

THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME SEVEN | NUMBER ONE | FEB 2015

Welcome and Warmth: Fireplaces in Nebraska's Capitol



1930's era postcard showing one of five Capitol fireplaces.

One of the goals of the Nebraska Capitol Commission in the 1919-1920 competition for an architect to design a third capitol in Lincoln was to achieve an inspiring monument made of worthy materials beautifully and fittingly set and embellished. Nebraska's new home for government was to be a collaboration between the architect and artists who would decorate the chambers for the executive, legislative and judicial branches.

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, the New York architect who won the competition gave Nebraska citizens, the pioneers who settled the state and their children, a monument to show the world the spirit of Nebraska and inspire future generations. While the exterior design of the Capitol was new and unique, representing a strong proud state embracing its future, the interior design reflected back on the traditional forms of European design familiar to the citizens. One familiar component of all buildings up to that point was the fireplace or stove; central heating was relatively new.

Throughout time the hearth or fireplace has been associated with home, warmth and security. With the goal of creating welcoming spaces for Nebraska's citizens and elected leaders, Bertram G. Goodhue incorporated five fireplaces in the design of the building. The Governor's Suite has three, one in the Reception Room, one in the Hearing Room and one in the Private Office. The two Legislative Lounges each contain a fireplace as a focal point of the room's design. The five fireplaces in the Capitol are functional, chimneys rise above the copper roof, but there is no indication they have ever been used. The Capitol, upon completion, was heated with steam and any heat from a fireplace was unnecessary. The scale and design of the fireplaces indicate their function is symbolic. They provide a familiar form and welcoming ambiance for citizens.

Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

Pete Ricketts
Governor
Chairman

Galen Hadley
Speaker of the Legislature
Vice-Chairman

Michael Heavican
Chief Justice Supreme Court

Kim Wilson
Dean
College of Architecture, UNL

Michael Smith
Executive Director & CEO
Nebraska State Historical Society

Bryce Neidig
Congressional District 1

Stan Meradith
Congressional District 2

Jim Cudaback
Congressional District 3

Robert C. Ripley
Administrator
Office of the Capitol Commission
Secretary



The People of the
OCC
Office of the Capitol
Commission

EXPERIENCE AND SERVICE

Six Office of the Capitol Commission staff were recognized in 2014 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. We are pleased to recognize the dedication of these Nebraska state employees. 

ADMINISTRATION

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

ARCHIVE

Karen Wagner, *Archivist*

CARPENTRY

Brett Daugherty, *Shop Supervisor*
Ron Dulas, *Furniture Conservator*
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

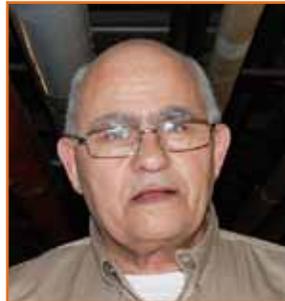
Mike Hoppmann, *Arborist/Groundskeeper*
Don Pracheil, *Mechanic*

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*



RICK NABER 15 YEARS
CUSTODIAL SUPERVISOR



MICHAEL JORDAN 20 YEARS
MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR



TAHIR KARIMI 20 YEARS
ELECTRICIAN



ROGER FRINK 25 YEARS
MACHINIST



TAMMY HONNOR 25 YEARS
FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION COORDINATOR



ROXANNE SMITH 30 YEARS
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Capitol Commission 2015 Schedule

The Nebraska Capitol Commission has set its schedule for 2015. The Commission meets quarterly in the Capitol to oversee and review maintenance and preservation of the capitol, discuss and approve the upcoming budget and projects for the Office of the Capitol Commission and set administrative rules for the use of the capitol. The meetings will be held in Hearing Room #1507 on ground floor of the Capitol. The last

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

- February 10, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.
- June 2, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.
- August 11, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.
- Joint Meeting -- November 17, 2015 at 10:00 a.m.
- November 17, 2015 at 11:00 a.m.

The meetings are open to the public. 

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Governor's Office Pedestal Table

In their bid proposal for the draperies and furnishings in the Governor's Suite of the Nebraska Capitol, Omaha's Orchard and Wilhelm Company included in their list of furniture "One Small Table 24" square, to be used as a side table next to one of the easy chairs." They indicated their furniture designs were from original museum drawings and any changes in the designs came from the suggestions of the Goodhue Associates and the Suite's mural painter, Augustus Vincent Tack. The architects, early in the Capitol's design and construction, had indicated stock furniture would not be appropriate for the Suite and stated "The best that the best designers can do is none too good in our opinion." The small side table became a custom crafted octagonal pedestal table with an inlaid wood base and top.

After many years of use, the pedestal had become unstable and the table was removed from service

to prevent further damage. It is the job of the Office of the Capitol Commission's Furniture Shop to care for these custom pieces as well as all original office furniture in the building. Dawn Hickmon, new Capitol Furniture Conservator, restored the pedestal table as part of her training on proper conservation techniques. There had been an attempt early on to stabilize the pedestal, but it did not comply with current shop standards of restoration. The OCC Furniture Shop takes a "least invasive" approach to restoration and replicates original construction techniques for repairs. Her work involved repairing and reattaching the pedestal, cleaning the table, adding color and finish to scratched or worn areas, and then applying a final coat of wax. A glass top was added for protection. The table has been returned to service in the Governor's Private Office. 



Each step of the Office of the Capitol Commission's restoration process requires documentation. Above, right and left, the table is disassembled and condition is recorded. Then staff investigates original construction with the goal of replicating the process for the repairs needed. Once the table has been repaired and the finishes restored in the least invasive manner the table is ready to be returned to service, shown at right.



Filling the Fireplaces

*Arts and
Crafts
designs
sought*

Prior to his death in 1924, Nebraska Capitol architect Bertram G. Goodhue worked to refine the architectural and decorative features of the building. Goodhue's Italian Renaissance themed Governor's Suite is the most elegant area of the Capitol. The grandeur of the Renaissance is recreated in the finishes and furnishings of the Suite. The three fireplaces in the suite are very different, but all are rich in traditional design detail, including the unique andirons. Upon Goodhue's death, the Goodhue Associates completed the second, third and fourth phases of the Capitol. They paid less attention to architectural finishes than Goodhue.

The fireplaces located in the East and West Legislative Lounges were constructed in these later phases and andirons never installed. Through the years the empty hearths were misused; one lounge was subdivided for office space and folding chairs stored in the firebox. After the 1992 restoration of the East Lounge, the Office of the Capitol Commission placed birch logs in all five fireplaces. Very plain log holders were added in the lounges and OCC staff began to look for andirons which would be period compatible with the original finishes in each lounge. The scale and size of the fireplaces in the lounges and a desire to maintain construction era style contributed to the difficulty of the search. Capitol preservation architects routinely visited antique shops, flea markets and the internet and quickly realized the size of the East Lounge firebox was beyond the typical scale of most andirons.

After a five year search, Matt Hansen, OCC Preservation Architect, found an antique dealer offering a set of 1920's Arts and Crafts andirons



Andirons in the Governor's Private Office were hand forged and richly finished.

from the Ballantine Brewery Estate cabin in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. The andirons from the summer cabin were the correct style and scale for the East Lounge. Continuing his search, Hansen found andirons for the West Lounge as well. Both sets needed custom modification to fit the shallow fireboxes. The Capitol's preservation architects purchased the andirons and OCC hardware conservator Roger Frink modified the andirons to fit. OCC recently installed the properly scaled and styled andirons in the East Lounge fireplace. 



OCC staff place appropriately scaled andirons in the East Lounge firebox.

BEHIND THE SCENES

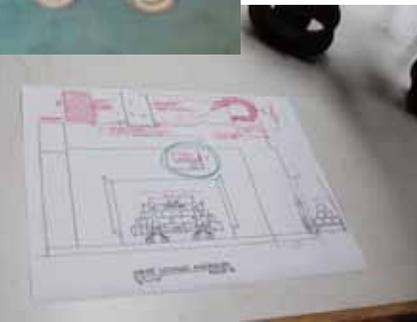
Conservator Modifies Andirons

Roger Frink, the Office of the Capitol Commission's hardware conservator, is a skilled artisan. His interest in metal work began as a hobby in the 1970's and he worked as a blacksmith providing living history demonstrations at the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission's Ft. Kearney and Ft. Hartsuff State Historical Parks. There he demonstrated the hand crafting of nails and sewing awls from raw metal. An avid frontiersman he participates in black powder events creating campware, cooking utensils and fire tools such as pokers and tongs. Through the years Frink has become skilled at forging, smithing, and casting metal. His hand-crafted custom fireplace sets and range hoods have been sent to clients around the world. When Capitol preservation architects found the andirons needed to complete the furnishing of the Legislative Lounges they knew he had the skill to modify them for a proper fit.

Once the andirons arrived at the Capitol, the preservation architects took them to the lounges for fitting. Drawings were created to show the changes needed and Roger began his custom modification. The andirons for the East Lounge needed only minor modification to the back log holder to make them fit. The andirons found for the West Lounge are the proper style and scale, but they need repair. Frink was able to replace a missing foot in the Capitol shop. But replacing the missing cross bar will require creating a new piece. This work will wait until warm weather when Frink can get out into his blacksmith shop and his forge. Once the andirons are complete, Frink will work on smoothing out the finish before they are placed in service in the West Lounge fireplace. 



West Lounge andiron, above, with cardboard mockup of missing cross bar. Right, staff drawing of bar with details OCC machinist Roger Frink will hand forge.



Left, missing log holder foot fabricated by Frink in place and awaiting final patination once the cross bar is complete.

Frink at work in his shop, right, smoothing and tapering stock on the grinder. Below, Frink uses the lathe and a tap to create a hole into which the existing finial will fit. Bottom right, the custom made foot is secured to the andiron.



WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Missing Candlesticks Sought

Creating an Italian Renaissance style office suite for Nebraska's Governor required very elegant furnishings in addition to the custom finishes in the Suite. The Capitol Archive has records of the specifications provided to potential contractors and the estimate and explanation of bid submitted by the winning firm. The Capitol Commission and the Goodhue Associates relied on subcontractor Orchard & Wilhelm Co. of Omaha to provide design expertise, and to oversee the production and installation of finishes and furnishings in the Governor's Suite.

Of particular interest to the Office of the Capitol Commission is a reference in the specifications and bid documents to a pair of candle sticks. **“One pair of Solid Bronze, Cast, Handchased Candle sticks 36” high, to sit on top of console.”** Photographs and post cards from the early years of the Capitol show the pair of candlesticks on the console table in the Reception Room. The furniture arrangement in the Reception Room has changed through the years, and possibly during one of those rearrangements in the 1960's the candlesticks were misplaced or deemed unnecessary and surplused. Today the console table sits in its original location and it is a long standing goal of the Capitol preservation staff to return the missing candlesticks to their proper location.

Capitol Commission staff are hopeful that someday someone will realize what they have and return them to the Capitol. There have been several missing items returned to the Capitol in the past. Whether they were legitimately purchased at a surplus auction or left the building in another manner, OCC asks no questions and is grateful for their return. 



In the above Library of Congress period photograph the candlesticks can be seen on the console table. Left, in the magnified section of another Library of Congress photograph one the candlesticks is seen in more detail. To report a sighting of the candlesticks, or information about their location and condition please contact the Office of the Capitol Commission at the address or phone number in this newsletter. No questions will be asked and you may qualify for a cash reward.



Images this page: Library of Congress Prints and Photograph Division Gottscho-Schleisner Collection

CAPITOL EVENTS

Lincoln Birthday Commemoration
February 12, 2015

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

Hemp Industry Awareness
February 13-22, 2015

The Nebraska Hemp Industries Association educational display in 1st floor rotunda.

Rare Disease Day Program
February 23, 2015 12:00 p.m.

The Short Bowel Syndrome Foundation will hold a 2nd floor rotunda program to raise awareness of rare disease as a health issue.

Unclaimed Property Display
February 23 - March 8, 2015

The Nebraska State Treasurer will display information about unclaimed property available through the Treasurer's Office.

Nebraska 150 Update
February 27, 2015 at 8:30 a.m.

The Friends of the Nebraska SesquiCentennial will hold a news conference program to update citizens on plans for the 2017 celebration of 150 years of statehood.

Statehood Day
March 1, 2015

Nebraska celebrates the 148th anniversary of its admittance as the 37th state in the United States.

Problem Gambling Awareness Display
March 2-6, 2013

This first floor rotunda display featuring Governor's and Mayor's Proclamation of March as Problem Gambling Awareness Month.

Music Education Week
March 2-6, 2015

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

Colon Cancer Awareness Month
March 6, 2015 at dark

The Capitol will be illuminated in blue in recognition of March as Colon Cancer Awareness Month.

Youth Art Month Display
March 7-21, 2015

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

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.

AfterSchool/Summer STEM Display
March 23-27, 2015

The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation Beyond School Bells program will have a 1st floor Rotunda display to raise awareness about the importance of after school and summer learning programs.

Capitol Forum
March 23, 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.

Nebraska Holocaust Commemoration
April 12, 2015

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

Social Work Week Display
April 13-17, 2015

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

Week of the Young Child Display
April 15-17, 2015

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

Mayor's Run 2015
May 2, 2015 at 8:00 a.m.

The Mayor's Run will feature 3,000 students running around the Capitol for fun and prizes.

National Peace Officer Week
May 8-15, 2015

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

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.

The Governor will sign Proclamations at 10:00 a.m. in the Warner Chamber on January 14, February 11, March 18, April 8, May 13, June 10, July 8, August 12, September 9, October 14, November 18 and December 9. For proclamation information please contact Sarah 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.



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Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924

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Test Your Knowledge

The fireplace in the Governor's Reception Room is decorated with small circular medallions representing the original 13 colonies which became the United States of America. Here are six of the 13 medallions and their states. Can you properly identify the symbol with the state?



RHODE ISLAND



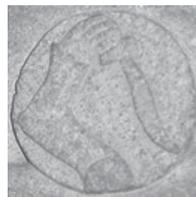
CONNECTICUT



NEW HAMPSHIRE



MASSACHUSETTS



VIRGINIA



PENNSYLVANIA

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.

Special thanks to Jamison Wyatt for researching the medallions.

Answers: Rhode Island-Anchor, Connecticut-Grape Leaf, New Hampshire-Ship on Stocks, Massachusetts-Arm with Sword, Virginia-Sword and Scales, Pennsylvania-Key-stone