

THE CAPITOL SOWER

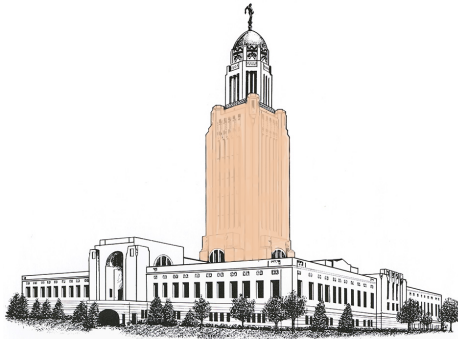
THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME SEVENTEEN | NUMBER ONE | FEB 2025

HVAC Phase 5 Update

The final phase of the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Replacement and Window Repair Project will begin this spring. The HVAC replacement project, in year seven, will focus on the tower of the Nebraska State Capitol. This final phase may prove the most challenging for contractors. Rather than working horizontally through large open areas, the tower work will require contractors to move vertically through small shafts rising 150 - 200 feet from the third to thirteenth floor. Capitol staff usually housed in the tower were moved to outside office space when the project began. The vacant tower offices allowed Legislative and Judicial branch staff to move within the Capitol as they vacated the base, quadrant by quadrant. The offices on first, second and third floors are reoccupied now with staff enjoying the comfort of the new system.

In each of the four phases of the HVAC Project in the base of the Capitol, contractors and Office of the Capitol Commission (OCC) staff worked in Preservation Space. Preservation Spaces are the highly finished formal chambers housing the functions of government, such as the Court Rooms, Legislative Chambers, the Governor's Suite, and ancillary offices. Contractors took special care to protect the finely finished rooms from damage as they removed the old and installed the new system. OCC staff was quite active in the restoration of finishes and furnishings in these Preservation Spaces.

The eight floors of tower offices are Adaptive Use Space with



standard finishes. While OCC staff will be called upon as needed for support of the HVAC project, work in the tower will not require their special expertise. The HVAC contractors and subcontractors will continue to work in Phase 5 spaces as they have through the other phases of the project.



Services for tower offices rise through the northeast and southwest elevator towers. The 1960's HVAC upgrade added chases to carry steam, chilled water and air ducts into the tower, above. In some instances, above right, dropped ceilings were added to accommodate the duct work which took up almost half of the vestibule space, below. Work to remove these chases has begun, left.



Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

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Governor, Chairman

John Arch
Speaker of the Legislature
Vice-Chairman

Jeffrey J. Funke
Chief Justice Supreme Court

Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg
Dean
College of Architecture, UNL

Daryl Bohac
CEO/Executive Director
Nebraska State Historical Society

Doug Carey
Congressional District 1

John Wightman Jr.
Congressional District 2

Katie Spohn
Congressional District 3

Brett Daugherty
Acting Administrator
Secretary



The People of the OCC Office of the Capitol Commission

ADMINISTRATION

Vacant, Administrator
Matt Hansen, Preservation Architect
Vacant, Preservation Architect
Brett Daugherty, Capitol Manager
Acting Administrator
Tammy Honnor, Facilities
Construction Coordinator
Sarah Lacey,
Administrative Technician
Clark DeVries
HVAC Project Manager

ARCHIVE

Karen Wagner, Archivist

CARPENTRY

Vacant, Shop Supervisor
Lana Gabel,
Furniture Conservator
Dawn Snider,
Furniture Conservation
Supervisor
Hunter VonHolt, Carpenter
Dan Kratky, Mason
John MacKichan,
Hardware Conservator
Mike Marshall, Cabinet Maker
Carpentry Supervisor

CUSTODIAL

David Hoelscher,
Capitol Conservation Supervisor
Richard Mallam, Custodial Leader
Dennis Roy, Custodial Leader

GROUNDS

Heather Dinslage,
Groundskeeper Leader
Aud Koch, Maintenance Technician
Lexis Funk,
Maintenance Technician

MAINTENANCE

Vacant, Maintenance Supervisor
Jeff Gillett, Plumber
Tahir Karimi, Electrician
Chris Lahmon,
Maintenance Technician
Harry Holcome,
Maintenance Technician

TOURS

Roxanne Smith,
Public Information Officer/
Tourism Supervisor/
Special Events Coordinator
Allison Monzu, Tourism Aide
Susan Myers, Tourism Aide
Kirk Wiota, Tourism Aide

OCC AT WORK Experience and Service

Maintenance Supervisor Retires



*Michael Jordan
Maintenance
Supervisor
30 years*

After 30 years of service to the State of Nebraska, Office of the Capitol Commission Maintenance Supervisor Michael Jordan is retiring. Jordan was hired as a maintenance specialist at the Capitol, then left to become Maintenance Supervisor at the Nebraska State Office Building just a block away. When the opportunity arose, he returned to the Capitol to supervise the care of mechanical systems throughout the building. For the past 15 years, with knowledge gained from working with the old timers who saw the 1960's HVAC system installed, he and his team succeeded in keeping the old system operating well past its prime. Jordan is happy to see the final phase of the HVAC Replacement Project begin, and leaves knowing the new system will heat and cool the building efficiently. As part of the OCC team Jordan shared an appreciation of the historic building. In retirement he plans to move to be near his grandchildren and will spend time in his shop and at the lake fishing. The Office of the Capitol Commission thanks him for his service and wishes him the best. 🍷

The Office of the Capitol Commission appreciates the experience of staff who demonstrate daily their dedication to the care of the Capitol. With the knowledge gained through their years with the Capitol Commission, they are able to maintain the high level of preservation Nebraskans expect for their Registered National Historic Landmark Capitol.



*Dawn Snider
Furniture
Conservator
15 years*



*John MacKichan
Machinist
15 years*



*Tammy Honnor
Facilities
Construction
Coordinator
35 Years*



*Roxanne Smith
Tourism
Supervisor
40 years*

Commission's 2025 Schedule

The Nebraska Capitol Commission will hold their quarterly meetings in Hearing Room #1507 on the ground floor of the Capitol. The Commission uses these meetings to oversee and review Capitol maintenance and preservation projects, discuss and approve projects and the upcoming budget for the Office of the Capitol Commission, and set administrative

rules for the use of the Capitol. The last meeting of the year includes a joint Capitol Commission/Capitol Environs Commission meeting. These meetings are open to the public. 🍷

- June 12, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.
- November 13, 2024,
Joint Meeting at 10:00 a.m.
Capitol Commission at 11:00 a.m.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Chief of Staff's Desk Restoration

Seven years ago Office of the Capitol Commission staff undertook the challenging task of restoring the Governor's Desk. Unlike office furniture purchased in bulk in the 1930-40's for agency use in the Capitol, the furnishings for the Governor's Suite were custom-made, one-of-a-kind pieces. While furnishings from the Governor's Suite were in storage during Phase 4 of the HVAC Project, OCC staff had the opportunity to restore the custom desk used by the Governor's Chief of Staff. The Chief of Staff's desk had been in continuous use for almost 100 years. OCC's highly skilled furniture conservation staff repaired and restored the desk and then returned it to service for the next 100 years.



Above, the Chief of Staff's desk arrives in the Carpenter shop. The desk is documented by desk style, inventory number and the date the restoration began. Right, the desk shows the almost 100 years of wear from constant use.



Above left and right, the first step in restoration removes the old finish from surfaces. Sanding removes any remnants of finish.



Left, after sanding and repairs, the furniture staff applies stain to unify the desk's appearance, and restore any color lost to sun fading.

Below, the final step is to apply a durable finish over the stain to protect the desk's surface.



Initial inspection of the desk revealed the top had cracked along the seams of the walnut planks used to fabricate the desk top. Many years of experience informed OCC's carpenter in his plan to repair the damage. Slightly enlarging the cracked area allowed for the insertion of walnut splices to stabilize the seams.




Left, top, the opened areas await the inserts.

Middle, after the inserts were glued in place the top was sanded and then stained.

Bottom, after finishing the repairs disappear.


Upward and Onward Blinds and Elevators

Now that Office of the Capitol Commission (OCC) staff have completed their intensive work restoring the fine finishes in the Governor's Suite, they have returned to other work associated with the Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Project. As the final phase of the project moves into the tower, OCC staff will follow -- upward and onward. There are over 600 blinds covering windows in the Capitol, each needing routine maintenance. The blinds regulate the amount of sunlight coming into the Capitol and protect the interior finishes from the damaging effects of ultraviolet light. In providing this service, the blinds themselves can suffer from sun damage. Paint, tapes and cords need to be routinely inspected for damage and replaced to keep these valuable window coverings functional. The HVAC work has required the removal of blinds which enables OCC staff to inspect and repair the blinds before reinstallation. 



Left, removed blinds are shrink wrapped together and placed in bins beside new slats. Below, After disassembly, the blind components are laid out for inspection and repair. Right, OCC staff uses a specially created rack to reassemble the blinds using new tapes, and cords. The tapes almost always need to be replaced as they are most susceptible to sun damage.



Each phase of the Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning Replacement Project required large sections of the Capitol to be vacated. Early in the planning process it was decided the Capitol's tower floors would serve as temporary office space for those displaced in the base. Legislative offices, including senators and staff, as well as executive and judicial branch personnel were moved up into and then back down from the tower as their original spaces were renovated. While OCC staff and contractors worked to protect the walnut paneled elevators, increased use by visitors, staff and movers took a toll on elevator cabs. While one elevator was under maintenance, OCC staff restored and refinished damaged panels. 



In addition to use by contractors, during everyday use the small elevators can become crowded, as visitors and staff brush up against the walls and the finishes can become damaged. Far left, OCC staff moved their shop to the elevator for over a week. Staff removed finish to expose bare wood and then applied color to hide the scratches, near left. Once the stain dried, a durable finish was reapplied, above. Right, the scratches and worn surfaces go unnoticed in the restored elevator. 



BEHIND THE SCENES

Capitol Floor Care

Monday through Friday at 5:00 p.m., as hundreds of executive, legislative, and judicial staff exit the Nebraska State Capitol, the Capitol's night time custodial crew enter. Under the leadership of the Office of the Capitol Commission's Conservation Supervisor David Hoelscher and Custodial Leader Richard Mallam, the floor crew works to clean and protect the granolith, slate and marble first and second floors. Protecting the floors from the elements is important for the long-term life and beauty of the Capitol. Prior to the 1980's the stone floors in the Capitol were left bare and it became apparent the floors were suffering, as the soft marble was being worn away. It was determined that covering the floors with a wax finish would protect the stone from further damage. Finish was applied year after year. After 30 years the many layers of finish became discolored, and divots and scratches appeared. Ten years ago, conservation staff began to experiment with stripping techniques which would remove the old finish without damaging the stone underneath. Now, with a successful technique developed, and as duties allow, staff is undertaking the very time-consuming restoration of the beautiful marble mosaic floors. 🏠



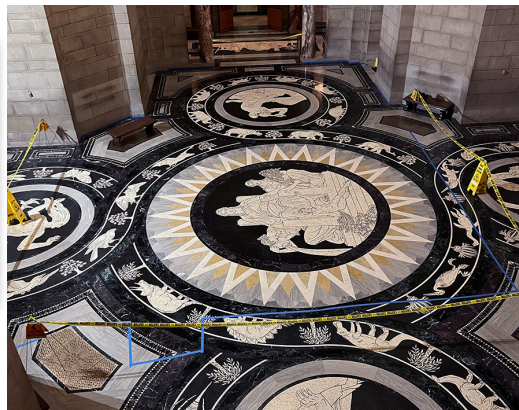
Above, using a scrubber, staff slowly removes finish. The need to protect the stone means the finish must be removed one thin layer at time, over a period of several nights. Once the finish is removed and bare stone exposed, staff applies a modern, more durable finish, left. Below left detail, the applied finish protects and enhances the colors of the bare marble. Image below, the left side shows how the old finish hides the beauty of the stone, visible in the restored section on the right side.



Removing the old finish from Hildreth Meiere's rotunda mosaics of the fossil life of Nebraska brings the contrasting colors to life. The restoration process, carried out over several days or weeks, often leaves bare marble exposed to scratches and stains. Below center, in the taped off areas staff has applied a first coat of finish to recently restored sections and additional finish in other areas. Ultimately staff will apply four coats of finish to protect the floors.



Above, the old finish makes the white marble look gray, while a scratch in the finish on the pterodactyl's back reveals the true color beneath.




Above, the restored black and white tiles provide a sharp contrast in the centipede in a restored section of the floor.

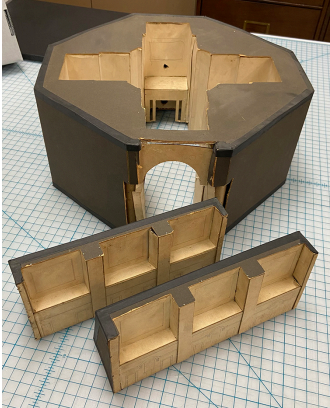
WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Because the creation of the Nebraska State Capitol was overseen by the Nebraska Capitol Commission, a state entity, all associated drawings, specifications, correspondence, photographs, artwork, and minutes of the Capitol Commission meetings were collected and stored away in a Capitol vault once the final bills were paid in 1934. In the 1970's and 80's, Capitol preservation architects began to sort through this material, organizing it to create the Nebraska Capitol Collections. This material is used to inform the care and long-term preservation of the building. While all two- and three-dimensional materials in the Collections, are related to this third Capitol, their relationship to each other is sometimes unclear. Connections are often made while researching completely different topics.

Recently, while gathering material for a research request about Capitol Thematic Consultant Hartley Burr Alexander, Ph.D., a reference was found in an October 11, 1926, letter from Goodhue Associates to Alexander stating, "We have sent you a colored drawing by express, also the models and Miss Meiere's drawings have been forwarded." This statement

helped the Capitol Archivist put together pieces of the Collection puzzle.

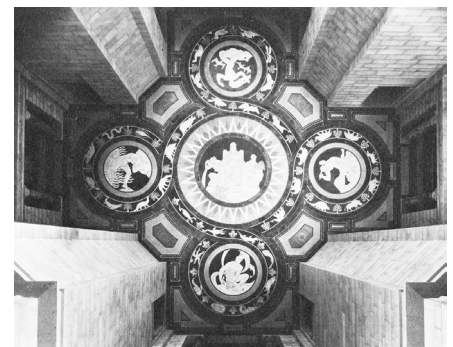
Earlier, while rearranging shelved material in the archive to accommodate plastic encapsulation for protection during the HVAC project, the archivist rediscovered long-stored items. One item, a rough cardboard model of the foyer and rotunda walls was stamped to indicate it came from the Goodhue office but had no information on when or why it was created. The archivist realized the mysterious model and a well-documented colored pencil sketch of Meiere's proposed floor mosaics created by the architect's office were the items identified in the October 11, 1926, letter. The model fits perfectly on the colored presentation drawing of the marble floor and was used to give the commissioners a view of the yet to be completed spaces at the October 26, 1926, Commission meeting. While there were later modifications to Meiere's designs, the overall vision was approved at this meeting. 



Left, a previously unidentified architect's model of the foyer and rotunda was a puzzle piece in the Nebraska Capitol Collections. Right, a well documented architect's drawing of the foyer and rotunda floors. A search of correspondence on an unrelated subject enabled the Capitol Archivist to fit the two pieces together, far right. The model walls fit the drawing perfectly. Below left and right, the walls and floor were designed to show the Nebraska Capitol Commission how the spaces would appear upon completion of the building.



The photo below, taken soon after construction was completed shows the 1926 model was an good representation of the final floor design. In the final design mosaicist Hildreth Meiere redesigned the central rotunda medallion and the large rectangular panels were reworked and rearranged on the floor.



CAPITOL EVENTS

"I Love NU" Day

March 31 - April 4, 2025

The University of Nebraska System will have a display in the 1st floor rotunda.

Walk for Life

April 12, 2025

I've Got A Name will hold an anti-human trafficking rally on the north side of the Capitol from 10:30 a.m. - noon.

Nebraska Community College Display

April 21 - 28, 2025

The Community College Association will have a display in the 1st floor rotunda.

Arbor Day

April 25, 2025

Arbor Day

Nebraska's homegrown holiday.

Capitol tours 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

State Holocaust Commemoration

April 27, 2025

The Jewish Federation of Lincoln and the Institute for Holocaust Education will hold a 2:00 p.m. ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda.

Worker's Memorial Day Vigil

April 28, 2025

The United Support Memorial for Workplace Fatalities will hold a vigil on the North Plaza at 6:30 p.m.

Operation Lifesaver Poster Contest Winners

April 29 - May 9, 2025

Operation Lifesaver and Nebraska Libraries will display safety posters based on the "Train on Track" book in the 1st floor rotunda.

Mayor's Run

May 3, 2025

The Lincoln Track Club will host a youth fun run around the Capitol from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

WWII Medal Presentation

May 8, 2025

The Nebraska Department of Veterans' Affairs and Governor Pillen will present medals to surviving WWII veterans.

Peace Officer's Memorial Day

May 13 - 18, 2024

The Nebraska State Patrol will honor Nebraska's fallen peace officers in a 1st floor display.

Pony Express-Mental Health Awareness

May 17, 2025

Families Inspiring Families will be on the north plaza from 12:30 - 3:00 p.m. to draw attention to children's mental health needs.

UNL NROTC Commissioning Ceremony

May 17, 2025

The University of Nebraska Naval ROTC program will commission six new officers in the second floor rotunda at 1:00 p.m.

Memorial Day

May 27, 2024

Capitol tours 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Cornhusker Girls State

June 5, 2024

The American Legion Auxiliary will hold the Girls State Inauguration ceremony in the 2nd floor rotunda at 2:00 p.m.

Star City Pride Parade


June 14, 2025


Star City Pride will sponsor a parade on the streets around the Nebraska State Capitol beginning at 10:00 a.m.

Awards Program

June 17, 2025

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services will host employee awards programs in the 2nd floor rotunda of the Capitol at 10:30 a.m. and at 1:30 p.m.

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 p.m., except at noon; Saturday and Holidays from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except at noon; Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Please call 402.471.0448 or visit www.capitol.org for more information. 



The Nebraska Music Education Association held their annual Capitol Concert Series in the Capitol rotunda. The 2025 noontime concerts were kicked off on March 24th by the Plainview Pirates Band, above left, and the Wesleyan Choir, right, completed the series on March 31st.



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FEB 2025

Nebraska Capitol Commission

Nebraska State Capitol

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Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924

In this issue:

DESK RESTORATION... 3

BLINDS..... 4

FLOOR CARE..... 5

MODEL..... 6

EVENTS..... 7

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Finishing Touches

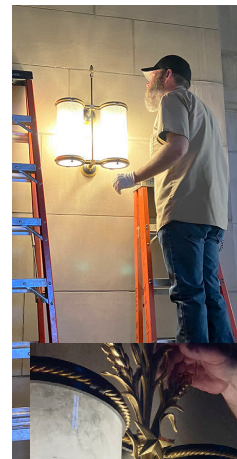
After contractors complete the installation of the ground source geothermal recirculating refrigerant heating and cooling system, and windows are repaired to reduce air infiltration, wall and floor protection is removed allowing walls to be repaired and repainted, and carpet to be installed. Once doors and window blinds are reinstalled, staff return to their offices.

Many decorative and functional components of the public areas of the Nebraska State Capitol received special

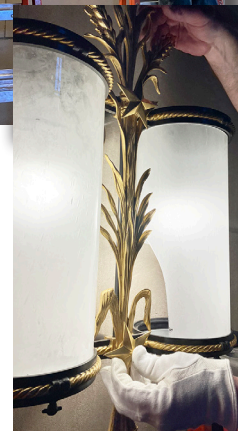
treatment after removal from the project areas. Cleaned and repaired, these original pieces are the finishing touches Office of the Capitol Commission (OCC) staff add to return the building to its preproject condition. 



The original steam heating system in the Capitol included radiators to heat the corridors, above left. During the current project the grills covering the radiators were removed by contractors and repainted. OCC's staff removed, cleaned and polished the shields or deflectors above the grills, above right.



Left, after OCC's electrician and machinist placed the fixture on the Vestibule stair wall, the machinist took over the task of adding the decorative elements to the fixture. Below, the sheaf of wheat which covers a mounting rod is attached.



Left, the detail of the bronze light fixture can be seen in this close-up, as can a broken glass shade. Replacing broken glass in Capitol original fixtures is always a challenge. Many shades were custom sized and made with techniques no longer used. Preservation staff works to replicate originals whenever and as closely as possible.