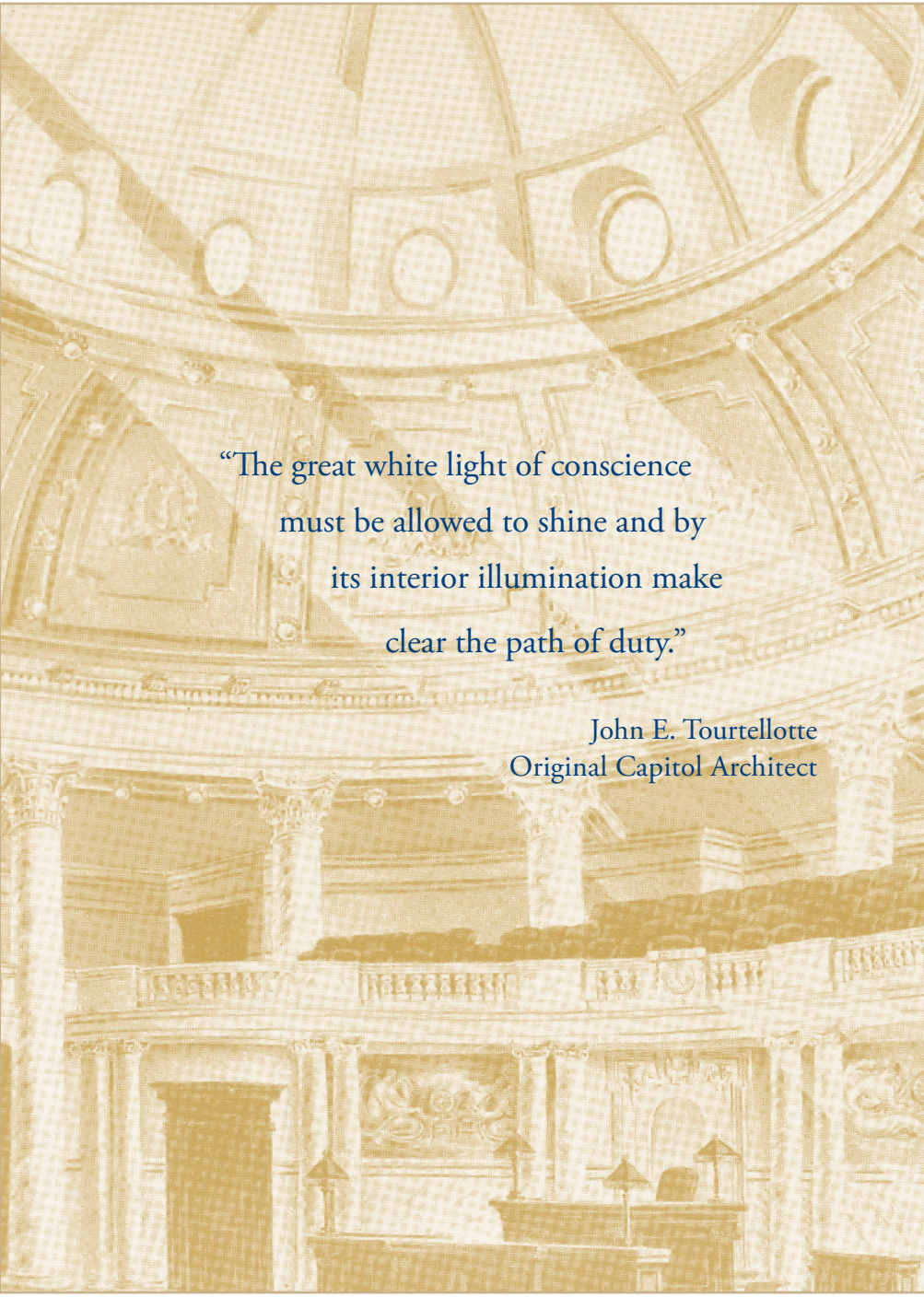


A detailed illustration of the Idaho State Capitol building, featuring a large central dome topped with a golden eagle. The building has classical architectural elements like columns and a pediment. In the foreground, there are people on horseback and vintage cars, suggesting a historical scene.

## Idaho State Capitol

*Capitol  
of Light*





“The great white light of conscience  
must be allowed to shine and by  
its interior illumination make  
clear the path of duty.”

John E. Tourtellotte  
Original Capitol Architect

# *Capitol of Light*

## **A Self-Guided Tour of the Idaho State Capitol**

Welcome to the Idaho State Capitol. For over a century this building has stood as the foremost symbol of democracy and sovereignty for the state of Idaho. Since its construction in 1905, governors, lawmakers, tourists, local residents, students, and teachers have all walked the halls of this magnificent building.

When John Tourtellotte designed the Capitol he used light shafts, skylights, and reflective marble surfaces to capture natural sunlight and direct it to the interior space. For Tourtellotte, light was a metaphor for an enlightened and moral state government.

This booklet will guide you through each floor of this beautiful facility and the exterior grounds. Its pages will impart the rich history of the Capitol from the construction of the original building through the 21<sup>st</sup> century restoration project.

### **Contents**

The Restoration. ....	1
A Bit of History. ....	2
Floor Tours. ....	5
The Capitol Grounds. ....	15



# *The Restoration*

In 1998, the Idaho Legislature authorized the Idaho State Capitol Commission to create a plan that would ensure the Capitol's survival for future generations. Although the commission developed a master plan in 2000 and the Legislature set aside funding to restore the building, economic conditions over the next five years put the project on hold. In 2005, a second effort yielded a more stable funding source and a modified master plan, which focused on four major elements:



Craftsman Randy Schaffer strips layers of paint off the capitol, or top, of the column to restore its original detail

***Preservation*** — To stabilize and repair historic materials and features and maintain the historic integrity of the structure

***Restoration*** — To preserve distinctive materials, features, and forms as they appeared after the original building's construction

***Rehabilitation*** — To make an efficient contemporary use of the building while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values

***Expansion*** — To allow the building to continue functioning as a working Capitol by

adding underground atrium wings to accommodate larger, more spacious legislative hearing rooms that will allow for more public participation in the legislative process

Much of the restoration work is not visible. Among the unseen improvements are upgraded electrical and smoke and fire detection systems; new HVAC, sewer, and hot water systems; improved exterior lighting; and installation of a wheelchair-accessible elevator and restrooms.

However, numerous and substantial changes will be visible on your tour, including repaired marble flooring and decorative plaster; stunningly restored wood floors, doors, and windows; refurbished light fixtures; two new 25,000 square-foot atrium-level wings with full ceiling skylights; replicated and restored furniture; and beautifully landscaped grounds.



# *A Bit of History*



*Idaho Territorial Capitol*

## **Territorial Capitol**

Boise was not Idaho's first capital city. In March 1863, when President Abraham Lincoln signed the law that created Idaho Territory, he left the task of choosing a temporary capital to William Wallace, a personal friend he appointed to serve as first Territorial Governor. Wallace chose Lewiston, then a booming supply point for the mines of north Idaho. The new legislature would select

the capital's permanent location. By 1864, gold discoveries in the Boise Basin had shifted the population south, and following a heated debate, the second Territorial Legislature chose Boise as the permanent capital. For the next twenty years, government proceedings took place at various locations throughout the city.

In 1885, the thirteenth Territorial Legislature approved construction of a centralized government building. Erected between Jefferson and State and Sixth and Seventh streets, the building was designed by noted architect Elijah E. Myers, a prolific designer of American capitol buildings.

## **Idaho's Second Capitol Building**

By 1905, the Capitol building's lack of amenities and limited space prompted the state legislature to fund construction of a new Capitol. Construction began in 1905 and was completed in two phases. Phase one, which included construction of the central section and dome, was completed in 1912. The new Capitol and its surrounding grounds occupied two blocks and were originally located between two early Boise landmarks—the Territorial Capitol and Central School. Both buildings



*Capitol dome construction*



*Construction workers atop the Capitol dome*

were demolished during phase two (1919–1921) to make way for the addition of the east and west wings.

Remodeling projects during the 1950s and 1970s accommodated a growing state government, but crowding, failing mechanical systems, and decades of hard use eventually left their mark on the aging building. Fortunately, the state of Idaho recognized the need to save the historic Capitol by restoring it and maintaining the building as a working seat of government.



*John E. Tourtellotte*

## **Creating a Vision for the People—The Architects**

For the 1905 Capitol building design, the Capitol Commission held an open competition and selected Tourtellotte & Company, a well-known Boise firm. John E. Tourtellotte, a Connecticut native, began his career in Massachusetts before heading west in 1889. Less than a year later he arrived in Boise and began working as a contract architect.



*Charles Hummel*

Tourtellotte's partner, Charles Hummel, was originally from Germany, where he received his architectural training. He worked in Switzerland before immigrating to the United States in 1885, eventually arriving in Idaho in 1895, and becoming Tourtellotte's partner in 1903. The successful partnership continued for many years, even after Tourtellotte relocated to Portland, Oregon. Following the deaths of both Tourtellotte and Hummel in 1939, the firm continued as Hummel Architects.



Tourtellotte was inspired to create a building that emphasized natural light and used it as a decorative element. He used light shafts, skylights, and reflective marble surfaces to capture natural sunlight and direct it to the interior space. For Tourtellotte, light was a metaphor for an enlightened and moral state government. The original design created an architecturally pleasing building that incorporated the materials and technologies of the day into a working Capitol.



*Ionic column*



*Corinthian column*

## Building and Architectural Details

As you walk through the Capitol, note the large, beautiful “marble” columns supporting the rotunda. They are not solid marble but have a finished surface composed of scagliola—a mixture of gypsum, glue, marble dust, and granite dyed to look like marble. Scagliola originated in Italy during the sixteenth century and grew in popularity because polished marble, though popular, was expensive and heavy.

In addition to scagliola, true marble is also used extensively throughout the building. White marble with green veining, called American Pavonazzo, can be seen on the columns of the central portion of the building. Brocadillo marble, a greenish-white marble with green veining, was used for the wainscoting and upper wall panels of the staircases. The floors throughout the building are comprised of four different marbles from four different quarries and locations. The gray patterned marble is from Alaska, the red stone from Georgia, the green stone from Vermont, and the black stone from Italy.

Classical architectural elements include Doric, Corinthian, and Ionic columns. Corinthian columns have decorative acanthus leaves at the top. Doric and Ionic columns are less ornate.

# Garden Level & Atrium Wings

In the original design, the central rotunda area of the garden level was a dark and often damp basement. The building restoration has transformed the area into the central welcoming place for visitors, with an interpretive exhibit, gift shop, and visitor information desk.



Original state seal painting by  
Emma Edwards Green

## Great Seal of the State of Idaho

Notice the Great Seal of the State of Idaho on the floor of the central rotunda. Adopted in 1891 by the state legislature, the original seal was designed by Emma Edwards Green and is the only state seal designed by a woman. The Latin motto *Esto perpetua* means “May it endure forever.” The miner represents the chief industry at the time the seal was created, while the woman holding scales represents justice, freedom, and equality.



Senate wing skylight

## Atrium Wings

From the central rotunda area, look east and west. You can see a full city block and take in the view of an impressive engineering achievement—the underground atrium wings. These wings were constructed to provide additional space for legislative committee hearing rooms, where the public can participate directly in the legislative process. The wings preserve the integrity of the building’s architecture and improve the functionality of the building. As you explore the new wings, look

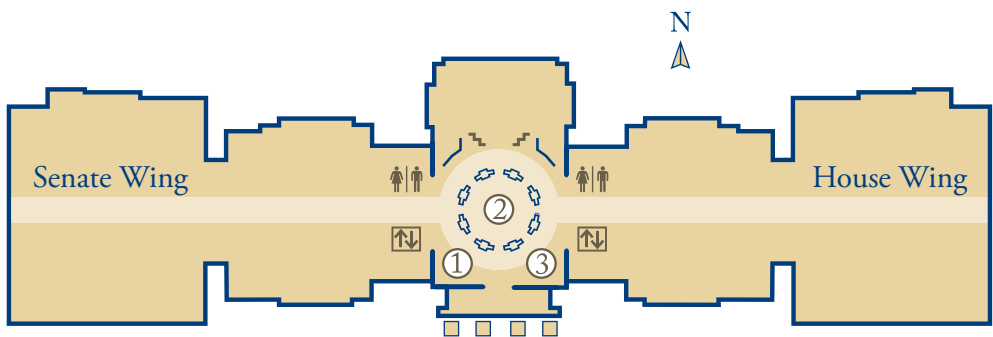
up. Glass skylights run the length of the central corridors and offer a view of the Capitol dome. These skylights—specially engineered and designed for this project—are consistent with the vision of the original architects and provide a seamless bond between the old and new. The skylights are made of fritted glass—a clear safety glass fired with a pattern of dots for the purpose of



shading and lowering solar gain—making artificial light unnecessary in some corridors during the summer and some sunny winter days.

Senate hearing rooms and offices are located in the west wing, and House hearing rooms and offices are in the east wing. A large 240-seat auditorium, shared by the Senate and House, is also located in the west wing. As you walk to the west wing, notice the original basement vault doors. These vaults were once used for record storage. All of the original vault doors remain in the building.

*Climb the grand staircase on the north side of the garden-level rotunda or use the elevators to access the first floor.*



1. Visitor Welcome Desk    2. Historical Exhibit    3. Gift Shop

 Restroom     Stairs     Elevator

# *First Floor*



*Dome interior*

## **The Rotunda**

Step into the center of the rotunda and look up to the breathtaking interior of the dome. Above you, the rotunda rises to an opening at the top of the inner dome called the oculus, or eye of the dome. You can see thirteen large stars, which represent the thirteen original colonies, and forty-three smaller stars, representing Idaho's admission as the forty-third state in the Union.

The dome is actually two domes: an inner dome constructed of wood and plaster and an outer dome constructed of steel and concrete and roofed with terracotta tiles.

In the center of the rotunda you are ringed by eight massive steel columns clad in scagliola. These sixty-foot-high columns support the dome and surround the gray, black, and red compass rose medallion on the floor.



*Decorative features of Treasurer vault*

## **The Treasurer's Office**

On the east side of the first floor is the Treasurer's office. Inside, an original vault contains a large manganese steel safe made in 1905 and still used today.

The Manganese Steel Safe Company was founded in the late 1890s as Hibbard, Rodman and Ely Company. At a plant in New Jersey, the company specialized in the manufacture of safes made of manganese steel, including a model called the "cannonball." The Hibbard, Rodman and Ely Company was so successful with sales of manganese steel safes that it changed its name to reflect the company's



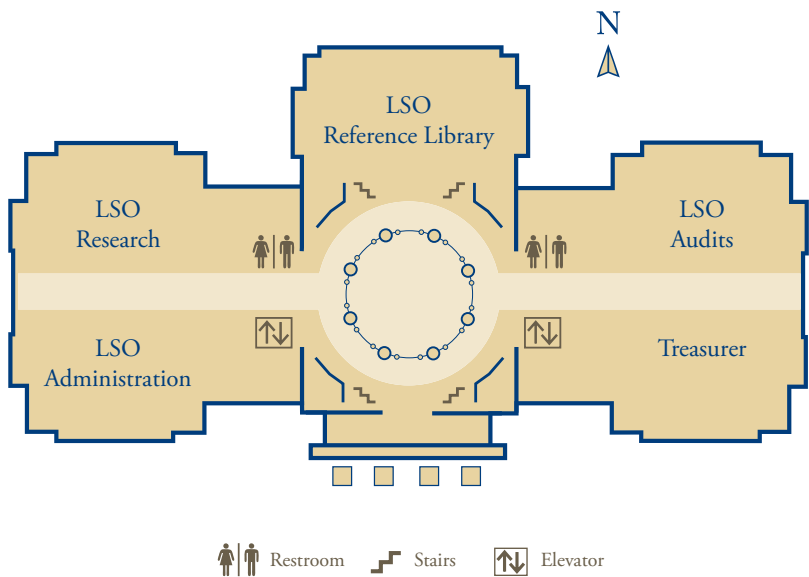
success. The round, double-locked, tightly sealed cannonball safe is still considered one of the most secure models.

**Legislative Services**

The Legislative Services Office (LSO), the nonpartisan support staff for the Legislature, also occupies the first floor. The LSO conducts bill research; drafts legislation; and provides budget analysis, financial compliance audits, and technology support for the Idaho Legislature.

An interesting feature of this floor is the elevator located outside the Legislative Reference Library. This private elevator transported judges to the Idaho Supreme Court Chamber, originally located on the third floor.

*Climb the grand staircase or use the elevators to continue to the second floor.*



# Second Floor



*Governor Smylie seated at historic desk*

## Executive Branch

The Governor's suite, which includes a ceremonial office and working office for the Governor and offices for support staff, is located in the west wing. In the ceremonial office, note the governor's desk, which has been used by Idaho governors since 1919. Official portraits of the current governor and first lady grace the walls of the office. In 1911, the Legislature commissioned artist Herbert

Collins to paint portraits of Idaho's territorial and state governors. The original twenty portraits, plus portraits of all governors who have served since 1911, are hung along the walls adjacent to the governor's suite. As you tour the ceremonial office notice the Corinthian columns and the ornate plaster work that has been restored to its original grandeur.

The second floor also houses offices for the Attorney General on the north side of the building and the Lieutenant Governor and Secretary of State in the east wing. The official copy of the Great Seal of the State of Idaho is kept in the reception area of the Secretary of State's office.



*Official Idaho State Seal*

In 1957 the Legislature commissioned Caldwell artist Paul B. Evans to update the state seal. Evans colorized and "streamlined" the seal. He added a border, sharpened some of the details, modified the female figure and modernized the miner's clothing. His revision of the 1891 design is the official seal used today.



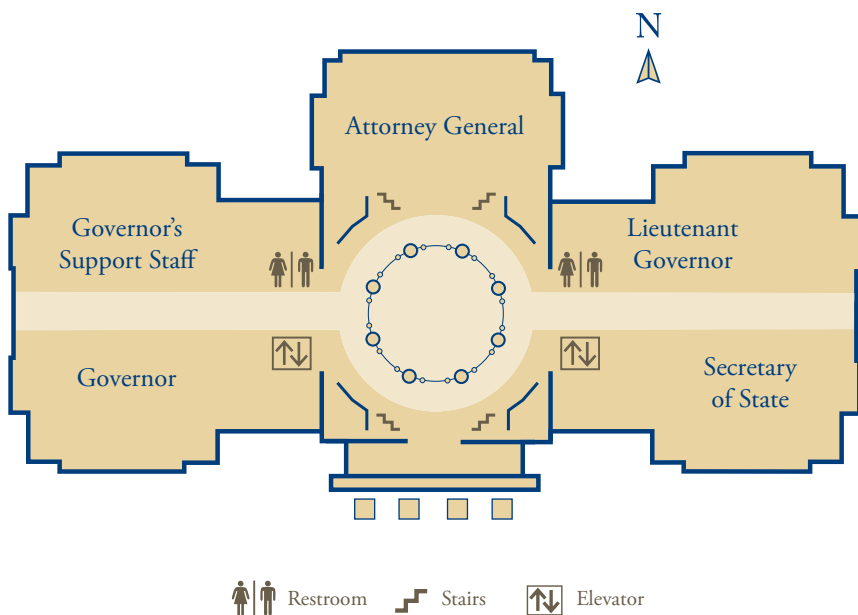


Wollaeger furniture label

As you tour this floor, notice the Honduran mahogany wood finish and decorative plaster cornices. The original furnishings for the offices, supplied by Wollaeger Manufacturing Company, were constructed of Spanish mahogany—a similar looking but much rarer

and expensive wood. Offices had both flat and roll-top desks made with brass bases on the legs and chairs finished to match the desks. Some five hundred pieces of original furniture remain in the building. For the 2009 restoration, furniture throughout the Capitol has been replicated or reproduced in the same style as the original.

*Climb the grand staircase or use the elevators to continue to the third floor.*



# Third Floor



*1960 joint legislative session*

As you climb the grand staircase to the third floor, look above you. In the 1950s, the space above the stairs was enclosed, but during restoration the area was opened up as originally designed, to provide more natural light. Newly crafted marble balustrades were based on original designs. Drop ceilings, installed in the 1950s to hide cabling, have also been removed, re-creating the original ceiling and showcasing the decorative plaster.

The light shafts visible in the hallways originally helped cool the building, but

by the 1970s they had lost their original function and served as pathways for electrical wiring. The original light shafts have been retrofitted to hide the new heating system and conduits. New wiring is hidden by backlit false walls that mimic the look of the original shafts.



*House chamber*

## House and Senate Chambers

The Idaho Legislature is a citizen legislature that meets annually in sessions that typically last from January through March. The House chamber is located in the east wing. The Idaho House of Representatives includes seventy members, two from each legislative district. The perimeter wall was added in the 1970s to improve acoustics, and the blue color scheme mimics the U.S. Capitol. The Senate chamber is located in the west wing. The Senate has thirty-five members, and the Lieutenant Governor—who is not a

member—serves as Senate president, voting only to break a tie. The color scheme in the Senate chamber is red, also used at the U.S. Capitol. The furniture in the



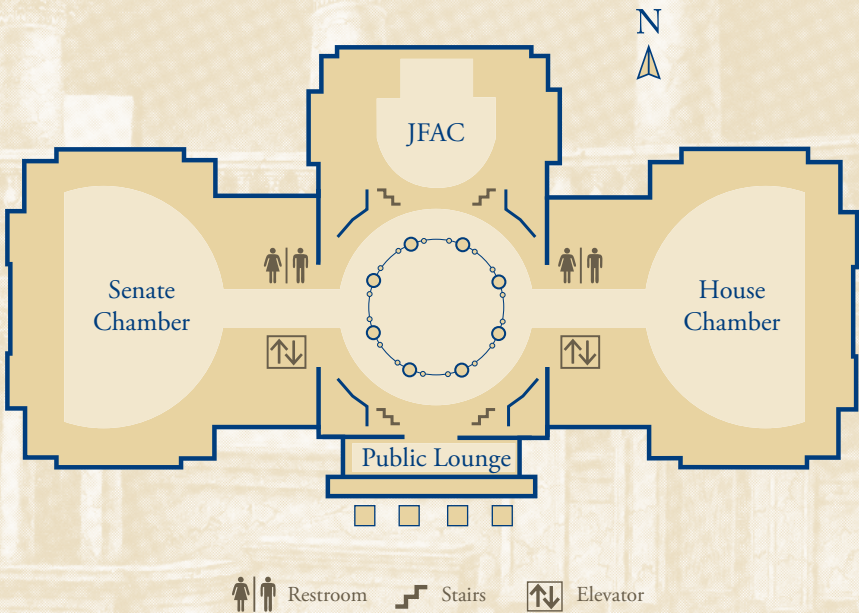
House and Senate chambers has been crafted to resemble the original desks while still accommodating modern technology.

**Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee**

The Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee (JFAC) is located in the former Supreme Court chamber at the north end of the floor. The Idaho Supreme Court met in this chamber from 1912 through 1970, when it moved to a new building on Fifth and State streets.

JFAC is comprised of ten members of the House of Representatives and ten members of the Senate. JFAC studies and recommends how the state budget will be allocated. Notice the judicial symbolism in this room. The light fixtures on the wall symbolize “torches of justices.”

*Continue your tour by climbing the grand staircase to the fourth floor.*





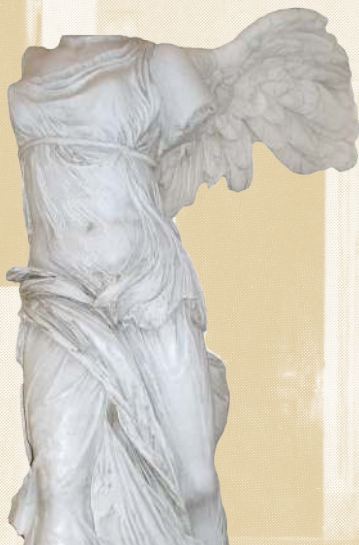
# Fourth Floor



George Washington Statue

Public galleries for the House and Senate are located on the fourth floor. As you walk to the public seating, notice the painted concrete floor. Though not marble, the floor mimics the colors and style of the marble floors below.

Two statues are located on the south side of the rotunda and flank the entrance to Statuary Hall. The *George Washington Statue* was carved from a single piece of pine by Charles Ostner, an Austrian immigrant. Ostner, working at night by candlelight and from a postage stamp size likeness of the President, took four years to carve the figure. The statue was bronzed and presented to the Idaho Territory in 1869. It was displayed on the Capitol grounds until 1934, when it was brought indoors due to weather damage. The statue was repaired, restored, and covered with gold leaf in 1966.



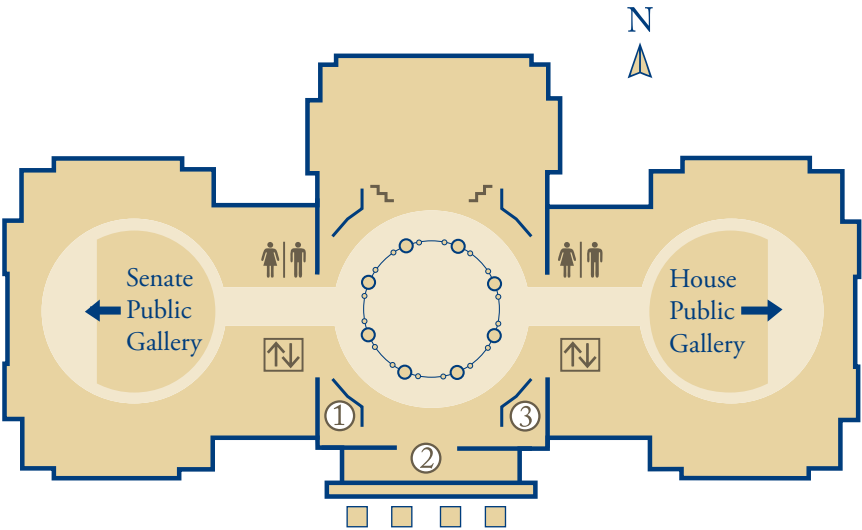
Replica of the Winged Victory of Samothrace statue

The second statue is a replica of *Winged Victory of Samothrace*. The original statue was sculpted about 400–300 BC on Samothrace, an island in the Aegean Sea. Lost for centuries, the sculpture was rediscovered in 1863 and sent to the Louvre Museum in France. Idaho received this replica from the Merci (thank you) Train, which was sent to the United States in 1949 by the people of France to express their appreciation for the food, medicine, fuel, and clothing Americans sent to France following World War II. Boxcars filled with gifts from the people of France were sent to the capital cities of each state. Idaho's boxcar included this replica of *Winged Victory of Samothrace*.



As you enter Statuary Hall, look up at the barrel ceiling. Hidden from view for years, the ceiling has been restored to its original beauty. When Statuary Hall is filled with light and air, it exemplifies the original interior design of the building.

*This ends the interior tour of the Capitol. To tour the Capitol grounds, exit the building at the garden level, first floor, or second floor.*



1. George Washington Statue   2. Statuary Hall   3. Winged Victory Statue

 Restroom    Stairs    Elevator

# Capitol Grounds

The open and spacious lawn resembles the original 1905 Capitol landscape. Over time, numerous trees and bushes were planted on the grounds, eventually masking full view of the building. During renovation, many old and diseased trees were removed. The wood has been used to produce gavels, benches, and gift shop souvenirs.

As you walk the grounds and sidewalks, hot water boils beneath your feet. Idaho's Capitol is the only one in the United States heated by geothermal water. Boise sits atop a large, naturally occurring geothermal resource where water is pumped from three thousand feet underground.

As you stand at the Capitol steps, you are looking at the main ceremonial entrance where visitors are greeted and inaugurations are held. A replica of the *Liberty Bell*, molded in France, stands at the base of the stairs and was given to the state by the U.S. Department of the Treasury in 1950. Two giant spheres of Montana granite flank the thirty-three steps. Don't forget to look up at the bronze plated copper eagle perched atop the Capitol dome. It's difficult to guess its size from such a distance, but it is 5'7" tall.



Ezra Meeker

Erected in 1906, *Pioneer Monument*—located on the southeast grounds—honors pioneers of the Old Oregon Trail. The national movement to preserve the Oregon Trail was organized by Ezra Meeker, who travelled west to Oregon on the trail in 1852 by oxcart. In 1906, at age 76, he began work to preserve the trail and in time he followed the trail by auto and airplane.



Governor Steunenberg

The *Model 1840* cast-iron cannon is a seacoast gun used by the Confederacy in the Civil War and was purchased by State Treasurer S. A. Hastings and Senator William Borah.

Dedicated in 1927, the *Steunenberg Memorial*, south of the Capitol's main entrance in Capitol Park, honors Governor Frank Steunenberg, who served Idaho from 1897 to 1900 and was assassinated in 1905.

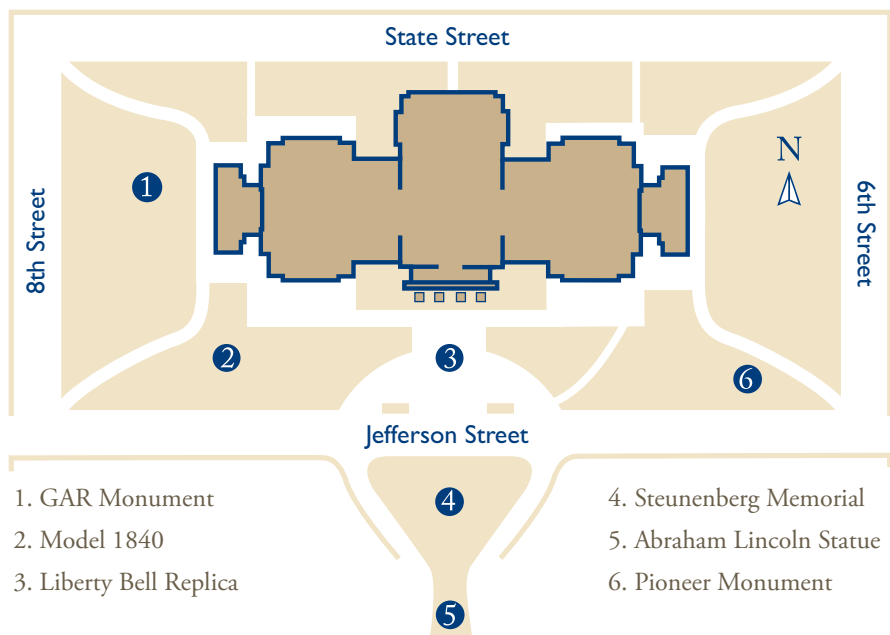


The *Abraham Lincoln Statue*, south of the *Steunenberg Memorial*, was originally placed on the grounds of the Old Soldier's Home in 1915, approximately three miles west of the Capitol. When the Old Soldier's Home was demolished in the 1970s for construction of Veterans Memorial State Park, the *Abraham Lincoln Statue* was moved to the grounds of the Veterans Administration at the site of Old Fort Boise. An expansion project in 2008 led to the removal of the statue, which was placed at its current location and rededicated in a ceremony on February 12, 2009.



*Grand Army of the Republic*

The *Grand Army of the Republic Monument* (GAR), located on the northwest grounds, was donated in 1935 by the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic to honor the men of the Union Army who served in the Civil War.



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**[www.legislature.idaho.gov](http://www.legislature.idaho.gov)**

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