

THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME SEVENTEEN | NUMBER THREE | AUGUST 2026

Furnishing the New Capitol

Capitol architect Betram Goodhue's plan to build the new Capitol in phases fit Nebraskan's desire to build the Capitol in a fiscally responsible manner. Upon Goodhue's death in 1924, the Nebraska Capitol Commission began working with The Goodhue's Associates to complete the building following the phased construction plan. The first phase built the outer office square, moved government functions from the old to new building. Then the old Capitol was razed from the center of the site.

The second phase of construction was the most significant. Decisions made during this period, 1925 - 1929, focused on how the new Capitol would function as office space and how to finish the public areas of the Capitol. State agencies were consulted on the functionality of their new office space and agencies were making requests for modifications to meet their daily needs. These modifications were being made as construction on site continued. Because it was early in the process, state workers moved into the new building with their existing office furniture.

Initially the Governor and staff, and members of the Supreme Court and staff worked in minimally finished space. The final interior finishes for the structurally complete Governor's Suite and Supreme Court were yet to be determined. Artistic plans for the thematic program of art and inscriptions throughout the building were being finalized, and plans for

the Legislative Chambers were being discussed.

The Nebraska Capitol Commission was meeting monthly, sometimes more often, to make decisions and pay bills. Topics brought before the Nebraska Capitol Commission in 1926 included the construction of a joint heating plant to serve both the University of Nebraska and the new Capitol, whether to replace the onyx mullions in the foyer windows with Yule marble from Colorado, the addition of marble wainscoting in the outer first and second floor corridors, and what kind of promotional materials should be distributed to the general public. Bills for the operation of the railroad circling the new building continued to come in, track repairs, including labor and railroad spikes, and payments for locomotives to move materials on and off site.

While The Goodhue Associates were still involved with the artistic program for the Capitol, the Commission was taking a larger role. The Commission agreed to work with Augustus Vincent Tack, Goodhue's choice for the murals in the Governor's Suite, and opened discussion with the Lorenz Studios for wood carving to be executed in various chambers. In late 1926 thematic consultant Hartley Burr Alexander delivered his final Synopsis of Decorations and Inscriptions for the Nebraska State Capitol. Alexander then began to work more directly with mosaicist Hildreth Meiere on the floors and ceilings.

Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

Jim Pillen
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
Director & CEO
Nebraska State Historical Society

Doug Carey
Congressional District 1

Jack Wightman, Jr.
Congressional District 2

Katie Spohn
Congressional District 3

Brett Daugherty
Acting Capitol Administrator
Secretary



The Supreme Court Has Suggestions

Phase One of the four-phase construction of Bertram Goodhue's Capitol was completed by 1925. Completed meant floors, walls and ceilings in the outer square were built. Basic office finishes were in place and office furniture, desks, file cabinets, tables, and chairs from the old building were moved to the new office locations. The Nebraska Capitol Commission surveyed staff to discover their needs as they began to use the new building. As the demolition of the second Capitol was completed and construction on the central structure of the new Capitol progressed, staff communicated their needs to the Nebraska Capitol Commission. As a result the Capitol Commission worked with the architects to amend designs and change specifications.

The State Librarian expressed a desire to modify the design and plans for the State Library. The Architects agreed that the book stacks on the main floor could be moved away from the outer walls to allow better flow and access through the stacks, but the Architects did not agree to add private offices in the main room of the library. The tower was designed to have additional book stacks and storage for the State Law Library. But as construction

progressed it was determined the tower would not be needed for library use and the spaces were redesigned to be general office space.

The Supreme Court had definite ideas about their work spaces. A committee of Judges William Rose, George Day, and Edward Good presented a formal report with their desired changes for Court Room #2 to the Capitol Commission at their meeting on February 20, 1926. They asked to lengthen the Court Room front to back by 12 feet, and the Consultation Room by the same 12 feet, resulting in a smaller office space at the north end of that suite of rooms for staff. They were also concerned the original design for the Judges' bench was too narrow and suggested reducing the width of the stairs flanking the bench to give each Judge additional space, widening the space needed by the Chief Justice for record keeping. They also had ideas for changing the finishes in the rooms (see the section of report reproduced below). The Court Room we see today indicates when Commissioner Walter Head traveled to New York and meet with the architects, the Court's suggestions were incorporated into updated designs. 

"We are informed that the specifications call for wood paneling on the walls to a height of 4½ feet from the floor. We are of the opinion that the room would present a much finer appearance if this paneling would reach approximately 8 feet from the floor, similar to the paneling in one of the Governor's suite of rooms. We are also informed that the specifications call for a plaster ceiling. It occurs to us that a paneled wood ceiling, similar to that in the office occupied by the Governor's private secretary, would be more appropriate and present a much finer appearance.

W. B. Rose
Geo. A. Day
E. E. Good "

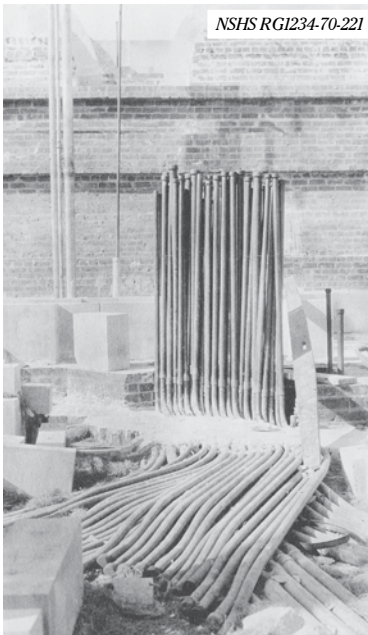
Electronic Voting

Early in Phase One of the construction of the new Capitol a representative of the Nebraska Legislature attended the February 23, 1923, Nebraska Capitol Commission meeting, as recorded in the Commission minutes below.

Moved by Mr. Head and seconded by Mr. Hardy - that whereas Mr. Diebold representing members of the Legislature has called attention of the Commission to the fact that a large number of states are installing Legislative Voting Machines, and it will cost considerable more to install such machines after the building is completed, if the conduits are not installed while the building is being constructed - that the Architect be instructed to provide for conduits so that Legislative voting machines may be installed whenever the Legislature votes to use same.

On roll call, all members voted in the affirmative.
Motion declared carried.

The Capitol Commission relied on the Legislature to investigate the electronic voting systems available from several suppliers and report their needs to the Commission. After three years of correspondence and discussion the Commission at their February 20, 1926, meeting determined that installing conduit in the floor of the Legislative Chambers would be the best option and would allow for any manufacturer of electronic voting systems chosen by the Legislature to install their system using the conduit provided. As construction of the east legislative chamber progressed, at the May 25, 1926, Commission meeting, discussion of electronic voting moved from internal infrastructure to the location of the Indicator Board for the electronic system. It was the recommendation of the Architects to place the Indicator Boards in the center of the wall at the front of both Legislative Chambers to be plainly visible by any member of the House or Senate. 



NSHS RGI234-70-221

Left, the conduit for the electronic voting system is in place very early in the construction of the East Legislative Chamber. The conduit lays in place on the sub-floor and once routed to the desks and voting stations, it will be covered with another layer of concrete. The vertical conduit will be encased within the northeast pier of the chamber. Right, construction of the north wall of the east chamber and northeast pier progresses. Top, the conduit can be seen rising above the limestone corner. Bottom, the balcony floor is in place above the corner arch. Electrical wires from each desk will move through the conduit to a room at the 3rd floor balcony level where connections will be made between individual voting stations and the lighted Indicator Panel.



NSHS RGI234-70-222



NSHS RGI234-70-225



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Nebraska Capitol Commission

Nebraska State Capitol

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Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869–1924

Proper Setting

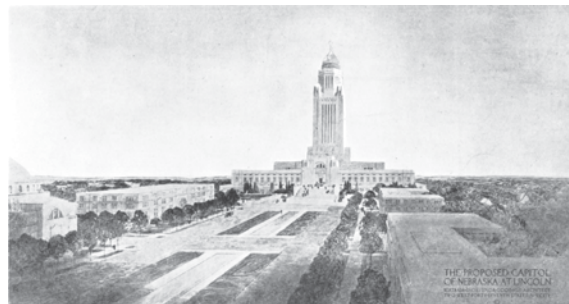
In his discussion of the location of the Nebraska State Capitol, architect Bertram Goodhue described it as at intersection of grand boulevards within the city. He envisioned his central north-south east-west floor plan would visually extend out into the grid of the city. Early renderings show his vision of 15th Street to the north as a grand plaza lined with government buildings. In 1927 the Legislature passed House Roll No. 595, which provided a framework for the improvement of 15th Street north of the Capitol. The Bill authorized the Nebraska Capitol Commission to coordinate with elected representatives of the City of Lincoln, the President of the Board of Regents, and the Department of Public Works, if and when they considered the widening and extending 15th Street from the Capitol to the University. This 1927 bill laid the foundation for the Capitol Environs Commission which would be created by the City and State in 1987. 

Guided Tours are offered Monday-Friday hourly from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except at noon, Saturday and holidays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except at noon, and Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Please call 402.471.0448 or visit www.capitol.nebraska.gov.

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.

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments about the content.

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The rendering of the Nebraska State Capitol, above, was created by the office of architect Bertram Goodhue and shows his vision for the north approach to the Capitol. The photo on the right was taken from the top of the new Capitol during construction and shows 15th Street north of the Capitol as it actually appeared. For reference, the Scottish Rite building is in the bottom center of the image, and 15th Street ends at O Street, near the center of the photo.

