

Welcome to Michigan's State Capitol




Michigan STATE CAPITOL
Preserving the Past... Inspiring the Future...

Dear Friend:

Welcome to the Michigan State Capitol. We are delighted you have taken the time to visit us and tour this magnificent and fascinating historic site.

Today Michigan's State Capitol is nationally recognized for its extraordinary architecture and art. It stands as Michigan's most important public building and a proud symbol of our state. Sadly, this was not always the case. For decades, the building's history and beauty were threatened by weathering, neglect, crowding, hard use, and technological change.

In 1987, the Michigan Legislature authorized a massive restoration to return the aging building to its original glory and preserve it for future centuries of use. Completed in 1992, the restoration won national acclaim with top awards from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Park Service also named the State Capitol a National Historic Landmark, an award reserved only for America's most significant historic places.

On January 1, 1879, our grand new State Capitol was dedicated to the people of Michigan. Speaking at its dedication, Governor Croswell noted that the structure stood as "evidence of the lasting taste, spirit and enterprise" of the citizens of the state. Over 140 years later, on November 29, 2022, another celebration took place to commemorate the opening of the Capitol's visitor center, Heritage Hall. This 40,000 square foot space provides educational opportunities for the Capitol's many guests, and state-of-the-art accommodations for legislative business and special events.

Although widely honored for its authentic restoration and historical significance, the State Capitol is more than a museum. It remains a dynamic, living building, fully prepared to honor Michigan's past, while serving its people as a modern seat of state government.

We hope you enjoy your visit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. C. Kandler', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

William C. Kandler, Chair,
Michigan State Capitol Commission



(Image courtesy of David Marvin)

Michigan State Capitol

Opened January 1, 1879
Rededicated November 19, 1992

Written by the
Michigan State Capitol Commission

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Capitol Education &
History Department

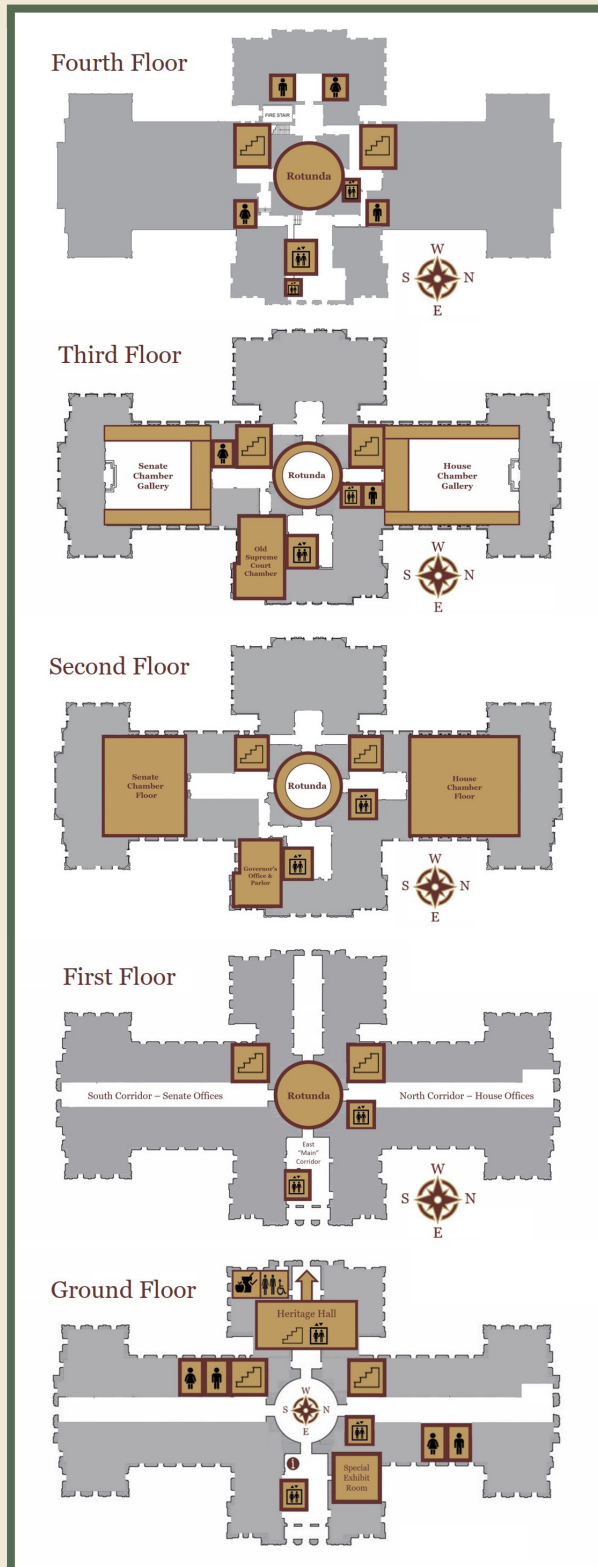
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Scan this code for more Capitol information!

We hope you enjoy your visit to Michigan's magnificent State Capitol. Named a National Historic Landmark in 1992, there are several features that make our Capitol special!



A Monument to the Arts:

In the Michigan Capitol, you'll see breathtaking spaces, rich walnut woodwork, and elegant marble columns - but look carefully or you may be fooled! In the 1880s, artists concealed inexpensive materials with brilliant colors, elaborate patterns, and faux finishes. **With over nine acres of carefully restored painted surfaces, our Capitol is one of the best examples of Victorian decorative art in the country!**

A Monument to Its Architect:

Elijah E. Myers was virtually unknown until he won a national competition in 1872 to design Michigan's third Capitol. Upon its completion, the building met with great acclaim, and soon Myers won commissions across the country. **Myers designed more state capitol buildings than any other architect; the Michigan, Texas, and Colorado Capitols stand as lasting testaments to his skill.**

A Monument to American History:

Myers recognized that the dome of the U.S. Capitol, built 1856-1866, had come to represent the Union that Michigan had sacrificed so much to save in the Civil War. **The Michigan Capitol became a model for many statehouses built after the war and helped establish the domed capitol as a symbol of American democracy.**

A Monument to Preservation:

After decades of neglect and overcrowding, the Capitol was restored between 1987 and 1992. Starting in 2015, the Michigan State Capitol Commission has undertaken several projects to continue the preservation of the building. **Our goal is to respect the Capitol's iconic 19th century design, while meeting the needs of a 21st century state and its people.**

Before you start your tour ...

Preserving Michigan's Treasure

With your help we can preserve this beautiful building as the working seat of Michigan state government!

Do Look — But Please Don't Touch!

Almost every surface you see, including the walls, the columns, and the woodwork, are hand-painted.

- Please do not lean items against the walls, columns, or woodwork.
- Please do not touch painted surfaces with your hands. Our skin contains oils which, over time, damage the paint.

Staying Safe

- Be careful on the cast iron stairs. Do not allow children to jump or run on the steps or in the hallways.
- Be careful at the railings around the rotunda. Make sure children do not climb, lean over — or through — the railings.
- Do not place anything on the rotunda railings. Cameras and cell phones can slide off and injure those standing below. Place your camera strap around your wrist or neck before taking a photo over the railings.

For Your Convenience...

- Bathrooms are located in Heritage Hall, and in the Capitol on the ground floor, third floor, and fourth floor.
- Elevators are located at the south end of Heritage Hall and in the Capitol in the east and north wings.
- A number of devices are available to make your visit more accessible including: wheelchairs, sensory friendly kits, color blind corrective lenses, hearing assistance devices, and self-guided tour books in braille.
- The Capitol Education Service offers guided tours and serves as a reference for questions about the Capitol and state government.
- For questions or assistance please stop at our information desks located in Heritage Hall and on the ground floor of the Capitol.

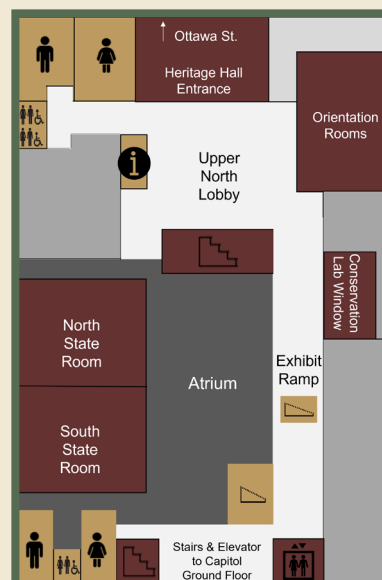


Heritage Hall ...

Begin your tour in Heritage Hall, a state-of-the-art visitors center completed in 2022. This space was intended for you, our guests! Designed to be a modern facility that provides a seamless transition to our historic Capitol, the 40,000 square foot space is located underground, and features four large skylights that let in natural light and visually link the two spaces.

Two orientation rooms, located across from the information desk, provide an introduction to civics and government. As you enter these rooms, look up to see antique **skylight panels** that hung in the roof over the House and Senate Chambers. These panels were removed during the Capitol's restoration (1987-1992).

The exterior of Heritage Hall is faced with sandstone from the same formation as the stone used to build the Capitol in the 1870s.



Heritage Hall ...



Look up through the Heritage Hall skylights to see some stunning views of our Capitol!



Enclosed by an acoustical glass wall, the north and south State Rooms are separated by a Skyfold partition and can be combined into one large space.

The central atrium and State Rooms on the west side of Heritage Hall host events such as legislative committees, luncheons, award ceremonies, press conferences, and showcases. Moving these events into Heritage Hall takes stress off the Capitol and helps preserve the delicate artwork and finishes in the historic building.

Along the left side of the space is an **exhibit ramp** detailing over 150 years of history! The exhibits include large graphic panels, photo collages, and over 200 artifacts that tell the story of our first two Capitols, the construction of our current Capitol, and the experiences of people who have served in and visited the building.



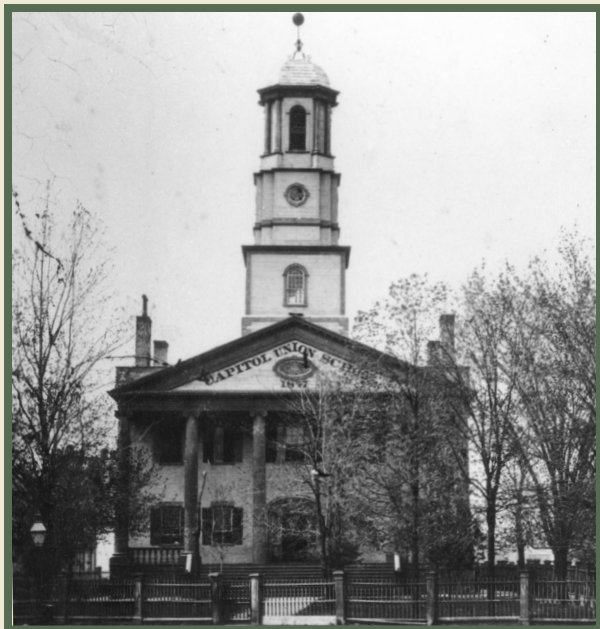
A conservation specialist works on the flag of the 21st Michigan Infantry Regiment.

Make sure you look in the **conservation laboratory** through the viewing window. In this space conservation specialists and artists care for Civil War battle flags, Capitol portraits, and other delicate artifacts.

A large bronze **seal of the State of Michigan** hangs on the far wall of Heritage Hall. Formerly located in the east sidewalk, it was removed in 2016 and carefully restored before being installed here. The center of the seal contains the state coat of arms. On the left is an elk and on the right a moose. Above are symbols of the country, the eagle and our nation's motto, *E pluribus unum*, "Out of many, one." A shield bears the Latin word *Tuebor* which means "I will defend." Underneath, a pioneer stands on a lakeshore with a rising sun behind him. A banner at the bottom bears Michigan's motto, *Si quaeris peninsulam amoenam circumspice*, "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you." As you continue through our Capitol, you will see elements of the coat of arms on door hinges, doorknobs, and light fixtures.



The Roman numerals on Michigan's State Seal read A.D. MDCCCXXXV, or 1835 – the year Michigan declared itself a state.



Constructed 1823-1828, our first Capitol became Detroit's first public high school after the legislature moved out. The building was remodeled before being destroyed by fire in 1893. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)

The First Capitol

In 1787, the United States government set aside the Great Lakes region as the Northwest Territory. The Michigan Territory was established within it in 1805 with Detroit serving as the territorial capital.

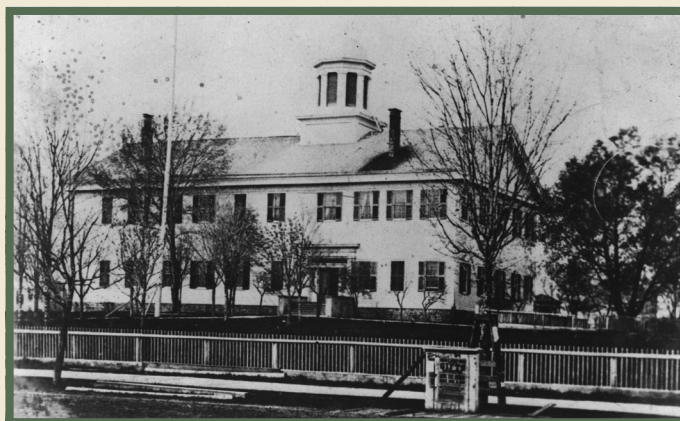
After a border dispute with Ohio delayed Michigan's entrance to the Union, Michigan officially became a state in 1837. Detroit remained our capital city and the territorial courthouse transitioned into our state's first Capitol building. Michigan's constitution included a provision that Detroit would remain the capital only until 1847, "when it shall be permanently located by the legislature." This led to intense debate as each legislator vied for the honor of locating the capital in their district.

The Second Capitol

On March 16, 1847, after months of negotiation, Governor Greenly signed a law naming Lansing Township in Ingham County the new state capital. This choice puzzled many Michiganders who called the location a "howling wilderness." One source states that only eight registered voters lived there at the time! But Lansing Township offered a central location and an undeveloped area for a future grand Capitol building.

Michigan's constitution required the legislature to convene at the new seat of government by January 1848. So, in late 1847, a wooden structure was hastily built to serve as a temporary Capitol. Soon a small settlement grew up around it, and the city of Lansing was finally incorporated in 1859.

Inadequate from the start, our second Capitol quickly became overcrowded and a 16-foot addition was added in 1865. At last, in 1871 Governor Henry Baldwin called for a larger, fireproof, and more dignified seat of state government.



After the state moved out of the Second Capitol it was used as a factory and meeting hall. It burned down on December 16, 1882. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)

The Third Capitol

The State Building Commission held a nationwide contest to find an architect to design our new State Capitol. In January 1872, they selected a plan titled “Tuebor” drawn by **Elijah E. Myers**. His design for a Renaissance Revival or Neoclassical building incorporated motifs from Greek and Roman architecture. Myers included a distinctive cast iron dome, inspired by the dome on the United States Capitol.

While our Capitol contains millions of locally-made bricks, no preference was given to Michigan products - materials were selected for the best price from sources across the country and abroad. The exterior stone was quarried in Ohio, and the iron was cast in Pennsylvania. Marble and limestone came from Vermont, glass from England, and tin from Wales. The final cost of construction was \$1,427,738.78.

E. E. Myers was living in Illinois when he was hired to build Michigan’s Capitol. During construction, he settled in Detroit and later traveled the country building churches, schools, hospitals, city halls, and courthouses.



Made of wrought and cast iron from the S. J. Creswell Ironworks in Philadelphia, the dome took almost a year to build. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)

Michigan’s third Capitol building was dedicated on January 1, 1879, when the state was home to approximately one million people. Over the next several decades, Michigan’s population grew steadily. At the same time, state government gradually expanded, and the Capitol became overcrowded. Only twelve years after the building opened, some state offices were relocated to another downtown building. By the 1910’s the problem was so severe, the legislature appropriated money for a seven-story office building, which was completed in 1921.

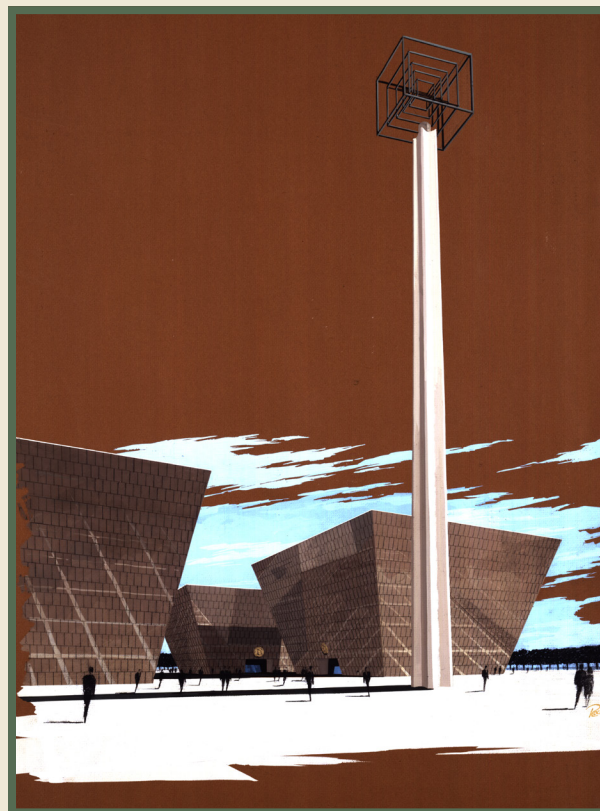
First, some history ...



Architect Elijah Myers won national attention for the scandal-free construction and elegant design of Michigan's new Capitol. Local citizens affectionately referred to the building as "The Lion of Lansing."

While all this was happening, technology was also evolving. The building was wired for electric lights from the mid-1880s through 1905. In the 1930's the first electric voting system was installed in the House Chamber. The first sound system followed in the 1940's. The introduction of these technologies brought opportunities to remodel and update the Capitol, giving it a more "modern" look.

By the 1960's the initially part-time legislature was meeting year-round and Michigan's 20th century government was rapidly outgrowing the Capitol. The state explored proposals for a fourth Capitol building, but these were eventually tabled due cost and aesthetic concerns. Instead, large areas of the building were overflowed to provide additional office space.



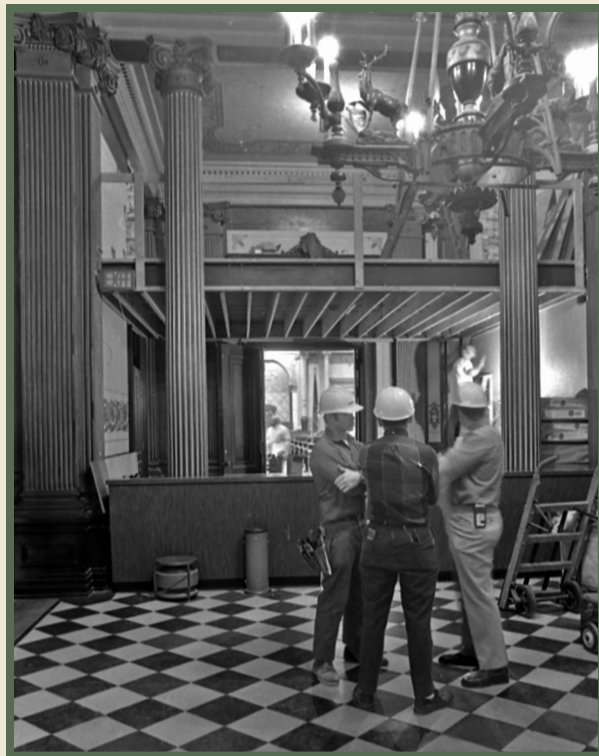
A Michigan architectural firm designed several concepts for a fourth Capitol, most of which contained three buildings – one for each branch of government.

In 1982, Governor William Milliken formed the Friends of the Capitol, a non-profit advocacy group to study the Capitol's condition and make recommendations for its improvement. As a result, a project was launched to restore our Capitol to its original Victorian grandeur. This project brought together architects, artists, and craftspeople who removed overfloors and drop ceilings; rerouted sprinklers, ductwork, and wiring; recreated the decorative artwork; and installed period appropriate lighting, furnishings, and carpeting. Following the project's completion in 1992, the Michigan State Capitol was named a **National Historic Landmark** – the highest honor given to historic structures in the United States.

The restoration was a resounding success, but the work of preservation never ends! In 2015, the Michigan State Capitol Commission launched a new series of projects to renew the Capitol's stonework, dome, and outdated mechanical systems. Stonemasons repaired damage on the exterior and replaced deteriorating sandstone. The dome was repainted, and metalworkers replaced hundreds of missing sheet metal decorations. From 2017-2020, outdated heating, cooling, electrical, plumbing, and fire suppression equipment was upgraded. In addition, a geothermal system comprised of 272 five-hundred-foot wells was installed below the surface of Capitol Square. The 2019-2022 construction of Heritage Hall marked the peak of this renewal effort.

Today, regular maintenance is instrumental to keeping the building functional, beautiful, and welcoming. The Capitol's caretakers continue preservation efforts by monitoring the building's conditions and regularly addressing potential problems.

The metal dome requires resealing and repainting about every 20-30 years to prevent rust and water damage. This project was last undertaken in 2015.



Overfloors or half floors were built in many rooms in the Capitol, horizontally splitting the 22-foot spaces. Even the lobby of the House Chamber was overfloored to create more rooms!

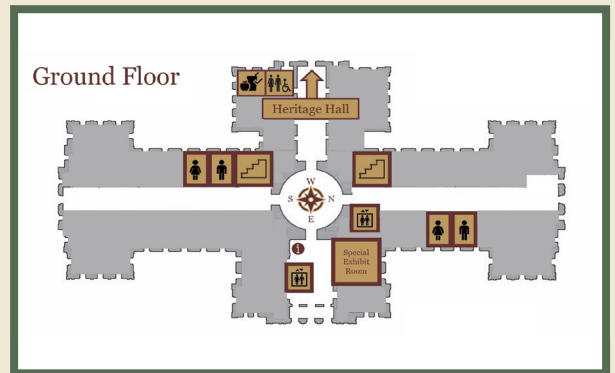


First, some history ...



(Image courtesy of Chris Powers)

Take the stairs or elevator near the seal to reach the ground floor of the Capitol. Then, walk to the central rotunda (marked with a large compass).



The Ground Floor

While Elijah Myers planned the ground floor to serve as storage space, state departments quickly took over these rooms for additional offices. By 1941, the Auditor General's Office alone occupied over ten rooms on the ground floor!

Never intended to be a public space, the ground floor is less elaborately decorated than the upper floors of the Capitol. In the center of the building, you are directly under the dome. The glass tiles above form the floor of the Rotunda. If you look carefully, you may see people walk across the glass! The floor's cast iron beams extend into the rounded brick walls, which support the weight of the dome above.



This c. 1900 photo of a ground floor office used by the Auditor General's staff shows a diverse and expanding workforce. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)

One former office, located across from the ground floor information desk, now holds **special exhibits**. In this room you can see a c. 1900 vault door used by the State Treasury, a portion of the original House rostrum, and a rebuilt bookcase from the old State Library.

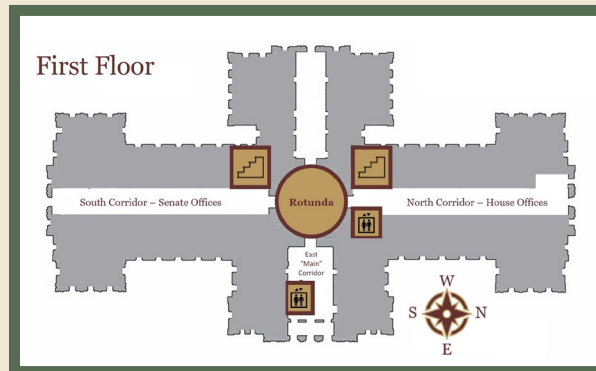
The remainder of the ground floor now includes offices for the Secretary of the Senate, Clerk of the House, Michigan State Police, and several legislators.

To learn more about our exhibits visit MSCExhibits.org



An armory storing Civil War guns, artillery, and ammunition was located on the ground floor in the south hallway. (Image courtesy of Craig Whitford)

Take the Grand Stairs (located in the north or south hallways) or the elevator (located in the east and north hallways) to the first floor.



The First Floor

The first floor of our Capitol was originally home to **executive offices** including the Auditor General, Adjutant General, Secretary of State, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and State Treasurer. As the building became overcrowded, more powerful offices retained their Capitol rooms, while smaller agencies were relocated. The last of these departmental offices left in the early 1970s for newer buildings in the Capitol Complex. Legislators who hold leadership positions now occupy these office suites.

This is where you begin to see the skill of the artists who decorated the Capitol. Almost every surface is painted, and each room bears different color schemes and designs. Columns and wainscoting made of white pine, plaster, and cast iron are faux finished to look like marble. One of the only places you'll see real marble is in the white floor tiles. The black floor tiles are made of limestone containing the **fossils** of marine animals. Both the marble and the limestone were quarried in Vermont.



When the Capitol opened in 1879, the public was told the plaster needed "time to cure" but the state really needed time to raise money for decorating! From 1885-1890, artisans from the William Wright Company of Detroit painted the building. (Image courtesy of the Rambo Family Collection)



Superintendent of Public Instruction Henry Pattengill and his staff posed for this photograph in their first-floor west wing office in 1893. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)



(Image courtesy of Dave Thompson)

Another feature of the corridors are the large cast metal chandeliers featuring motifs from the state coat-of-arms. Twenty of these “**Michigan**” chandeliers were customized for the building and installed in 1878. Originally designed to burn gas, they were converted to electricity around 1890.



(Images courtesy of Dave Thompson)

The Rotunda

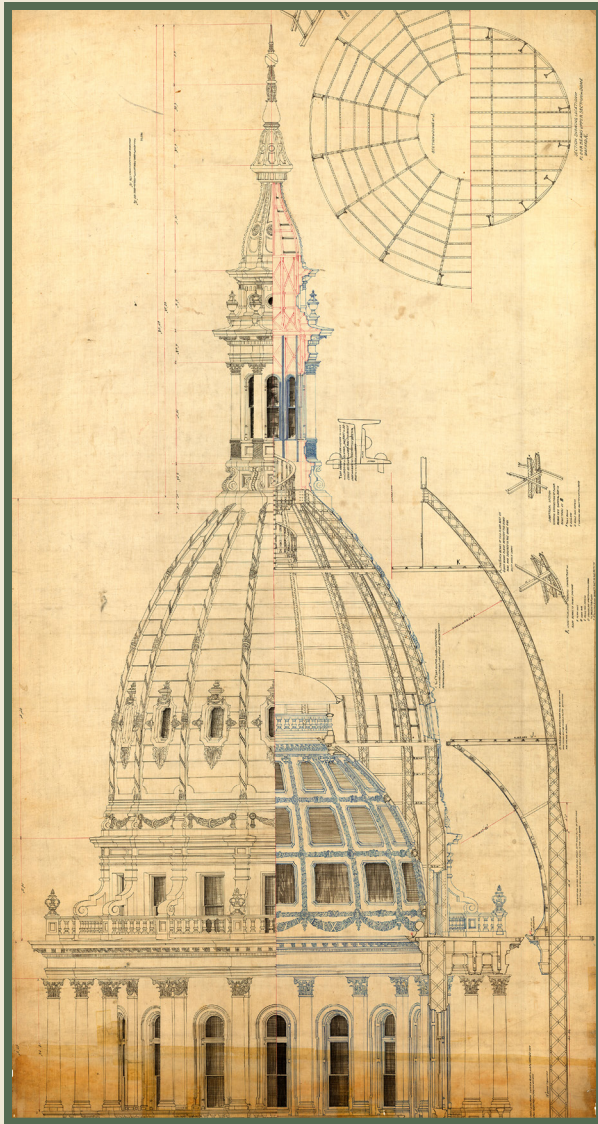
The Rotunda was designed to awe and inspire. The floor of the Rotunda consists of 976 pieces of glass, each about an inch thick. Some of these tiles are still original, installed during construction in the 1870s!

Rising 160 feet above the glass floor is the inner dome of the capitol. The **oculus**, or “eye”, of the dome is decorated to look like a starry sky and features approximately 110 gold leaf stars. The stars represent Michigan’s bright future and encourages all visitors to “reach for the stars” and achieve their full potential.

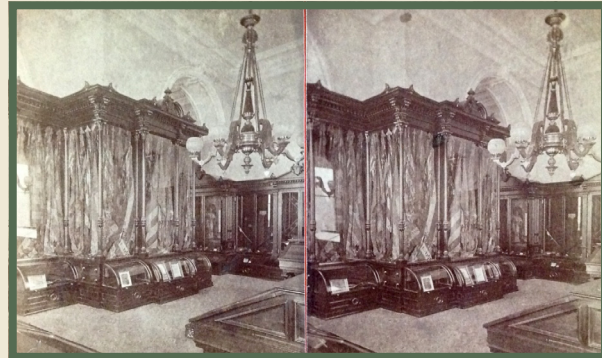
Just below the oculus are eight female figures painted on canvas and mounted to the inner dome. Sometimes called muses or allegories, they represent art, agriculture, law, science, justice, industry, commerce, and education. They are the work of an Italian artist, Tommaso Juglaris.

Tommaso Juglaris painted the muses in 1886 while working as an art instructor in Boston. This muse represents art.





The Michigan State Capitol is a double domed building. The inner dome is over 160 feet, with an outer dome rising above. The exterior height of the building is 267 feet. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)



Many early Capitol photos were stereoviews. When viewed through a device called a stereopticon, this photo creates a three-dimensional image of the military museum! (Image courtesy the Rambo Family Collection)



The Capitol Battle Flag Collection includes the flag the Twenty-Fourth Michigan Infantry, carried at the Battle of Gettysburg. The regiment was part of the famous Iron Brigade and suffered 80% casualties during the battle.

For more information about the Michigan Capitol Battle Flag Collection, please find us online at MSCBattleFlags.org.

the Rotunda . . .

The cases encircling the rotunda hold replicas of Michigan's Civil War **battle flags**. More than 90,000 Michigan volunteers joined the struggle to save the Union and abolish slavery. When the building opened, the original flags were displayed in a military museum in the Adjutant General's suite. In 1909, the flags were moved to the rotunda where years of exposure to light, temperature and humidity changes, and overcrowding caused them to deteriorate significantly. In 1990, the original flags were moved to archival storage at the Michigan Historical Museum and replicas were installed in their place. Conservation of the collection takes place in the Heritage Hall Conservation Laboratory.

Governor's Office . . .



Take the Grand Stairs or the elevators to the second floor. The Governor's suite is in the east wing. The Governor's parlor can be viewed on a guided tour.



The Governor's Office

This suite of rooms served as the Governor's main office from 1879 until just prior to the restoration. At that time a second, more modern office was opened in the Romney Building across the street. Today, most Governors use the Capitol office for bill signings, press conferences, and other ceremonial events.

The Governor's Office is one of the few spaces where you will see actual English walnut wainscoting. The office also has original furniture, including a parlor table, a side table, a credenza, a fireplace surround, and a **Hunt sideboard** made by the Feige Company of Saginaw. In the 1870s, Michigan was one of the leading furniture producers in the United States and some of these pieces were exhibited at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. The Feige Company also built furniture in the House and Senate Chamber and the Supreme Court.



This 1879 photograph shows the Feige furniture in the unpainted Governor's Office. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)



Prior to the restoration, other furniture came in and out of the space, walls were repainted, different light fixtures were added, and doorways were walled over.

The Governor's office did not escape modernization efforts. Governors frequently changed out furnishings to suit their tastes. By the early 1900s, the Feige furniture was out of fashion and was at risk of being discarded. Happily, Marie Ferrey, curator of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society Museum (the forerunner to the Michigan History Museum), added the pieces to the museum's collection. During the restoration, the Feige furniture was conserved and returned to its rightful place, missing decorative art was recreated on the walls, the ceilings were cleaned, and period appropriate lighting was installed.



During the restoration, conservators carefully cleaned and stabilized the ceiling, which had been stained by years of gas lighting and smoking.

Move towards the railings on the second floor, then continue to the third floor to view the Gallery of Governors, located around the railings.



The Gallery of Governors

Along the railings on the second and third floor of the rotunda, hang portraits of Michigan's fourteen most recent governors. By tradition, governors pay for their own portraits and present them to the state after leaving office. The portraits are arranged in chronological order, with the newest on the second floor and older ones on the third floor. When a new portrait is added, the oldest one is relocated elsewhere in the building.

Governors choose the artist and style of their portrait. In the modern era, governors often use their portrait to highlight interests and accomplishments from their time in office. The portrait of **Governor G. Mennen "Soapy" Williams** (which hangs on the third floor) includes the Mackinac Bridge. Governor Williams supported the construction of the bridge when he was in office.

For more information about portraits, visit MSCArts.org.

The portrait that elicits the most questions is that of **Governor John Swainson**, who served one two-year term, 1961-1962. Swainson hired an abstract expressionist to paint his portrait, and according to press coverage from the unveiling, the artist wanted the portrait to represent Swainson's youth and unfinished career.



Governor Williams served six terms (1949-1960), more than any other Michigan governor. Before 1963, Governors were elected to two-year terms and there were no term limits. Today, Governors can serve up to two, four-year terms.



John Swainson legs were amputated after an injury he sustained during World War II. His portrait artist painted his legs lighter, alluding to the prosthetics he used.

From the third floor of the Gallery of Governors, look down to see an optical illusion in the glass floor below. From this height, the glass floor may look like it curves downward. Myers intended this bowl effect to mirror the curve of the dome above.



Once on the third floor, visit the House of Representatives chamber in the north wing and the Senate chamber in the south wing. Visitors can view these rooms from the third floor. Legislators enter at the second-floor lobbies.



During session visitors are asked to follow the following rules:

- Please remain seated.
- No food or drink.
- Do not use flash photography.

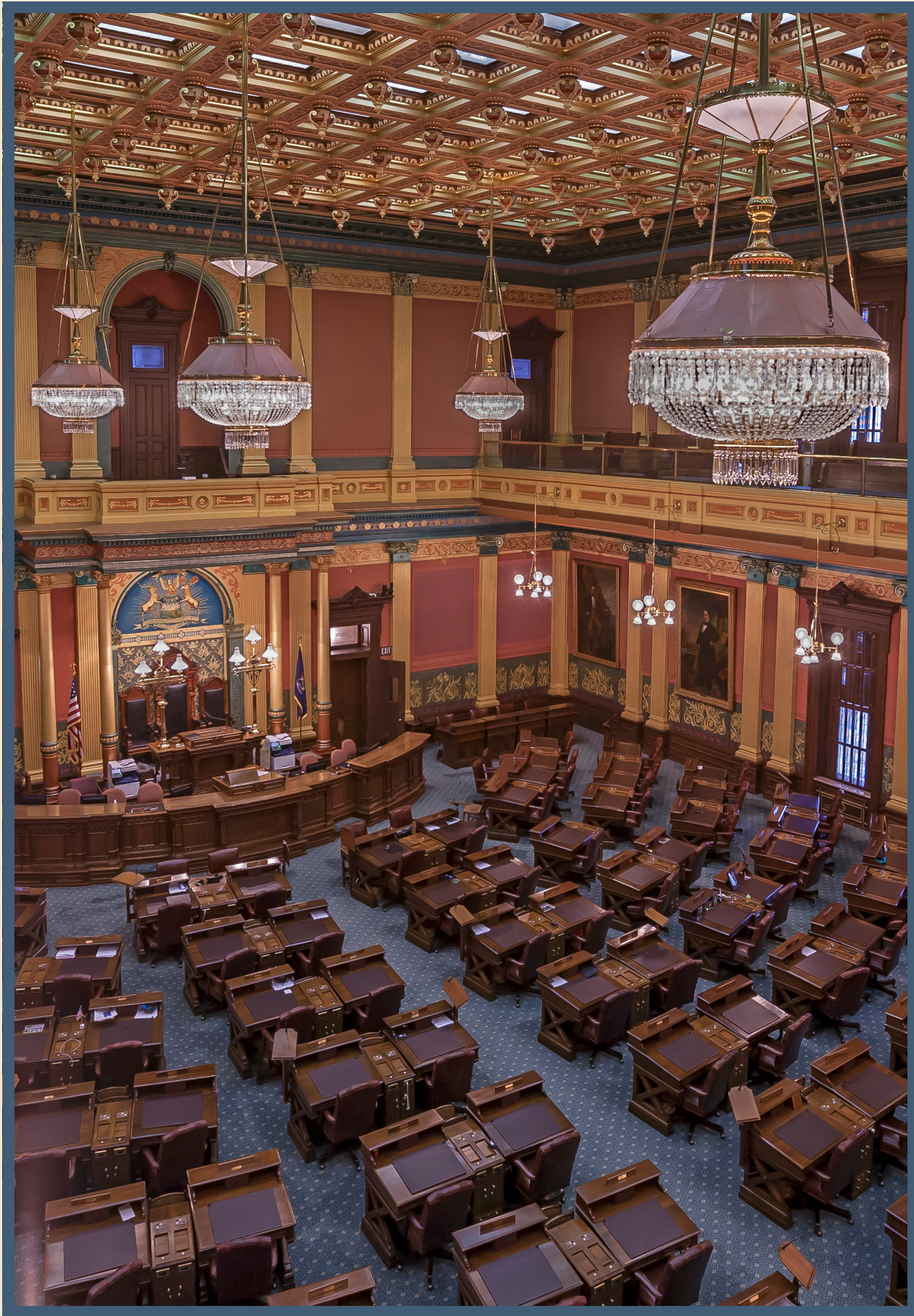
Visitors may have to wait briefly until a seat is vacated to enter and both galleries have accessible areas for visitors in wheelchairs.

The Legislative Chambers

The House of Representatives is the largest room in the Capitol. Michigan representatives are elected to two-year terms from districts of about 90,000 constituents. House members elect a representative of the majority party to serve as the Speaker of the House. The Speaker presides over session, makes House committee appointments, and sets daily agendas with the Majority Floor Leader.



The House had 100 members when this photo was taken in 1899.



Legislative Chambers ...

Today the House of Representatives has 110 members, who sit with the other members of their political party.



Representatives have a set of voting buttons at their desk which allow them to vote “aye” or “nay” on bills, “cancel” their vote to make a change, and call a “page” or messenger to their desk. The black button allows them to explain their “nay” vote.

Michigan Senators are elected to four-year terms from districts of about 260,000 constituents. The Lieutenant Governor of Michigan presides over Senate session as the President of the Senate. The Senate Majority Leader makes Senate committee appointments and supervises the administration of Senate business.

At the front of each chamber, you’ll see a large, curving desk called the **rostrum**. This is where the presiding officers lead session, assisted by the Clerk of the House, or the Secretary of the Senate, and other session staff. Michigan has a full-time legislature which usually holds session from January through June, and September through December.

Representative and Senators sit at assigned **desks**, most of which are original to the chambers. When the state purchased the desks in 1878, they each cost \$13.97 ½! Originally, clerks recorded attendance and votes by hand as legislators called out “aye” and “nay.” Today, members use **voting buttons** located on consoles next to their desks to cast votes. Results are displayed on **voting boards** on the front walls of each chamber. These boards match the color of the surrounding walls, so they do not interrupt the historical appearance of the room when not in use.



During a vote, the House voting boards display member’s names which will turn red or green as they vote.



Legislative Chambers ...

The Michigan Senate has 38 members. A staff person sits by each Senator's desk.

As you look up in the chambers, you'll see a beautiful, **coffered ceiling** displaying the coats of arms of each U.S. state in ruby etched glass. Above the decorative glass tiles are skylights on the Capitol's roof, which allow sunlight into the chambers. When the Capitol opened, the ceilings included only the 38 states existent in 1879. Sadly, the tiles were removed in the mid-twentieth century. During the 1989-1990 chamber restorations, new replica tiles featuring all 50 states were made. In both ceilings, the Michigan coat of arms is placed in the front of the room, directly over the rostrums.



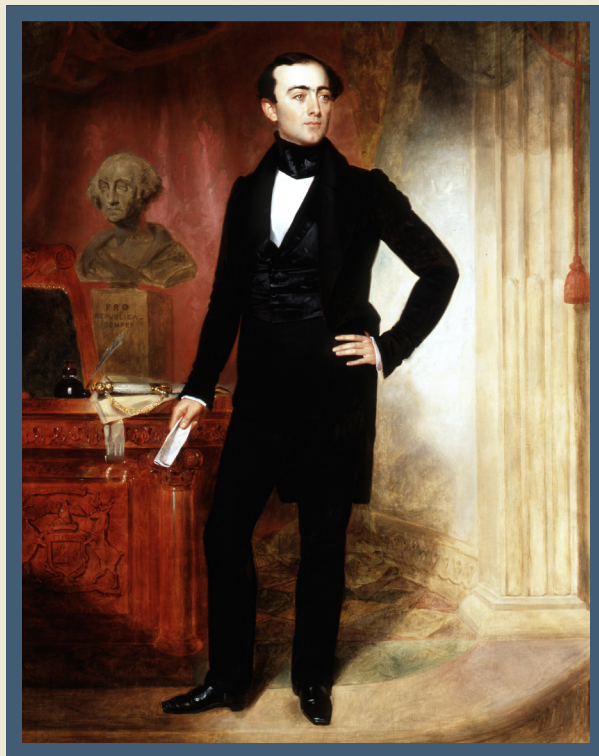
In 1989, the Senate Chamber was transformed into a construction site.

Hanging from the coffered ceilings, you'll see a set of sparkling **chandeliers** - six in the House and four in the Senate. These original fixtures each contain over 1,600 pieces of glass and crystal! Suspended from mechanical winches above the etched glass tiles, Capitol staff lower them to the floor for repair and cleaning.

The House and Senate chambers are home to several portraits of significant historical figures. A portrait of Michigan's first governor, **Stevens T. Mason**, hangs on the west wall of the House Chamber. Nicknamed the "Boy Governor," Mason was appointed Territorial Secretary at 19, and he was nearly 26 when Michigan achieved statehood in 1837. He is the youngest governor in U.S. history!

On the south wall of the Senate chamber, you'll find a portrait of Michigan's "Civil War Governor", **Austin Blair**. An outspoken abolitionist and beloved supporter of Michigan's Civil War soldiers, he is the only individual honored with a monument on Capitol Square.

A smaller portrait on the Senate's west wall commemorates **Eva McCall Hamilton**, Michigan's first woman legislator. Elected to the Senate in 1920, Hamilton advocated for education, healthcare, and improved social services.



Alvin Smith painted this portrait of Governor Mason around 1836. It has hung in all three of Michigan's Capitols.



Austin Blair spent so much of his own money on the war effort he could not afford an official governor's portrait. His friends commissioned this portrait on his behalf.



Before she was elected, Hamilton was a Grand Rapids activist involved in the women's suffrage movement and the expansion of farmers markets.

Old Supreme Court Room . . .



The historic Supreme Courtroom is considered one of the best-preserved spaces in our Capitol. (Image courtesy of David Marvin)

Move to the east wing of the third floor to view the Old Supreme Court Room.

The Old Supreme Court Room

This grand room where Michigan's Supreme Court met for about 90 years contains particularly fine examples of Victorian decorative arts. While most rooms in the Capitol have flat plaster walls, the Supreme Court has highly **textured walls** with a complex vine and poinsettia flower pattern. The ceiling of this room is a few feet higher than the other rooms on the third floor to accommodate an elaborate **plaster cornice**. The ceiling itself still bears its original 1880s paint which was cleaned and conserved during the restoration.

The original **judges' bench** still stands at the front of the room, flanked by two lamps. The bench, and the 18-foot-tall bookcase behind it, were designed by architect Elijah Myers and made by the Feige Company of Saginaw.

As a result of overcrowding, the Michigan Supreme Court moved into what is now the G. Mennen Williams Building in 1970. In 2002, Michigan's judicial branch dedicated their own building, the Hall of Justice, located at the western end of the Capitol Complex.

Following the Court's departure, the Senate began holding committee meetings and hearings in this space. Today, it is home to the **Senate Appropriations Committee**. The House and Senate Appropriations Committees are the legislative bodies charged with crafting Michigan's annual budget.

Just outside the Old Supreme Court, you'll find a portrait of Representative **William Webb Ferguson**, Michigan's first African American legislator. Before he was elected in 1892, Ferguson took a segregated Detroit restaurant to court after being denied service. The Michigan Supreme Court heard his case, *Ferguson v. Gies*, in this room in 1890 and ruled unanimously in his favor. This ruling affirmed that Michigan law barred racial segregation in public spaces.



While serving in the House of Representatives, Ferguson sponsored a bill to prevent life insurance companies from discriminating against African Americans.



The number of Michigan Supreme Court Justices has changed several times. This 1909 photo shows the judges' bench extended to accommodate eight justices. Seven justices serve on our Supreme Court today.



House and Senate committees discuss legislation about a certain topic such as education, health policy, etc. State officials, experts in relevant topics, and members of the public can share their knowledge and opinions by testifying before a committee. (Image courtesy of David Marvin)

The West Wing

Today, the west wing includes the Speaker's Library on the second floor, the House Appropriations Committee Room on third floor, and legislative committee rooms on the fourth floor.

From 1879 to 1922, all these rooms were part of one open, continuous space which housed the **State Library**. With space for 100,000 volumes, the library was an important source of information for state officials and their staff members. Two prominent women presided over this resource as State Librarian. Harriett Tenney was the first female state officer in Michigan, serving 1869-1891. Her protégé, Mary Spencer, held the position 1893-1923.

By 1922 the collection had outgrown the Capitol's west wing and the library was moved to the State Office Building, now the Elliott-Larsen Building. At this time, solid floors were constructed at the truss levels, turning the open atrium into a series of conventional, one-story rooms.

The Supreme Court acquired the second floor for the state's law library. Justices and their staffs moved into offices on the third floor. The Secretary of State's Motor Vehicle Division occupied the fourth floor.

In the early 1970s the occupants of the west wing changed again. The Supreme Court vacated their Capitol offices and took the law library to their new quarters. The House acquired the second, third and fourth floor spaces, which they transformed into vast banks of cubicles for legislators and staff. During the restoration, the west wing was converted into large meeting rooms with adjoining offices for legislators.



The old library contained four iron balconies holding custom-built walnut bookcases. Anyone could use materials in the library, but only state officials could check out books. (Image courtesy of the Archives of Michigan)



When this photo of the fourth floor was taken in 1968, the west wing was one of the most crowded spaces in the Capitol. The third floor alone had offices for 17 legislators and their staffs!

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Capitol Facts:

- **Height:** 267 feet from the ground to the tip of the finial above the dome
- **Length:** 420 feet, 2 inches
- **Width:** 273 feet, 11 inches
- **Perimeter:** 1,520 feet
- **Area:** 1 1/6 acres
- **Construction Period:** six years, 1872 through 1878, dedicated on January 1, 1879
- **Construction Cost:** \$1,427,738,78
- **Restoration Period:** five years, from 1987 through 1992, rededicated on November 19, 1992

The information in this publication is available,
upon request, in an alternative, accessible format.



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