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TEXAS CAPITOL GUIDE

Government Documents

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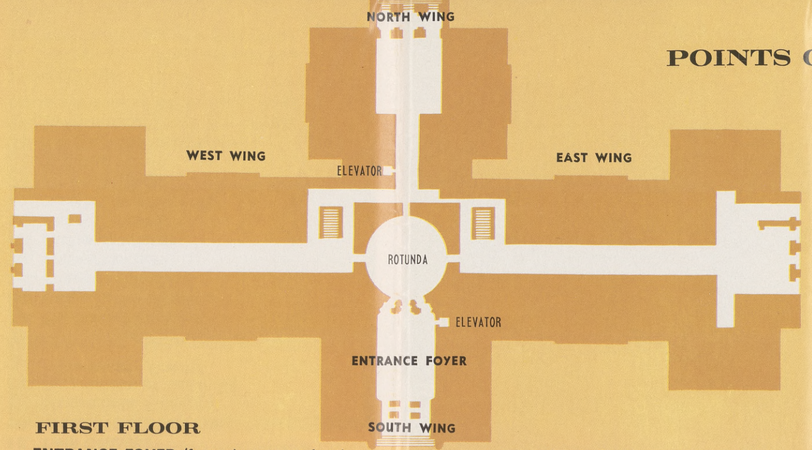
STATE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS
AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
Travel & Information Division
Austin, Texas

POINTS OF INTEREST IN THE CAPITOL BUILDING



FIRST FLOOR

ENTRANCE FOYER (from downtown Austin or south)

Twelve significant battles fought on Texas soil are memorialized in terrazzo on the foyer floor. On opposite walls are paintings by Austin artist W. H. Huddle, depicting, on the west wall, the Surrender of Santa Anna, after the battle of San Jacinto, and, on the east wall, Davy Crockett, well-known hero of the Alamo. Flanking the entrance to the rotunda are marble statues by Texas sculptress Elisabet Ney, of Stephen F. Austin, Father of Texas, and Sam Houston, Commander in Chief during the Texas Revolution. A copy of the Texas Declaration of Independence signed March 2, 1836, appears behind a wrought iron and glass enclosure on the right. Similarly displayed on the left is a copy of the Ordinance of Secession signed February 1, 1861.

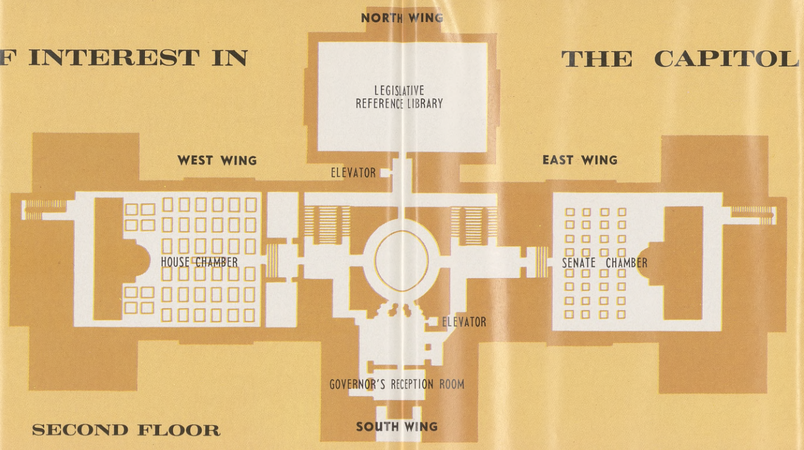
ROTUNDA

In the center of the building is the circular open rotunda rising to the top of the dome. Four floors of the Capitol open on it. The circular steps appearing in the very upper portion of the dome are not open to the public. Portraits of the five Presidents of the Republic of Texas and the past Governors of the State of Texas are displayed on the walls of the first, second, third and fourth floors. A bust of Texas' only woman governor, Mrs. Miriam A. Ferguson, occupies a pedestal on the main floor.

In the center of the rotunda floor is a composite terrazzo design of the "Seals of the Nations." The Seal of the Republic of Texas, with its Lone Star, forms the center of the giant pattern. Tangent to this circle and between the points of a larger star are the coats of arms of each of the five nations of which Texas has been a part.

In colorful stonework is depicted the Great Seal of the United States. Clockwise is the Seal of the Confederacy which features an equestrian statue of George Washington at Richmond. The most active design is Mexico's seal displaying the famed eagle and snake of Mexican legend. France is represented by the dignity of the fleur-de-lis from the coat of arms of the Bourbon kings of France. For the Kingdom of Spain, a seal depicts the lions and castles of Leon and Castile. The entire design becomes more beautiful as it is viewed from upper balconies of the rotunda.

Executive and legislative branches of state government, along with support services, are housed in the Capitol. Other state offices are in surrounding buildings of the Capitol complex. Directories of Capitol offices are on the east and west walls of the north hall.



SECOND FLOOR

Visitors are welcome to the Governor's Reception Room in the south wing. The "Six Flags that have flown over Texas" are displayed behind glass in the walls. The governor's and his staffs' working offices are on the right and left of the Public Reception Room.

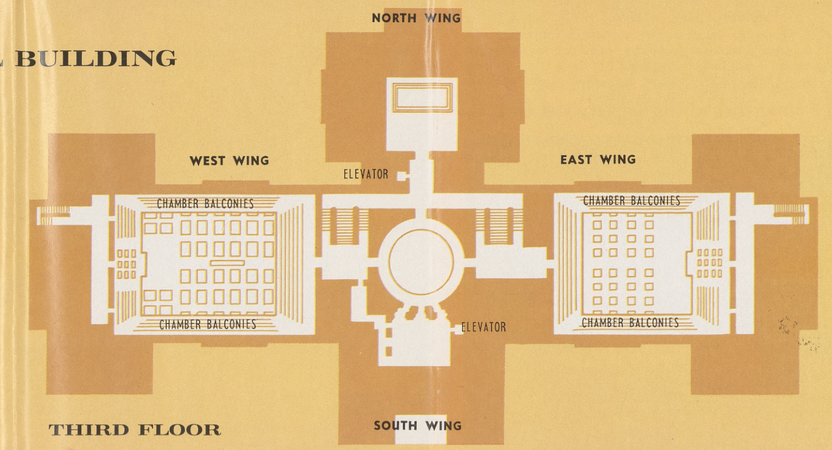
The House of Representatives, in the west wing, is the chamber for 150 members elected for two-year terms and presided over by the Speaker. Voting is done electronically and recorded on both a miniature panel on the desk of the Speaker and the large boards on the wall. Members of the press have their own table in the center of House. Bills are read at the podium directly in front of the Speaker. Directly behind the Speaker's rostrum is enshrined the original San Jacinto battle flag. The Speaker of the House has his offices and living quarters to the left rear of the chamber. The Chief Clerk has offices on the right.

Visitors are not allowed on the House floor during session without special permission. They are welcome in the House Reception Room and on the third floor balcony.

The Senate, in the east wing, is the hall of deliberation for the 31 members elected for four-year terms. The Lt. Governor presides over the Senate. His office and living quarters are to the right rear of the Senate chamber. An office for the Secretary of the Senate is to the left rear of the main chamber. Of the many paintings in these chambers, most historical interest centers on the two giant scenes at the right and left of the Senate entrance depicting "Dawn at the Alamo" and "The Battle of San Jacinto." Forty years of the lifetime of the artist, H. A. McArdle, were required to complete research and painting of the two huge pictures.

During sessions, visitors are not permitted on the Senate floor without permission.

For the convenience of Texas legislators, a Reference Library is maintained in the north wing of the second floor. All House and Senate journals and legislative bills from 1900 to the present are here. Reports and studies of state agencies and legislative committees are available for immediate reference. Newspaper clippings concerning political and governmental actions date back to 1920. Microfilm of many large daily Texas newspapers, including one daily record from 1880, provides a detailed history of Texas government activities. The Library is open to the public.



THIRD FLOOR

During sessions of the legislature, visitors to the Capitol can view proceedings of both the Senate and House of Representatives from the chamber balconies. Entrance to the House balcony is west of the rotunda. The entrance to the Senate balcony is in the east wing. Pictures of past members of both the Senate and House are displayed on the walls of the respective balconies.

PUBLIC VISITING HOURS

Capitol — Open 24 hours daily. Free guided tours, daily 8:15 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Tourist information desk in south foyer staffed 8 a.m.-5 p.m. daily. Governor's Reception Room open to visitors 8 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

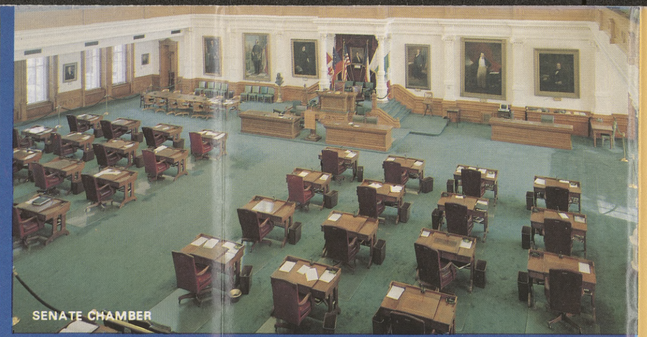
Texas Archives and Library Building — Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Old Land Office Building Museum — Open 9 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Museums maintained by Daughters of the Republic of Texas and Daughters of the Confederacy.

Governor's Mansion — Open for tours 10-11:40 a.m. Monday through Saturday; 2-3:40 p.m. Sunday. Closed state holidays and during various official functions. **NOTE:** Visitors should check tour schedules in advance by telephone: 475-2121.

Free tourist parking at "State Visitor Parking" lots SE corner 11th & Congress Ave. (south of Capitol); and mid-1500 block Congress Ave. (north of Capitol). Two-hour limit.

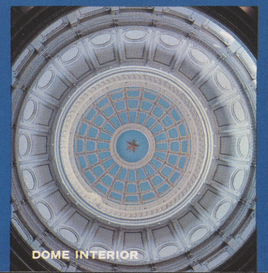
HOUSE CHAMBER



SENATE CHAMBER

SAM HOUSTON

GOVERNOR'S RECEPTION ROOM



DOME INTERIOR

ROTUNDA FLOOR

CORRIDOR

CAPITOL FACTS

Construction on the Capitol was begun in 1882, completed in 1888. Covering three acres of ground with some 8.5 acres of floor space, the building at the time was said to be the seventh largest in the world.

Design — classic in architecture, shaped as a Grecian Cross.

Dimensions are as follows:

Length — 585 feet, 10 inches, including steps.

Width — 299 feet, 10 inches, including steps.

Height — 309 feet, 8 inches from basement floor to the top of the statue, 16 feet above the dome. The Goddess of Liberty was raised to position February 26, 1888. The dome stands seven feet higher than that of the National Capitol.

Materials used in construction:

Exterior walls — 15,000 carloads of Texas pink granite quarried 50 miles northwest at Marble Falls, transported by a specially built railroad and ox teams.

Interior and dome walls — Texas limestone.

Woods — wainscoting is oak, pine, cherry, cedar, walnut, ash and mahogany with aggregate length of about seven miles.

Door and window frames — oak and pine, excepting those in the Governor's Reception Room which are of cherry.

Roof — copper, 85,000 square feet.

Flooring — original: hand-blocked clay tile, glass and wood. Present halls and rotunda: terrazzo laid in the 1930s. All terrazzo colors are from Texas rock aggregate except the blue in the U.S. Seal, which was imported from Italy.

Weight of cornerstone — 16,000 pounds in the rough.

In order to maintain the immaculate appearance of the giant building, painting and maintenance crews are continually at work in some portion of the 273,799 square feet available space. The most dramatic task of maintenance is painting the interior of the capitol dome. Every seven years scaffolds are erected that reach the 260 feet from the star on the rotunda floor to the top of the dome.

ELEVATORS

Elevators serving the upper floors of the Capitol are on the east side of the south entrance arcade and on the west side of the north arcade, and at the entrances to the east and west wings.

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In the south foyer of the State Capitol is a complete Tourist Information Center for the Capitol Complex as well as the entire State of Texas. The center, operated by the State Department of Highways and Public Transportation and staffed by trained travel counselors, functions similarly to the nine Texas Tourist Bureaus at primary entrances to the state and the Judge Roy Bean Visitor Center at Langtry. Open daily, these centers provide travel information, descriptive literature and other services designed to make travel in Texas pleasant and rewarding.

TEXAS CAPITALS

Prior to the annexation of Texas as the 28th State of the Union, December 29, 1845, Texas history records 14 capitals under flags of Mexico and the Republic of Texas.

Austin was chosen as the permanent capital of the Republic of Texas by the Congress in August 1839. The first capitol building in Austin was erected in that year and served the Republic of Texas. Presidents and the Congress of the Republic performed official acts within this building which was located at the corner of 8th and Colorado Streets, the site of the present Austin City Hall.

Another structure was built on the present capitol site in 1853 to house the offices of the State of Texas. This structure burned November 9, 1881, heightening an already recognized need for a larger permanent capitol building which had been envisioned for years.

THE PRESENT CAPITOL OF TEXAS

The current constitution of the State of Texas, adopted in an election February 15, 1876, embodied the provision for the sale of public land to obtain funds for the erection of a new state capitol. The builders accepted as payment 3,000,000 acres of land in 10 counties in the panhandle of Texas.

In the original plans, the buildings was to be built of Texas limestone. Construction was begun February 1, 1882. Following the laying of the cornerstone, March 2, 1885, doubt had arisen concerning the quantity of uniform quality limestone available from the quarries selected.

The owners of Granite Mountain near Marble Falls in Burnet County, Texas, tendered to the people of the State of Texas, free of charge, all the granite stone required to complete the building. The present capitol was dedicated May 16,1888, and occupied in September of the same year.

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CAPITOL COMPLEX

For ease in locating specific points, the following numerals correspond to those on the pictorial view of the Capitol area.

BUILDINGS

1. Capitol
2. Supreme Court Building
3. John H. Reagan State Office Building
4. Stephen F. Austin State Office Building
5. LBJ Building (Finance Building)
6. Texas Employment Commission Building
7. Sam Houston State Office Building
8. Archives and Library Building
9. State Insurance Building
10. Old Land Office Building Museum
11. Texas Education Agency
12. State Department of Highways and Public Transportation
13. Governor's Mansion
14. House Office Building

POINTS OF INTEREST

15. Twin Cannons
16. Mineral Water Fountain
17. Bicentennial Fountain
18. Foundations of 1882-88 Temporary Capitol

MEMORIAL STATUES

19. The Alamo Memorial
20. Confederate Memorial
21. Volunteer Firemen
22. Terry's Rangers
23. Statue of Liberty
24. Hood's Brigade
25. Spanish American War
26. Texas Cowboy
27. T-Patch
28. The Ten Commandments
29. In Memory of World War I Dead
30. In Memory of World War II Dead

PARKING

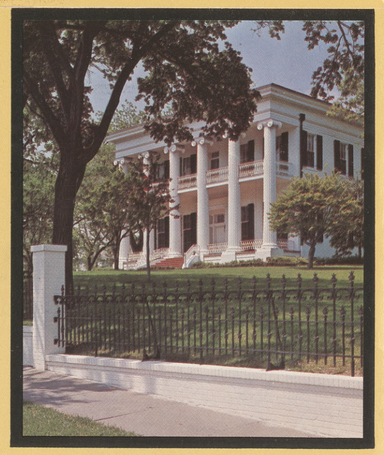
31. SE corner 11th & Congress Ave.
32. Mid-1500 block Congress Ave.

THE ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY BUILDING

This is the permanent depository for historical documents and archival collections of historical significance to Texans. Like all of the newer buildings, this structure is built of the same granite as the Capitol Building.

SUPREME COURT BUILDING

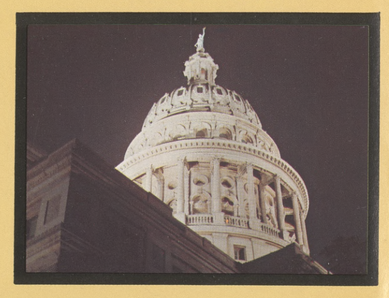
The new Supreme Court Building includes offices of Texas court justices and the State's highest courts, the Texas Supreme Court and the Criminal Appeals Court. The building also houses the Third Court of Civil Appeals.



GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Oldest of all buildings in the Capitol complex is the Governor's Mansion constructed in 1856. Typical of fine homes of this period, the mansion is an example of Neo Classic or Greek revival style. A majority of the rooms are furnished with antiques of historical significance and are viewed by thousands of visitors each year. The Governor and his family have a private apartment on the second floor of the mansion.

CAPITOL DOME



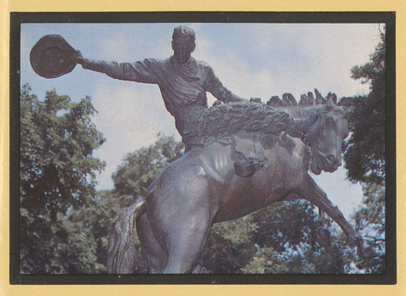
CAPITOL GROUNDS

Examples of 50 varieties of Texas trees shade the 25.96 acres of the original Capitol ground. Among them are palm, pecan, sycamore, cottonwood, mesquite, oak, hackberry, elm, walnut, peach, cedar, huisache, and many other varieties of evergreen.

High atop the Capitol dome stands the Goddess of Liberty holding aloft the 5 pointed star that is emblematic of the Republic of Texas.

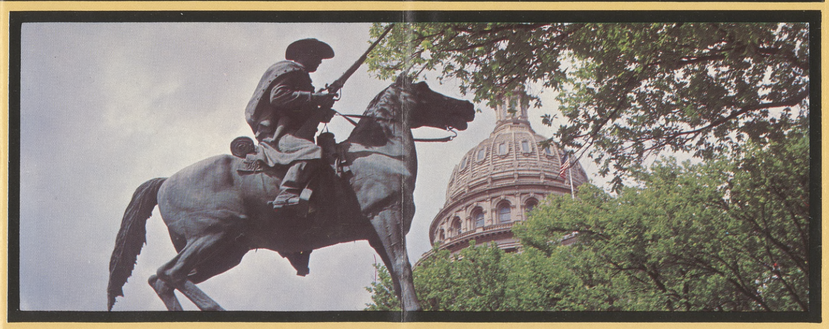
TEXAS COWBOY

This bronze statue, depicting a typical Texas cowboy riding a rearing horse, was presented to the State of Texas in 1925 by its sculptor Constance Whitney Warren of Paris, France.



CONFEDERATE MEMORIAL

Typical of the monuments on the Capitol grounds is the Memorial to the Confederate Dead erected in 1901. The five bronze figures represent the Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Navy, and President Jefferson Davis of the Confederacy.



TERRY'S RANGERS

A symbol of the rugged and valiant spirit of the Texas Rangers memorially portrayed is the statue of Terry's Texas Rangers during their period of service with the Confederate Army.

SPANISH AMERICAN WAR

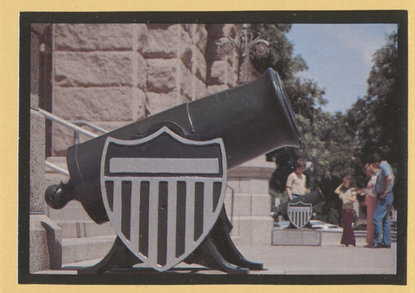
Honoring the memory of Spanish-American War Veterans, this bronze statue of a soldier, "The Hiker," is mounted on Texas granite and was erected in 1951.

Erected in 1907 and executed in bronze, this statue is mounted on Texas granite. Pompeo Coppini was the sculptor.

TWIN CANNONS

Not to be confused with the "Twin Sisters" cannons used at the Battle of San Jacinto, these early artillery pieces were fired during the War Between the States.

The Twin Cannons were presented to the Republic of Texas in 1836 by Major General Thomas Chambers.



OLD LAND OFFICE BUILDING MUSEUM

Built in 1857, this building first opened as a museum in 1919. On the first floor is housed the Daughters of the Confederacy Museum containing Confederate relics and records. The Daughters of the Republic of Texas Museum showing records and exhibits of Texas Republic days, including genuine relics and items used by early settlers, is on the second floor.

CAPITOL GARDEN