebraska's 150th birthday. 



The project so far, above, contractors salvaged original stone pavers, stockpiled them on pallets seen in the upper right of the photo and use a Bobcat equipped with a jack hammer to break up the existing concrete sidewalk base. Left, a small backhoe will be used for excavation in the courtyard.

Right, the project necessitates the use of the ground floor north entrance for access to the interior courtyards. For protection, a runway was built to carry small-scale equipment. Contractors placed plastic curtains over the doors to lessen the impact of open doors in cold and hot weather. Far right, floors and walls are protected with OSB panels to prevent damage. A power buggy awaits a load of rubble in the courtyard vestibule.



Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

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Chairman

Galen Hadley
Speaker of the Legislature
Vice-Chairman

Michael Heavican
Chief Justice Supreme Court

Scott Killinger
Interim Dean
College of Architecture, UNL

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Congressional District 2

Jim Cudaback
Congressional District 3

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Office of the Capitol Commission
Secretary



The People of the
OCC
Office of the Capitol
Commission

OCC AT WORK
Experience and Service

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Mark Tonjes, Capitol Manager
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Construction Coordinator
Joni Lowry
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ARCHIVE

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CARPENTRY

Brett Daugherty, Shop Supervisor
Lana Gabel,
Furniture Conservator
Dawn Hickmon,
Furniture Conservator
Steve Janssen, Furniture Finisher
Phil Lagoni, Mason
John MacKichan,
Hardware Conservator
Mike Marshall, Cabinet Maker

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Perry Shuman,
Capitol Conservation Supervi-
sor
Richard Mallam, Custodial Leader
Rich Naber, Custodial Leader

GROUNDS

Heather Dinslage,
Groundskeeper Leader
Don Pracheil, Mechanic

MAINTENANCE

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Kent Bonebright,
Sheet Metal Fabricator
Tahir Karimi, Electrician
Jeff Gillett, Plumber
John Steele,
Maintenance Technician

TOURS

Roxanne Smith,
Tourism Supervisor/
Special Events Coordinator/
Public Information Officer
Daniel Hutt,
Tourism Aide
Ted Haubrich,
Tourism Aide

Three Office of the Capitol Commission staff were recognized in 2015 for their years of service to the State of Nebraska. Each OCC team member performs an important role in maintaining, interpreting and preserving the Capitol for future generations. OCC is pleased to recognize the dedication of these Nebraska state employees. 




DON PRACHEIL 35 YEARS
MECHANIC



PHIL LAGONI 25 YEARS
MASON



GLORIA WITHERSPOON
25 YEARS
TOURISM AIDE

Gloria Witherspoon's retirement in October 2015 was celebrated at a special reception attended by over 100 colleagues, friends and family. For 25 years the Mississippi native shared the Capitol and her adopted state's history with thousands of visitors. Teachers across the state will miss her ability to engage and encourage students to learn about and be proud of Nebraska. OCC thanks Gloria for her service and wishes her the best in retirement. 

Capitol Commission 2016 Schedule

The Nebraska Capitol Commission has set its schedule for 2016. The Commission meets quarterly in the Capitol to oversee and review maintenance and preservation of the Capitol, discuss and approve the upcoming budgets and projects for the Office of the Capitol Commission and set administrative rules for the use of the Capitol. The meetings are held in Hearing Room #1507 on ground floor of the Capitol. The

last meeting of the year includes a joint Capitol Commission/Capitol Environs Commission meeting.

- February 9, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.
- June 14, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.
- August 23, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.
- Joint Meeting -- November 8, 2016 at 10:00 a.m.
- November 8, 2016 at 11:00 a.m.

The meetings are open to the public. 

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Governor's Suite Restoration

The installation of the restored gallery and councillor chairs in the Governor's Hearing Room is the latest part of the decades long conservation activity of the most richly furnished office in the Nebraska State Capitol. Beginning with the 1980 cleaning of the fresco-like oil-on-canvas murals in the Private Office and Reception Room, the Governor's Suite is slowly being returned to its original 1927 condition, and the work continues. Since 1983, Capitol Administrator Robert C. Ripley, FAIA, has built upon the foundation of preservation laid by Thomas Kaspar, AIA. When Kaspar came to the Capitol in the late 1970's, he found Governor's Suite original furnishings had been removed, modified or left to deteriorate. To protect the furnishings for future preservation and restoration, Kaspar removed worn and damaged pieces from the Suite and placed them in storage. Now, almost 40 years later, the hearing room chairs are being returned. Over the last 30 years, the Office of the Capitol Commission has assembled a preservation team capable of restoring the most beautiful and richly furnished office in the Capitol to its original grandeur.

While the preservation team's work is often unnoticed, the list of their accomplishments in the Governor's Suite is long. Staff replicated missing drapery hardware for the Hearing Room and Secretary's Office using the few originals Kaspar

found in storage. Originals were cleaned and returned to the Reception Room. Drapery was replicated referencing historic photographs in the Capitol Archive, and new drapery, closely matching the original fabric, was hung. Blinds were restored and rehung. The floors in the Suite have been refinished; an added dais in the Hearing Room was removed prior to refinishing the oak floor. Fireplaces have been cleaned. Original rugs have been moved to storage for reference, and compatible rugs put in place. Chairs in the Governor's Private Office were restored in the 1990's. The banquettes in the reception room were rebuilt, enlarged, and upholstered in velvet mohair to match the original color and skirt design.

Carpentry staff built a simplified walnut lectern which compliments the original Hearing Room furniture in the 1980's. Media equipment for the Governor's News Conferences was recently updated and placed in a custom cabinet. Outdated television camera lights were removed and new lighting installed in a way which is reversible and does not damage the building fabric. The wall sconces in the Hearing Room and the chandelier in the Private Office have been rewired.

Much of the Suite's conservation work is not noticed by visitors; but, it will be hard to miss the latest restoration project in the Suite. OCC has been working for over 10 years to return the original Hearing Room chairs to service. The gallery or audience chairs were returned in May of 2015, and the councillor's chairs were placed at the front of the room in December. Restored and reupholstered, the museum quality chairs are back and better than ever. One more piece in the conservation of the Governor's Suite completed.



After 10 years of work, the Governor's Hearing Room chairs are restored and returned to service.

Carving Corn

The decade long conservation project to restore and return the original Counselor and Gallery chairs to service in the Governor's Hearing Room involved the Office of the Capitol Commission's Carpentry and Furniture staff on every level. Staff removed upholstery, reglued and refinished the chair frames prior to the reupholstery process. As the project came to a close, Cabinet Maker Mike Marshall and Furniture Conservator Ron Dulas, joined forces to replicate the finials on the Governor's Hearing Room chair.

of corn, wheat, bison and arrows throughout the decoration. The Governor's chair, custom designed, included a husked ear of corn as a focal point on the back of the chair. Through the years the corn finials had been chipped and broken. Marshall carved new finials, and Dulas finished the finials to match the existing conditions exactly. Once their handiwork was added, the Counselor's chairs and the project were complete.

**Carpenters
create
custom
finials**

During the design and construction of the Capitol, Goodhue and his Associates used Nebraska icons



Cabinet Maker Mike Marshall and Furniture Conservator Ron Dulas recreated the corn finials for the Governor's Chair in the final phase of the Hearing Room Chair Restoration Project. The original finials had been damaged and broken. The first step, above, was the creation of a pattern from an original finial. Using solid walnut stock Marshall cut and carved the block down, (three left images), until it closely resembled the original, below center. The new finial was positioned, above right, on the Governor's Chair for comparison with the original. After further fine tuning, the finials were given to Dulas. Using originals as guides, right, Dulas stained and distressed the

finish to match. Below, anticipating a future need for restoration and repair, four finials were created, two will be kept in reserve in the Nebraska Capitol Collection.




BEHIND THE SCENES

Architects and Consultants

During their years of oversight on the creation of the Nebraska State Capitol, 1919 through 1934, the Nebraska Capitol Commission relied on agents in Omaha and New York to be their eyes, ears and legs. Starting with Omaha architect Thomas R. Kimball, FAIA, who the Commission relied upon to write the design competition, and University of Nebraska Philosophy Professor Hartley Burr Alexander, thematic advisor for the artwork, outside consultants have worked on the Capitol. To furnish the Governor's Suite, the Commission relied on the Orchard & Wilhelm Company in Omaha to act as agent with manufacturers of furniture, drapery and carpet. The Supervising Architect on site, William Younkin, presented Orchard Wilhelm the list of furnishings needed, they then followed up with specifications and contacted manufacturers.

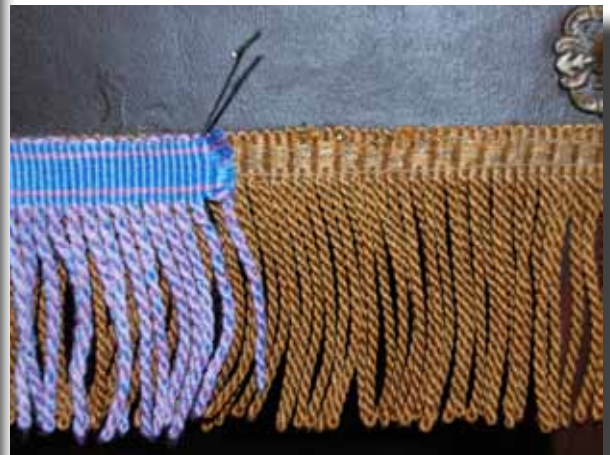
The recent Governor's Hearing Room Chair Restoration Project could not have been completed without the help of textile and furnishings consultant Elizabeth Lahikainen from Salem, Massachusetts. Capitol staff previously worked with her to stabilize the velvet wall-hangings in the Governor's Private Office. With her connections in the conservation world, knowledge of textiles, and love of the Capitol, she set to work finding a craftsman to replicated the original leather seats

and backs for the hearing room chairs. When restoring such significant pieces of furniture, finding an exact match to the original is essential. Through months of sending samples back and forth, and correspondence to update progress, Lahikainen finally found a craftsman in Belgium to replicate the polychrome and tooled leather for the chairs.

In addition, she found a manufacturer to replicate the fringe trim of the chairs. One would think fringe is fringe, but in restoration work, fringe is a specialized detail. First is the fringe cotton, silk, wool or something else. Fringe can have a right hand or left hand twist, and the number of twists per inch needs to be calculated. Once the proper fringe is selected, color matching begins. The consultants job is to seek out and follow up with manufacturers, finding just the right company to do the work, and making sure the work is done properly. The Office of the Capitol Commission Preservation Architects have been fortunate to work with consultants willing to do their best to see the building and its furnishings are preserved in as original condition as possible. The Governor's Hearing Room chairs are an excellent example of this collaboration. 



Consultant Elizabeth Lahikainen, an expert in textile conservation, was chosen to find a manufacturer and oversee the replication of the custom leather and fringe needed to restore the Governor's Hearing Room Chairs. Left, an original leather seat back is inset on a completed chair back awaiting fringe. Below, a fringe sample is placed for comparison over the original. Further work with the manufacturer was needed to match the original fringe.



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Chairs Returned To Capitol

While the carpentry and furniture shop staff worked to restore the Governor's Hearing Room chairs, the Preservation Architects and Capitol Archivist located and returned two office chairs to the Capitol inventory. Upon completion of the building, all offices were furnished with tables, desks, chairs and associated office equipment specifically chosen for the building. This furniture was made of solid wood and repairable, unlike much of the modern office furniture made of particle board and thin veneer. The Nebraska Capitol Commission and the citizens of Nebraska invested in high quality furniture with the intent that staff use it indefinitely. Unfortunately, in the 1950's and 1960's this furniture was considered old fashioned and hundreds of pieces surplused. Some of the furniture left the building when agencies moved to the State Office Building in the 1970's. Office of the Capitol Commission staff have sought out and returned agency-removed furniture to the building.

In addition, preservation staff have familiarized themselves with the manufactureres and style of the original furniture and keep a vigilant eye out in antique stores, garage sales and on-line auctions for pieces which made it into private hands. Last fall, two Capitol original chairs were located in this manner. One was found on-line and one was found at a local antique mall. The chair found online was originally purchased for office use, to be placed in front of a desk and used by guests. The other chair was armless, originally purchased for use around a conference table. The pieces were identified by the style, material and manufacturer; one

chair had retained its Capitol original inventory tag. Through negotiations with the owners, the pieces were purchased and brought back to the Capitol.

When the chairs were back in the Capitol Collection, the furniture staff discovered the armless chair finished a set of six chairs needed for an office conference area. They had located five suitable chairs in the collection and needed a sixth. The chairs are being cleaned and repaired; all six will be placed in service as soon as they are restored. The original intent of the Nebraska Capitol Commission will be honored. The Office of the Capitol Commission staff continue to follow the guidance provided over 80 years ago. 



Above, five original chairs from the collection and one original chair returned to the collection, third from left, await restoration in the furniture shop. The first step in the restoration process is completed at left, the chairs have been repaired, reglued and the finish restored. In the next step, the furniture staff will apply the leather backs. Then the chairs will go back into service.

CAPITOL EVENTS

Nebraska Wellhead Protection Network

February 8-12, 2016

The Groundwater Foundation sponsored educational display in 1st floor rotunda.

Lincoln Birthday Commemoration

February 12, 2016

The Nebraska Chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War will stand vigil at the Lincoln Monument.

Behavioral Health Across Nebraska

February 15-19, 2016

The Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health display in 1st floor rotunda.

Nebraska Home Care Display

February 18, 2016

The Nebraska Home Care Association educational display in 1st floor rotunda.

Nebraska Energy Assistance Awareness

February 22-26, 2016

The Nebraska Energy Assistance Network educational display in 1st floor rotunda.

Utility Contractors Display

February 25, 2016

The National Utility Contractors Association of Nebraska educational display in 1st floor rotunda.

Nebraska 150 Update

February 26, 2016 at 8:30 a.m.

The Friends of the Nebraska SesquiCentennial will hold a news conference to update citizens on plans for the 2017 celebration.

Social Work Week Display

February 29-March 4, 2016

The Nebraska Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers will sponsor a 1st floor Rotunda display.

Music Education Week

February 29-March 3, 2016

The Nebraska Music Educators series of noon concerts in the 2nd floor Rotunda featuring bands and choirs from across the state.

Youth Art Month Display

February 29-March 12, 2016

The Nebraska Art Teachers Association will showcase artwork by students from across Nebraska in this annual 1st floor Rotunda display.

Statehood Day

March 1, 2016

Nebraska celebrates the 149th anniversary of its admittance as the 37th state in the United States.

Unclaimed Property Display

March 7-11, 2016

The Nebraska State Treasurer will display information about unclaimed property.

Youth Art Month State Celebration

March 21, 2013 at 2:00 p.m.

The Nebraska Art Teachers Association will honor winners of the youth art contest in the 2nd Floor Rotunda of the Capitol.

Mari Sandoz Recognition Display

March 14-18, 2016

The Mari Sandoz Heritage Society commemorates the 50th anniversary of this Nebraska author's passing.

Capitol Forum

March 21, 2015

Students from across Nebraska will display posters addressing international issues as part of a day long program sponsored by the Secretary of State's office.

World Autism Awareness Day

April 2, 2016 at dark

The Capitol will be illuminated in blue in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day.

Soundsational Singers Concert

April 5, 2016 at noon

The O'Neill Elementary students will sing in 2nd floor Rotunda.

Money Smart Week

April 25-29, 2016

The Nebraska Financial Education Coalition display in 1st floor rotunda.

Capitol Goes Green for Arbor Day

April 29, 2016 at dark

The Capitol will be illuminated in recognition of Arbor Day founded by Nebraskan J. Sterling Morton.

Nebraska Holocaust Commemoration

May 1, 2016

The Institute for Holocaust Education sponsors this annual remembrance in the in the 2nd Floor Rotunda of the Capitol at 3:00 p.m.

AFA Quilt to Remember

May 2-6, 2016

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America display of quilt panels in 1st floor rotunda.

National Peace Officer Week

May 6-13, 2016

The Nebraska State Patrol honors Nebraska's fallen officers in a 1st floor rotunda display.

Cornhusker Girls State


June 9, 2016

The American Legion Auxiliary hosts the annual Girls State Inauguration Ceremony in the Capitol 2nd floor rotunda at 2:00 p.m.

Cornhusker Boys State

June 9, 2016

The Boys State attendees meet in the 2nd floor rotunda at 1:30 p.m. and then visit Capitol offices to learn about government.

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.



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*Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924*

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Missing Hardware Sought



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> for more information.

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments about the content. All images property of the Office of the Capitol Commission.

Throughout the Capitol's 90 year life custom details have gone missing. Unfortunately, some visitors want to take more than memories with them. The Office of the Capitol Commission is seeking the return of custom finials which once capped stair rails in the building. While they may look like paperweights, they are a special component of the Capitol and should be returned to their original location in the stairways. The Office of the Capitol Commission will accept the return of these cast bronze ram's heads and octagonal caps, no questions asked. Please contact OCC at (402)471-6655 for more information. 