

THE CAPITOL SOWER

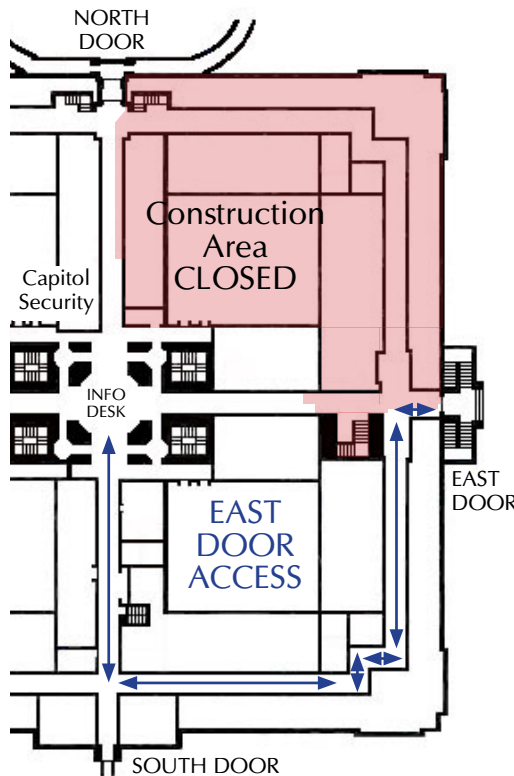
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME FIFTEEN | NUMBER TWO | JUNE 2023

HVAC Phase IV Update

The northwest quadrant of the Nebraska State Capitol is being reoccupied by Nebraska's legislative branch staff as office space becomes available in the Phase 3 work area. Senators are moving out of temporary space in the Capitol's tower and returning to more comfortable office space on first and second floor. The new ground source geothermal variable refrigerant system will allow staff in each office to control their cooling during summer and heating in winter. After waiting patiently while colleagues have enjoyed the comfort provided in Phase 1 and 2, returning staff will finally reap the benefits of the Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning Upgrade and Window Repair Project. The return to the newly renovated space allowed the relocation of some of the Clerk of the Legislature's staff. The Legislature's Mail and Bill Rooms have been consolidated in Room #1126 near the Capitol's south door

With the completion of Phase 3, the Capitol's ADA elevator which accommodates wheel chairs that cannot fit in the tower elevators is open for easy access in the northwest corner of the Capitol's base in Rooms 1009 and 2004. The project allowed the adjacent accessible rest rooms to be upgraded with automatic door openers.

As Phase 3 comes to a close, Phase 4 work is beginning in the northeast quadrant of the base. Executive branch staff have begun to move. The State Auditor's office is now located on the 8th floor of the tower. As the Legislative branch vacates tower offices, Executive branch support staff will move onto the



11th, 12th and 13th floors. Tower office access will continue to be by appointment. During Phase 4 Capitol Security will move west across the north hall from their current location in the northeast corner of first floor rotunda.

Phase 4 contractor activity will prevent access to the east door via the east center corridor. Those entering and exiting through the east door will need to travel through the south and east ground floor corridors. A construction ramp will be installed on the north side of the east entrance for contractors to carry demolition debris out and new HVAC equipment into the Capitol.

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Lexis Funk,
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MAINTENANCE

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Tahir Karimi, Electrician
Chris Lahmon,
Maintenance Technician
Harry Holcome,
Maintenance Technician

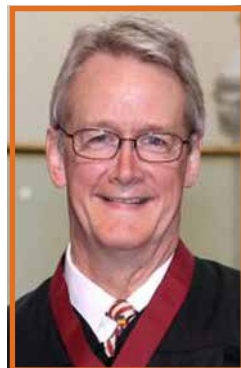
TOURS

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Tourism Supervisor/
Special Events Coordinator
Allison Monzu, Tourism Aide
Susan Myers, Tourism Aide
Kirk Wiota, Tourism Aide

OCC AT WORK

Experience and Service

Capitol Administrator Retires



Robert C. Ripley, FAIA, has retired from the leadership of the Office of the Capitol Commission after 40 years of service caring for the Nebraska State Capitol. During his time at the Capitol, Ripley became a leader in the preservation community and used his knowledge to establish a program of preservation, restoration, and maintenance which became a model for other states to follow. Ripley leaves the nationally registered landmark Capitol with its grand public spaces restored and office space ready to serve many future generations of Nebraska citizens and their government. 🏡

Capitol Grounds Team

Following restoration of the Nebraska State Capitol's original courtyard planting scheme, the Office of the Capitol Commission assembled a team of dedicated landscape professionals to maintain the newly planted flowers and shrubs. In addition to courtyard maintenance, the team is responsible for the care of the shrub beds surrounding the base of the Capitol, the trees on the grounds, and the mowing and management of the turf around the Capitol. While most casual viewers of the grounds are impressed by the lawn, the bulk of the staff's work is caring for the shrubs and trees, not mowing. Staff is also responsible for snow removal in winter.

The team, from left, Heather Dinslage, Aud Koch, and Lexis Funk have over 30 years of landscape experience and are all licensed arborists. Dinslage, team leader, has 15 years landscaping experience including maintenance work at the Department of Roads and plant installation for a private company. Koch, with a degree in Studio Art worked in Portland for Marvel Comics before returning to Nebraska. At the beginning of the COVID pandemic she took a job with a tree trimming service, and discovered she enjoyed working outside. Since coming to the Capitol she has completed the Master Gardener training. Funk graduated from the University of Nebraska with a degree in plant sciences while working summers at a nursery selling plants. She then took a position as Master Gardener at the Great Plains Zoo and Delbridge Museum in Sioux Falls, S.D. Returning to Nebraska, she joined the grounds crew of the Capitol. This newly assembled team enjoys their work and takes pride in maintaining the national historic landmark landscape. 🏡



The Nebraska Capitol Commission holds their quarterly meetings in Hearing Room #1507 on the ground floor of the Capitol. These meetings are open to the public. For a schedule of meetings with agendas, please go to:

<https://capitol.nebraska.gov/about/nebraska-capitol-commission/>

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Cold Storage Changed

When the Nebraska State Capitol was completed in 1932, all offices of state government were located in the building. The Departments of Public Works, Health, Agriculture, Insurance, Motor Vehicles, and Pardons among others, along with the Historical Society had offices on first floor. Legislators' offices were their desks on the floor of the two Legislative Chambers. As government grew some agencies were moved out of the Capitol into additional office buildings. Finally in 1975 with the construction of the Nebraska State Office Building agencies were moved and space in the Capitol opened for the possibility of expanding Legislative office space.

For years the Bureau of Health occupied the northwest corner of first floor. Within the Bureau of Health there were various laboratories doing research. As medical knowledge increased during the ten years of Capitol construction, the Bureau of Health needed refrigerated space to hold medical specimens and a storage room inside Room #1015 was divided in two. Two separate insulated doors were added, the spaces were lined with cork and cooled by a basement refrigeration unit installed for that purpose.

When the former Bureau of Health suite of offices became individual senator's offices, the former refrigerated spaces were converted to office supply and file storage with minimal structural alteration. During the current HVAC project work contractors and Office of the Capitol Commission staff closed an opening in the common wall and converted one of the cork lined spaces into standard storage while preserving the smaller cork lined refrigerated space. As the Capitol's architect Bertram Goodhue intended, the Capitol's adaptive use office spaces can be reconfigured for updated purposes while still retaining components which document the Capitol's architectural history for future generations.



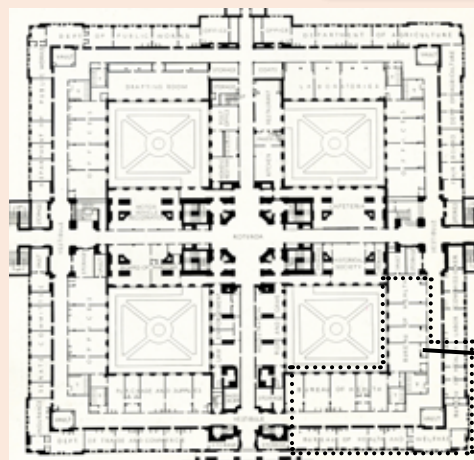
Modifying a space previously created for additional refrigerated storage began with the removal of an insulated door and interior cork



walls. During that process, the cork back wall of the adjacent original refrigerated unit was uncovered, above center. OCC staff removed the "refrigerator door" and then OCC mason Dan Kratky repaired and modified the tile wall opening to allow OCC carpenter Mike Marshall, above left, to install a new walnut door for the improved office storage space. As part of their project work, the HVAC contractors created a false wall to stabilize the 4" thick cork they began plaster repair and painting, right above. The reinstallation of door casings and slate base in the office means Phase 3 work is almost complete and a senator and staff will return to find improved office storage space.

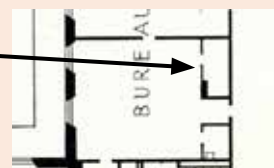


The original refrigerated storage unit has 4 inch thick cork lined walls which were repainted to preserve the cork, above center. Shelving was returned to the original wall-mounted brackets, left, readying it for storage use by legislative staff. Above right, the original "refrigerator door" awaits reinstallation on a cart in Room # 1015. The thickness of the door emphasizes its former function, keeping cold air inside the storage area.



Nebraska's original board of health law was enacted in 1891. In 1917, as discussion of a third Capitol began, the legislature passed a law reorganizing the health department.

Left, a 1934 first floor plan of this the third Capitol shows the location of the Bureau of Health in the first floor northwest quadrant. The inset below shows the location of the original space set aside for refrigerated storage.



Original Trees Still Stand--For Now

In 1934, following the end of the construction of the Nebraska State Capitol, work on the grounds began. The site was cleared, graded and prepared for landscaping. Nebraska's first professionally trained landscape architect, Ernst Herminghaus, used his landscape design, the placement of trees and shrubs, to enhance the building's architecture and frame views of the Capitol. In some instances he chose very large evergreen specimens for immediate impact, especially at the entrances. The deciduous trees out in the lawn were planted in smaller sizes. Herminghaus had very specific ideas about how tree size and placement would affect a visitor's perception of the building. He understood the building would stand for hundreds of years while the plant material, trees and shrubs, would be planted, grow, age, outgrow their space, be removed, and be replanted, beginning the process all over again.

Currently, only a few of the original trees planted on the grounds remain. The trees and shrubs planted in 1934 have aged and outgrown their space or been damaged by storms and squirrels, and had to be removed. The Concolor firs flanking the north and south entrances have been replaced several times. Herminghaus prescribed these firs be planted in graduated heights, larger near the street and progressively smaller toward the building to create a false perspective. The firs have grown at different rates or succumbed to disease. During the 1998-2010 Exterior Masonry Restoration Project the fir trees were removed from the north and south entrances to allow contractors access to disassemble, repair and rebuild the walls. The original Mugo pine shrubs at the Capitol's base had grown too large and were removed during the Masonry Project and replaced with smaller varieties. Replacing trees on the Capitol grounds has been done using grants from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum and project funds. Trees have been planted on the Capitol grounds in celebration of Arbor Day for decades. Each tree replanted has been of the species and in the location identified in the original Herminghaus landscape plan.

Above right and enlarged photos, squirrels do a considerable amount of damage to the Capitol's trees. They can easily kill a young tree by stripping bark off the trunk. It takes them a bit longer to damage and ultimately kill larger mature trees. Squirrels' teeth, like those of all rodents, grow constantly and require constant chewing to keep them trimmed. As the squirrels chew on the tree's bark, they create depressions where water can collect, rotting the exposed wood. Squirrels also chew holes in trees to build nests where they can live over-winter and have young. These hollow nests allow insects access to the interior of trees and their activity damages the structural integrity of the limbs and trunks of trees. Once enough damage has occurred, the branches fall off; occasionally entire trees fall over.



Above left, one of the original oak trees planted on the southeast lawn in 1934 lived for 90 years before it had to be removed after wind storm damage caused one huge branch to fall. Above right, First Lady Susanne Shore and students plant a replacement tree during the 2015 Arbor Day ceremony.



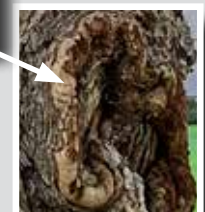
Left, the original trees on the northeast lawn have been replaced over the past few decades while staying true to the Capitol landscape architect's original species and location.



Left, a cute, fluffy and destructive squirrel has hollowed out a nest in a 30-year-old oak tree. This damage to the trunk will ultimately kill the tree. Below, this hole in the top of a large branch will eventually cause the large branch to fall.



Below, the lighter colored area at the edge of the hole indicates recent gnawing.



BEHIND THE SCENES

More Than Mowing

The most visible task associated with grounds maintenance at the Nebraska State Capitol is mowing the four-square-block lawn. The trees and shrubs just seem to exist within the expanse of grass. In reality, mowing is the least significant task performed by the Office of the Capitol Commission grounds maintenance team. Understanding the growth cycle of the trees and shrubs on the grounds, practicing proper pruning techniques and using proper pest management insure a healthy life for these important components of the landscape. Having a team dedicated to working only on the Capitol site means they can monitor trees and shrubs and properly care for them in a timely manner. Outside contractors brought in once a year for such tasks lack the knowledge and experience to understand specific Capitol growing conditions and cannot monitor seasonal changes in the growth and health of the plant material. The trees and shrubs on the grounds will benefit from the attention, and proper maintenance of the plant material will save taxpayer's money. 🍷



As licensed Arborists, staff are prepared to care for the Capitol's trees, large and small. Left, Koch, in full safety gear, prunes an ash tree. Proper pruning is a two step process. First, an initial cut removes the bulk of the limb, minimizing damage to the main branch. A closer cut will finish the job safely. Right, Funk checks a flowering tree in the courtyard for aphids.



With just Capitol grounds to care for, staff can properly maintain the courtyards. Left, Koch and Dinslage prune roses in the spring to encourage summer-long blooms. Above, with monitoring, staff is able to detect pest problems early and take action to keep the roses healthy.



Above, in this 2011 view of the west horseshoe drive, the original junipers planted on the grounds in 1934 have grown unhindered; the shrubs near the building have grown without proper pruning. The concolor firs along the plaza have grown to fill their space beside the drive. Above right, 12 years later, the firs along the drive had grown too large and were trimmed back to allow cars to pass; some of the firs had died and been removed. Capitol Landscape Architect Ernst Herminghaus believed trees and shrubs that outgrew their space should be removed and replaced with smaller ones. This spring the overgrown junipers were replaced and will be monitored and trimmed as needed. Right, the shrubs near the Capitol's base have been trimmed or replanted. Grounds maintenance staff will monitor the growth and condition of the plant materials.




On the building, another plant, algae, is being removed by contractors using a biocide, water and a powerwasher.



Above, Funk carefully hand prunes spires at the south entrance. Taking out the larger, older branches rejuvenates the shrubs to keep them healthy. Along the sidewalks, improper pruning by contractors with power equipment results in dead branches and will eventually lead to expensive replacement.

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

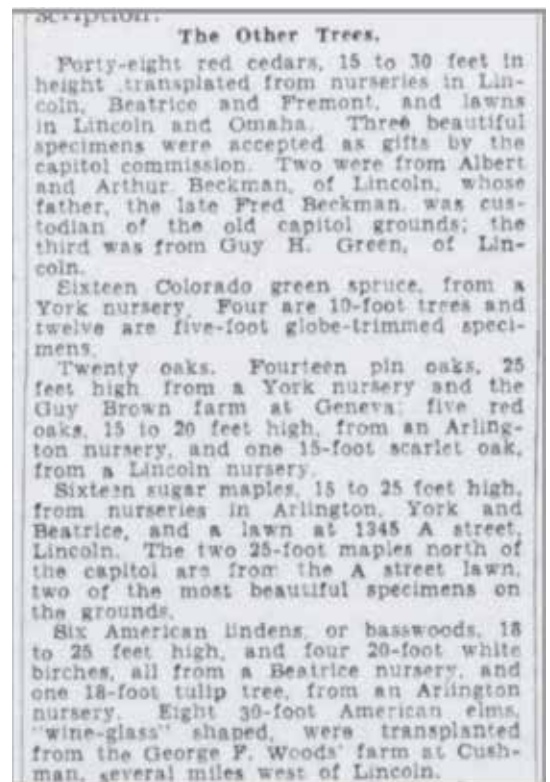
The Nebraska Capitol Collections hold a wealth of material and information about Bertram Goodhue's Capitol. From the original competition material to examples of original infrastructure removed during the current HVAC Upgrade Project, the Collections contain items of interest for current and future Capitol caretakers. Staff is always researching to add information to the archive. During the Courtyard Landscape Restoration Project, Capitol Preservation Architect Matt Hansen began to search the Capitol Archive for information on the original plant materials specified by Capitol Landscape Architect Ernst Herminghaus. Looking through online newspaper archives from across the state, Hansen discovered supplemental information about one of the names on a receipt in the Archive. J. J. Lydick supplied the concolor firs originally planted on the Capitol grounds and Hansen's research located information about his life and farm in Burt County. As with many aspects of the creation of the new Capitol, the landscaping of the grounds was newsworthy. Fortunately for Office of the Capitol Commission staff, these news articles provide additional information for the maintenance and care of the Capitol. 



News articles printed in the Lincoln Star newspaper provided Nebraskans information about the Capitol grounds in 1934.

Left, the ceremonial planting of the first tree on the grounds was the privilege of Capitol Commission chairman Governor Charles Bryan, pictured with shovel in hand. In the photograph published on February 4, 1934, Capitol Landscape Architect Ernst Herminghaus is pictured on the left, and William Younkin, supervising architect of construction is on the right.

Right, a March 11, 1934 Lincoln Star article identified trees for the landscape and the location of the nurseries across the state that provided them.



J. J. Lydick was a self-trained evergreen specialist in Burt County, Nebraska. He planted numerous species of evergreens in windbreaks on his farm. From his collection he provided forty-four concolor firs for the Capitol grounds in 1934. They can be seen growing on the Lydick farm in the above photo. Large 25 foot tall trees were dug and loaded onto trucks for the trip to Lincoln in the middle photo. The photo on the right shows some of the Lydick trees in place at the south entrance.



CAPITOL EVENTS

Independence Day

July 4, 2023

The Capitol will be open for public tours from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Purple Heart Day

August 7, 2023

The Capitol's tower will be lit purple as the Nebraska Department of Veteran's Affairs honors those wounded killed while serving in the Armed Forces

50 Mile March

August 26, 2023

The 50 Mile March Foundation will assemble at 3:00 p.m. on the north plaza of the Capitol as they prepare their walk to Omaha to draw attention to homeless veterans.

North American Festival of Wales

Opening Ceremony

August 31, 2023

The Welsh North American Association will begin their national convention with in the 2nd floor rotunda at 4:00 p.m.

Labor Day Holiday

September 4, 2023

The Nebraska State Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

New Attorney Swearing-In Ceremony

September 21, 2023

The Nebraska Supreme Court will swear-in new Nebraska attorneys in a 2:00 p.m. ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda.

New Probation Officer Swearing-In

October 5, 2023

The Administrative Offices of the Courts and Probation will swear-in new probation officers in a 1:30 p.m. 2nd floor rotunda program.

Indigenous Peoples/Columbus Day

October 9, 2023

The Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

NBEA Capitol Ceremony

November 3, 2023

The Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects will license new engineers and architects in a 3:00 p.m. ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda of the Capitol.

Veterans Day Holiday

November 11, 2023

The Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. and the tower illuminated in green at dusk.

Thanksgiving Holiday

November 23 - 24

The Capitol will be closed for the Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday and Friday. The building will reopen for tours on Saturday at 10:00 a.m.

Capitol Concert

December 3, 2023

The Epic Vocal Ensemble will perform a holiday concert in the 2nd floor rotunda at 2:00 p.m.

Capitol Tree Lighting and Carol Sing

December 10, 2023

The official state Christmas tree will be lit during a 2:00 p.m. ceremony in the second floor rotunda.

Christmas Day

December 25, 2023

The Capitol will be closed.

All events at the Nebraska State Capitol are free and open to the public.

Guided Tours are offered Monday-Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, except at noon; Saturday and Holidays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, except at noon; Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. Please call 402.471.0448 or visit www.capitol.org for more information.

2023 Capitol Arbor Day Tree Planting



On April 28, 2023, State Auditor Mike Foley looks on as Hanna Pinneo, Executive Director of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, discusses the importance of tree planting in Nebraska (left). State Forester Dr. John Erixson, Arbor Day Foundation President, Katie Loos, and Dr. Orval Gigstad, Nebraska Association of Resource Districts Board President, also provided remarks regarding their work encouraging tree planting in Nebraska. To conclude the program Mr. Foley read the Governor's Arbor Day Proclamation and (inset) ceremonially planted an elm on the West lawn of the Capitol.

In 1985, Landscape Architect Richard Sutton created the first masterplan, updated by Big Muddy Workshop in Omaha, for the restoration of Ernst Hemminghaus' original landscape. The Office of the Capitol Commission has seen the Arbor Day tree planting ceremonies as an opportunity to highlight Nebraska's homegrown holiday and plant trees to restore the Hemminghaus landscape. 



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The Capitol Sower, published by the Office of the Capitol Commission, is available online at www.capitol.org. Contact the Tourism Supervisor at [<roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov>](mailto:roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov) for more information.

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THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION |

JUNE 2023

Nebraska Capitol Commission

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Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924

Courtyard Fountain Care



To keep the water in the Capitol's courtyard fountains clear and clean, the water is constantly circulated through a system of filters inside the Capitol. While public water systems use chlorine to sanitize water, the use of chlorine would discolor and damage the fountains' bronze bowls and glass tiles. Instead, the water is sanitized using bromine.

Algae growth is another concern for Office of the Capitol Commission

Maintenance staff as they work to keep the courtyard fountains running clean and clear. Maintenance staff prevents algae in the courtyard fountains with a weekly treatment to kill the algae. The algicide foams as it interacts with the microscopic plants. Depending on the amount of algae in the fountain, the foam can be quite noticeable and long lasting. As the algae dies the foam disappears and the water runs clear again. 🍷