

100 years ago - No Going Back

After Capitol Architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's untimely death in April of 1924, a reorganized Bertram Goodhue's Associates-- Francis L. S. Mayers, Hardie Phillip, and Oscar H. Murray-- entered into a new contract with the Nebraska Capitol Commission. On November 14, 1924, they agreed to finish the design and construction of the new, third, Capitol. Once again the project was moving forward and the Commission was busy with decisions about window finishes, linoleum floors and marble columns in the Governor's Suite. The intent of the Nebraska Capitol Commission was to have the first rooms in the new building occupied by January of 1925. Work to complete construction and furnish rooms continued through the spring of 1925. At their March 19, 1925, meeting the Nebraska Capitol Commission opened bids for the demolition of the second Capitol. The J. H. Wiese Company of Omaha received the demolition bid, the Commission later determined the State would retain the salvaged second Capitol marble and slate floor tile for use in the new building, ultimately used in the courtyards. With the first phase nearly completed and occupied, in late March of 1925, the Commission advertised for second construction phase bids to be received by the end of April. Once the old building was vacated, contractors worked to demolish the old building and haul the material away. The old building was gone by August and excavation of the interior foundation and tower support piers were the first things to accomplish as second phase construction began. The second phase would eventually close the east side of the outer square and bring the east, north and south arms of the cross to the center rotunda area. The second phase of construction would take four years to complete.



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Left, seen from the Lincoln Monument, the second Capitol is enclosed by the outer square of the new building, an enclosed elevated walkway leads between the north and south sections of the new building. This west side of the square would be the last section completed in 1932. Above and inset, June 1, 1925, demolition workers remove the cupola from the second Capitol.



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By August 1, 1925, all that remains of the second Capitol is scattered rubble. Excavation of the footings, foundation and basement will be done from within the outer square. A rail line will be brought into the center under the east and west walkways. Excavation cranes will place the removed soil into railcars to be carried away and used for fill at the State Fair, now Innovation Campus, site along Salt Creek.



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The deepest footings are those under the tower. Above, the huge piers, up to 30 feet below ground level, which bear the weight of the tower were dug by machine and human power in September of 1925. After large holes for the tower's legs were dug by machine, the final piers in the sandstone substrate were dug by hand and the excavated soil carried out with buckets attached to pulleys, the shadow in the center of the photo. Ladders were used for access into the pier holes.



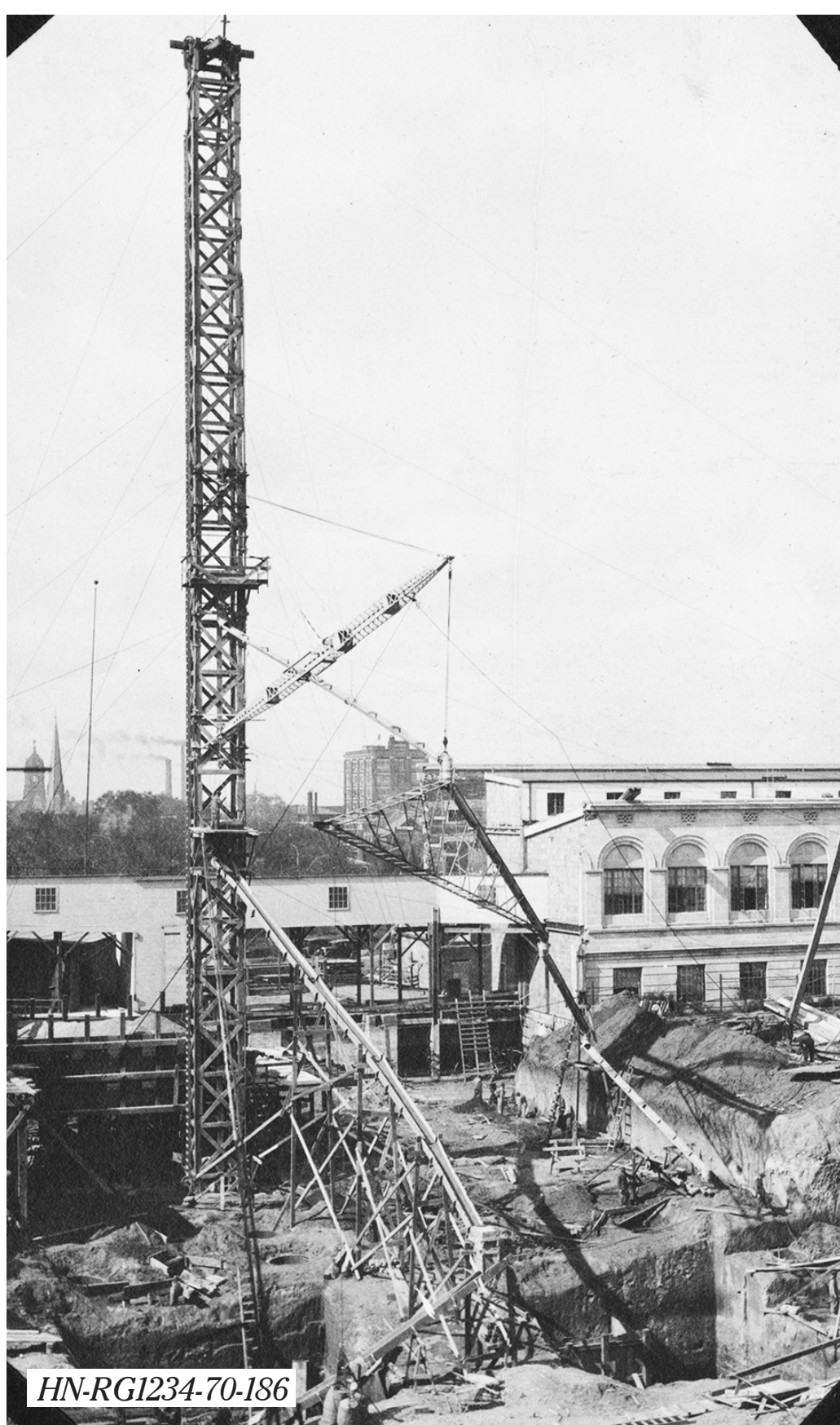
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To facilitate the excavation and removal of the soil upon which the second capitol stood, the rail line had to be extended and by October 10, 1925, entered the center of the site from the east and west sides. Excavating the basement of the third capitol down to the level of the newly completed outer square's basement filled railcar after railcar. In the above left photo, the rail line enters under the enclosed walkway which allowed movement between the north and south outer sections of the third Capitol. An excavator is parked on the rail line removing soil from what will become the first floor corridor under the East Legislative Chamber. Rail cars on either side will carry the soil away.

In the above right photo, the tower pier holes are being excavated. The pier in the hole on the left has been formed in the bottom and concrete will flow into the form through a series of channeled chutes coming from a concrete lift tower seen in the photo on the left. The photo below shows the same scene but looking to the north rather than west. In the right side of the photo below the rail line passes over the excavated first floor north corridor in front of the bricked-in arch between the Vestibule and the not yet constructed Foyer.



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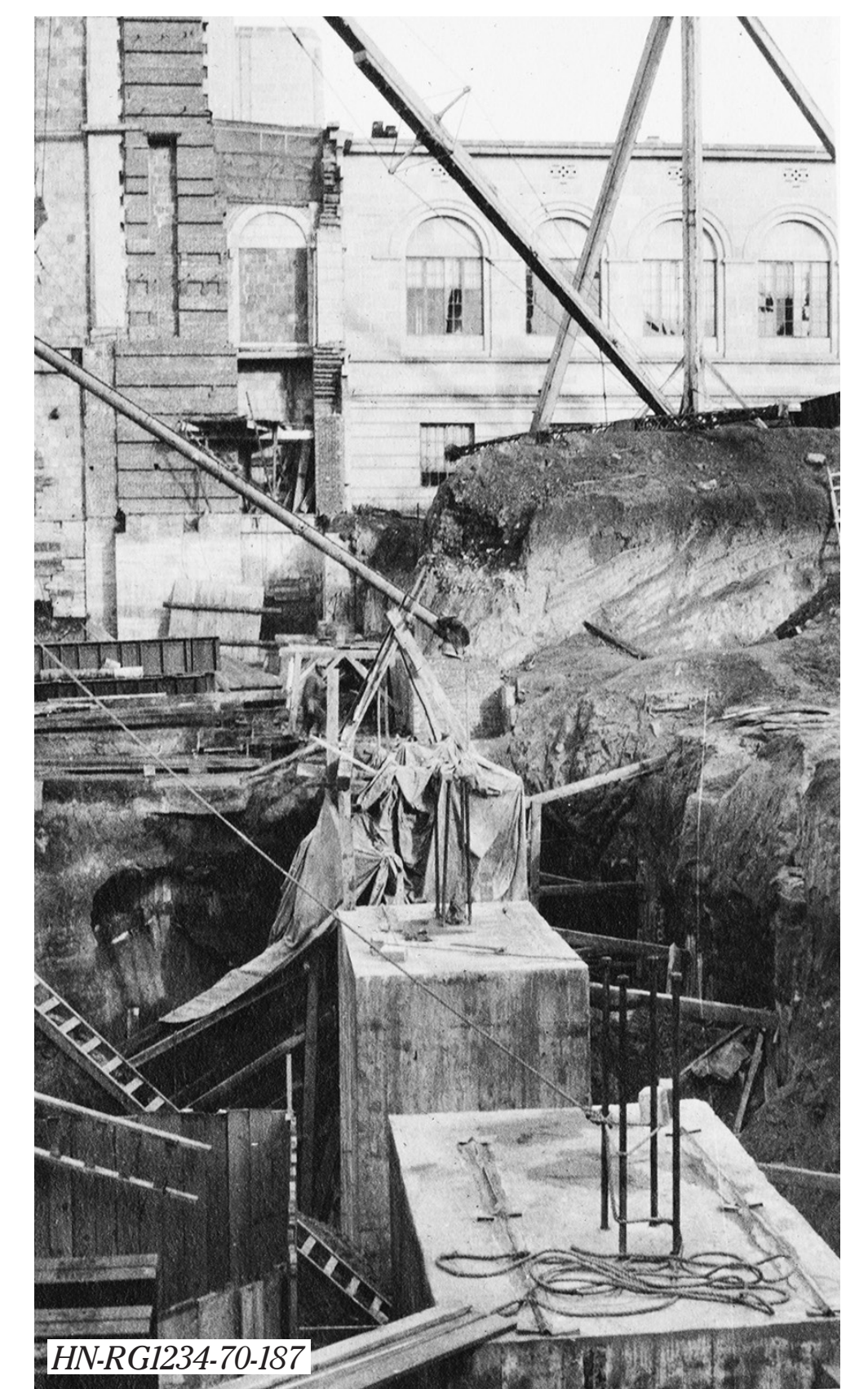
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By December of 1925 the scene inside the outer square of the new capitol had changed, excavation of basement and foundation walls was progressing. The rail line entering from the east had been removed to facilitate the architects plan to close the east side of the square base and build into the center. In the above photos, left looking west from center, and right looking north, the rail line is gone and the interior basement walls enclosing the courtyards are being defined; concrete work continues on the tower piers.

In the photo, below left, the east section of the basement is almost completely excavated. The concrete piers of the tower are visible in the middle of the photo. The arched windows in the photo on the right are offices in the new building and house state employees who, just like in the second Capitol, conducted state's business in a construction zone. In this north looking view piers which will bear the weight of the tower are visible in the foreground.



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