

WYOMING'S CAPITOL

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Written and Edited By Rick Ewig Linda G. Rollins Betty Giffin

Color Photographs By Richard Collier Mark Junge

Photograph of Nellie Tayloe Ross Portrait By Jim Birrell

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Logo By

Greg Kleinert
Design Director
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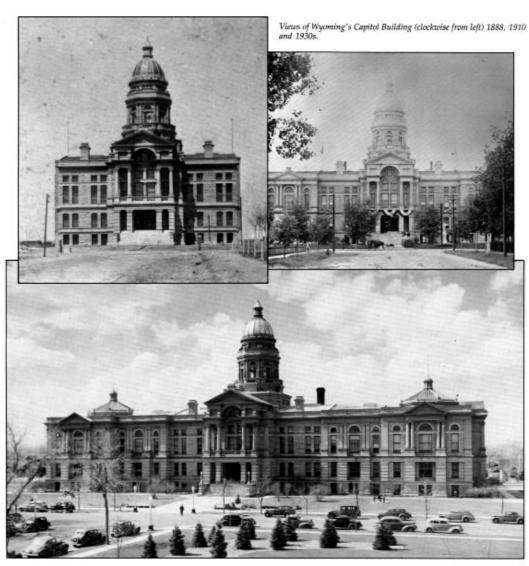
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ABOUT THE COVER — The beauty of the Wyoming State Capitol Building shines through at sunset. Dedication of the cornerstone was celebrated on a clear day in May of 1887. One hundred years later citizens from across the state gathered for a week-long celebration of the building's 100th birthday.



"The people should resolve that when the doors of the capitol shall swing open to receive the officers of the territory, that he who legislates for his private gain, that he who neglects to execute and fails to honestly administer the laws, shall be driven from its portals forever." Such was the feeling expressed by Judge Joseph M. Carey, Wyoming's delegate to Congress, at the cornerstone laying ceremony of the Wyoming Capitol on May 18, 1887.



In a relatively short span of time Wyoming had changed dramatically. At first a home only to the Indian, Wyoming during the 19th century experienced the coming of the fur trapper and trader, the western bound emigrant who used it only as a passageway, and several army outposts. It was not until after the Civil War that Wyoming found it necessary to organize a government.

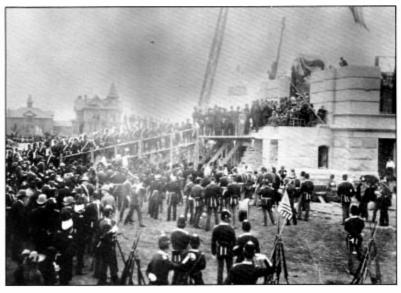
As a result of the coming of the Union Pacific Railroad, a line of towns sprang up along the southern portion of Wyoming. Grenville M. Dodge, chief engineer of the UP, laid out Cheyenne in July, 1867. A year later, President Andrew Johnson signed the Organic Act separating the area from Dakota Territory and forming Wyoming Territory. Almost another year passed, however, before the territorial government organized on May 19, 1869.

With its economy bolstered by the railroad, the cattle industry and nearby Fort D. A. Russell, Cheyenne quickly grew into the territory's largest city and became the logical choice for the capital. For nearly twenty years the legislature met in various rented quarters. The prospect of a permanent capitol building did not arise until 1886, when Governor Francis E. Warren, in his message to the Ninth Legislative Assembly, spoke of a need for public buildings. "It would afford greater convenience to the public if the various territorial offices could be brought together in a central location." He concluded his remarks by stating that any expenditure for public improvements would be regarded as "an investment for which the people have something to show in the nature of assets-not to be counted as a loss, but an available resource. It is better for the territory to own property than be compelled to pay a high rate of interest for the use of it."

The legislature agreed and passed a bill authorizing the construction of a Capitol with the cost not to exceed \$150,000. Warren signed the bill on March 4, 1886, and then appointed a five man Capitol Building Commission. The commissioners elected Erasmus Nagle, a leading Cheyenne merchant, as chairman.

Hoping to have the Capitol completed in time for the convening of the legislature in January, 1888, the commission began the selection of site and design. In April, they settled upon blocks 141 and 142 on Hill Street, now known as Capitol Avenue, costing \$13,100. Next they decided on style, "the front to be treated on the French Rennaisance class of architecture, the rear to correspond, but not to be treated so expensively."

The commission then advertised for an architect and, on May 17, 1886, chose David W. Gibbs of Toledo, Ohio. Aware of their money limitations, the commission directed Gibbs to draw plans "whereby additions could be erected with future appropriations." This he did and the commission's final report stated: "the east and west end walls being so constructed of brick that they will eventually, if the wings are added, become partition walls except in the various places where there should be doorways connecting the wings with the main part. And in the construction of said east and west end walls arches have been built permitting the taking out of the brick therein without injury to the remainder of the wall."



View of the cornerstone laying ceremony, May 18, 1887. Dignitaries stand anxiously on the platform awaiting the dedication and placement of cornerstone.



After the cornerstone was in place, the crowd gathered just west of the unfinished Capitol building. Several thousand people enjoyed the barbecue which consisted of pork, mutton, bread, "cornerstone pickles," lemonade and roast boot,

The commission selected Adam Feick & Bro. of Sandusky, Ohio, to construct the Capitol. Feick's winning bid came to \$131,275.13 for a building of wood construction with an iron tower. The contractor broke ground on September 9, 1886, and the Cheyenne Democratic Leader indicated Feick "had men and teams busily engaged in making the dirt fly."

The following May, the Cheyenne Daily Sun commented upon what was "the occasion of the greatest military and civic demonstration ever witnessed in the history of the city," that being the laying of the Capitol cornerstone on May 18, 1887. The planning committee for the celebration invited "all residents and citizens of the territory," and expected contingents from Nebraska and Colorado as well.

Preparations for the celebration took weeks. A large force of men constructed a makeshift cook house, a series of temporary tables just west of the Capitol which was enough to seat 400 people at one time, and farther west a fifty foot long barbecue pit, five feet wide and four and a half feet deep. An eighty foot long shed covered the pit.

The day dawned blue and by afternoon a few white clouds appeared to temper the sun's rays. Cheyenne banks and businesses closed their doors at noon and at 1:30 p.m. a grand parade began. According to the Sun, United States troops from Fort D.A. Russell, bicyclists, bands, firemen, territorial and city officials, many different societies and the Grand Lodge A.F. and A.M. of Wyoming and other Masonic bodies marched through Cheyenne's streets, past flag and streamer covered buildings, ending the parade at the partially finished Capitol.

As the crowd gathered, the Masons took their positions on a temporary platform built at the cornerstone to the left of the Capitol entrance. The cornerstone, a fine piece of Rawlins sandstone, hung suspended by a derrick. Scooped out of its under surface was sufficient space to admit a copper box sixteen inches in length, twelve inches wide and seven inches deep. In it were placed items such as the laws of Wyoming, an impression of the great seal of the territory, various territorial newspapers, timetables of the Union Pacific Railroad and several photographs. After a short prayer, Judge W.L. Kuykendall of the Masonic Lodge read the entire list of items, "with the exception of some which had been placed in the box for their own amusement or for reasons best known to themselves (and of which no mention was made in the schedule)."

After the cornerstone was in place, Grand Master Davis conducted the masonic ceremonies usual to such occasions. Judge Joseph M. Carey followed with a stirring speech on the early history of Wyoming and remarked that the Capitol should be "devoted to those of wisdom, good government and righteous law, which hereafter shall be enacted within it." Governor Thomas Moonlight then, according to the Sun, "made a very happy address which was frequently interrupted by applause."



The Capitol's cornerstone is visible as you enter the building from the South.

After the official ceremony, the crowd thronged to the barbecue just west of the Capitol. The menu consisted of pork, mutton, bread, "cornerstone pickles," lemonade and roast beef. The Sun reported "the fare was unusually good and tasted all the better from the fact of keen appetites and being eaten out of doors. Several hours were thus occupied, relays of people rapidly following each other." That evening, the Irish Benevolent Society hosted a grand ball, at which the dancing "was kept up until an early hour." The celebration proved to be a grand success.

The Capitol would not be completely finished until March, 1888, but already on that fine day in May, 1887, Wyomingites took pride in their new building overlooking the city park. The building was a modern one, being thoroughly wired and plumbed for electric light, gas and water. It also included a heating and ventilating system. The stone used in the foundation and steps came from Fort Collins, Colorado, while the stone in the superstructure was from a quarry in Rawlins, Wyoming. Because of poor quality, the commission rejected several shipments of Rawlins stone. Chairman Nagle then used the rejected blocks to build himself a home on 17th Street in Cheyenne. By the 1950s, this stone began to flake and crumble,

necessitating a stucco covering, and thereby confirming the commission's judgment.

The Capitol Building Commission submitted its final report on March 31, 1888, but already the Territorial Legislative Assembly had passed a bill providing \$215,000 for the building of more public institutions. The amount included \$125,000 for adding wings to the Capitol. Moonlight vetoed the expenditure, however, claiming the building was large enough for at least six more years and fearing an increased burden on Wyoming taxpayers. Nevertheless, both houses of the legislature overrode his veto and Moonlight reluctantly appointed the second Capitol Building Commission.

The second commission, following their predecessor, selected David W. Gibbs as the architect. They then chose Cheyenne contractor Moses P. Keefe's bid of \$117,504 for construction. The commission accepted the additional wings on April 4, 1890, and resolved, "we believe in this building are to be found greater room and comfort and more elegance and taste, than in any other structure of like cost in the United States." The completion of this building in 1890 could not have been more appropriate, since on July 10 of that year, Wyoming attained Statehood.

DAWN OF THE DAY.

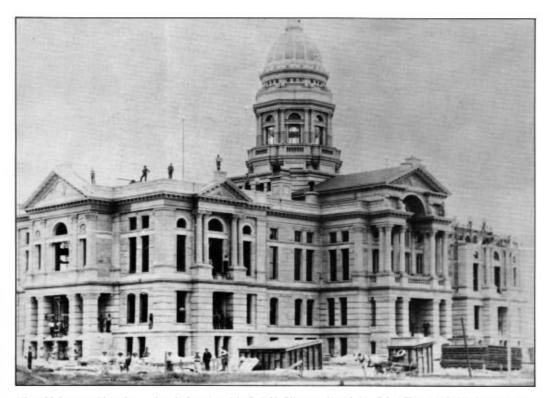
A Big Event in the History of the Territory.

Laying of the Territorial Capitol Cornerstone.

All Arrangements For the Ceremony Now Completed.

The absorbing event of to-day will be the laying of the corner stone of the territorial capitol with all the attendant ceremonies. Visitors have already begun to arrive in town in anticipation of the event, and the trains from the west will bring a big influx of people from various parts of the territory.

The Cheyenne Daily Sun reported the coming events of the big day in this article in its May 18, 1887, issue. The parade that day was the largest ever seen in the territory.



(Above) Workmen posed for a photograph as the first wings of the Capitol building neared completion. (Below) This original 1888 photograph shows the interior of the Capitol. Note the water faucet on the wall to the right of the staircase. For its time, the Capitol was considered to be quite modern, what with running water, electricity and centralized heating.





It is in this formal office that the Chief Executive Officer of state government greets official visitors.



Ornate and uniquely designed hinges were installed during the construction of the Capitol in 1887. Their beauty and craftsmanship add to the handsome cherry wood doors found throughout the building.



Even though the construction of the building called for a central coal fired furnace, individual offices contained fireplaces. This fireplace is one of the few remaining and can be found in the Secretary of State's office.

By the second decade of the 20th century, the Capitol had become overcrowded. In 1913, Governor Joseph M. Carey stated in his message to the state legislature: "The question of obtaining sufficient room to do the work that is required under the direction of the state officers, has become a serious one."

The legislature did not grant Carey's request, however, and it was not until 1915 that the Wyoming Senate and House took action. In January of that year, Governor John B. Kendrick, in his message to the legislature, reiterated Carey's plea for more space and added, "the congested condition of the capitol building, as suggested by Governor Carey at that time as a serious and urgent need, has today become an absolute and imperative necessity, and it is extremely important that prompt measures should be taken to relieve this condition." Apparently the legislative bodies concurred as they provided for the building of additional wings.

The third Capitol Building Commission designated William Dubois of Cheyenne as the architect for the additions. On September 6, 1915, the commission awarded the building contract to John W. Howard, also of Cheyenne, who had bid \$140,790. Howard completed the two wings by March 15, 1917. With the final additions, the Capitol is approximately 300 feet in length and 83 to 112 feet wide exclusive of approaches.

The last additions serve both chambers of the Wyoming legislature. The Senate meets in the west wing and the House of Representatives in the east. Each chamber contains four murals painted by Allen True at a cost of \$500 each. The murals represent various themes in Wyoming's history. The Senate displays "Indian Chief Cheyenne," "Frontier Cavalry Officers," "Pony Express Rider" and "Railroad Builders—Surveyors." "Cattlemen," "Trappers," "Homesteaders" and "Stagecoach" appear in the House. The ceiling of each chamber features beautiful stained glass, with the seal of the State of Wyoming in the center.

Entering the Capitol through the main entrance visitors approach the rotunda. It measures thirty feet in diameter and 54 feet from floor to stained glass dome above. On the wall of the main entranceway are three carved marble plaques commemorating the three separate commissions responsible for the Capitol construction.

On the right as you enter the rotunda is the Governor's office. Every Wyoming Governor since 1888 has occupied this office, including Governor John E. Osborne, whose occupation of it was unique, to say the least. In November, 1892, Osborne, a Democrat, appeared to have won the gubernatorial election. However, returns from Fremont and Converse counties were delayed so acting Governor Amos Barber did not officially confirm Osborne's victory. Apparently not willing to wait any longer, Osborne, on December 2, had himself sworn in by a notary public and moved into the Governor's office. The democratic Cheyenne Daily Leader applauded Osborne's actions while the republican Cheyenne Daily Sun accused him of usurpation and reported he broke into the office through a window during the early morning hours, claiming he "displayed the agility of a trained monkey." Osborne eventually became the official governor, but not before much mudslinging in the newspapers and not before a colorful episode had been added to Wyoming's history.

The most striking outside feature of the building is the dome. From the grade of the building to the top of the dome spire is 146 feet. Wyoming's is one of the few state capitol domes covered with gold leaf. At first an unattractive oxidized copper-covered dome, it was gilded in 1900 and then regilded four times: 1924, 1953, 1979 and 1986. The gold leaf is purchased in rolls 67 feet long and one-half inch wide. Less than one ounce is needed for the entire dome.

Renovation of the Capitol began in 1974 and was completed in 1980 at a cost of \$7 million. Work included stripping and staining all woodwork, re-stenciling the original frieze, replacing wooden floor beams and floors with steel and concrete, and modernizing the wiring, heating, plumbing and air conditioning. Because reapportionment had added to the number of legislators, enlargement of the House Chamber also was necessary.



The peak of the dome is 146° high and 50° in diameter. It is gilded with 24 carat gold leaf and has been gilded five times. The first time (in 1900) three layers of gold leaf were added one over the other on the original 1887 copper. In 1979 the original copper sheeting was removed, gold leafed in a shop, and then installed on the dome. The dome was leafed again in 1986, as is shown above.

In front of the Capitol stands a monument to Esther Hobart Morris. Mrs. Morris was instrumental in establishing Wyoming as the "Equality State." On December 10, 1869, Wyoming was the first government in the world granting women the right to vote. A replica of the statue stands in Statuary Hall at the nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C.

On the Capitol grounds stand several memorials. In front of the main entrance is a statue of Esther Hobart Morris, a replica of which is located in the United States Capitol. Morris advocated woman suffrage and served as the first woman Justice of the Peace, holding this position for eight and a half months during 1870 at South Pass City, Wyoming. The grounds also contain a statue dedicated to those who participated in the Spanish American War and a replica of the Liberty Bell. John W. Snyder, Secretary of the Treasury under President Harry Truman, presented the bell to the people of Wyoming as an inspirational symbol of the United States Bond Independence Drive which occurred in 1950. During the drive, the bell, its dimensions identical to the original in Philadelphia, was displayed in every part of the state.

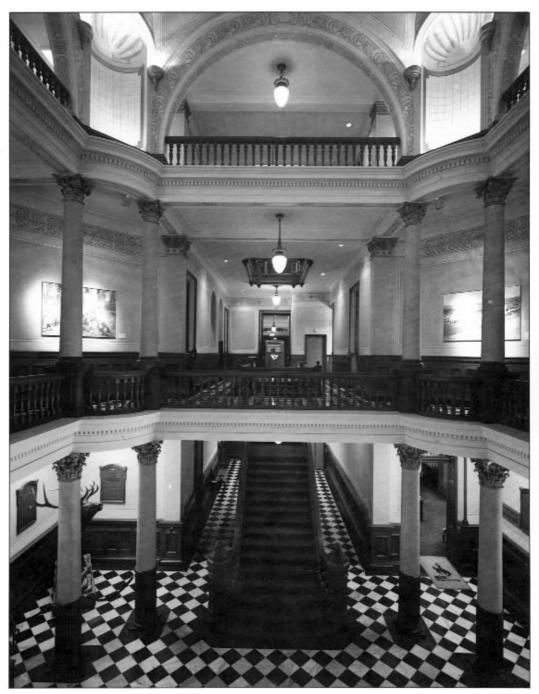
The most recent addition to the grounds is a bronze sculpture titled "The Spirit of Wyoming." It is located between the Capitol and the Herschler Building to the north. Sculptor Edward J. Fraughton conceived of it as a symbol representing Wyoming. According to him, "It praises a people, past, present and future, and illustrates the struggle of animal and man against nature and time."

The Capitol's grounds are landscaped simply, but with dignity. Flower beds to the east and west of the building replaced reflecting pools. Once surrounded by a wroughtiron fence, blue spruce and elm trees now border the lawn.

The Capitol no longer overlooks a city park. Many years ago Wyoming state government outgrew the confines of the Capitol and several state office buildings stand just south of it, such as the Supreme Court, Barrett and Hathaway buildings. The Herschler Building stands directly north.

For more than one hundred years Wyoming's Capitol, its background the distant snow-covered mountains, has risen as a symbol of the spirit of Wyoming's people. The Cheyenne Daily Leader evinced the state's pride in its neoclassical Capitol when it boasted in 1890: "In all Cheyenne, which is preeminently a city of handsome buildings, no structure compares in massiveness and beauty with Wyoming's state-house, a noble structure at the head of Capitol avenue." A century later this statement still holds true.

Due to copyright restrictions, the WSA removed certain parts of the original document. This change affects pages 8, 9, 11, 14, and 15.







Taking the stairs to the third floor of the Capitol is a tour within itself. Visitors can get a close look at the delicate hand-painted scroll work and the rich cherry wood that is used throughout the building.

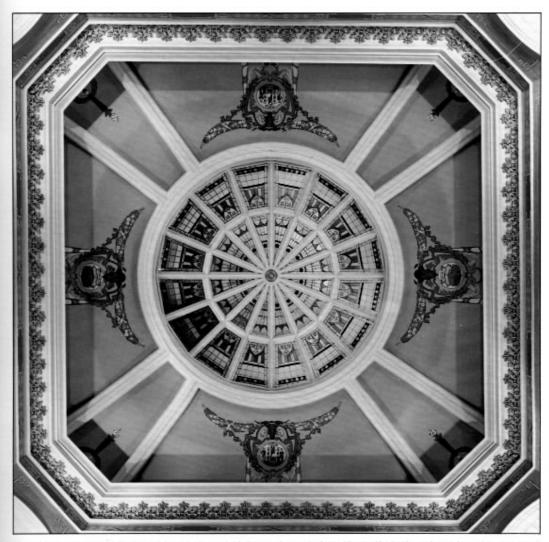
In this view from the second floor balcony you can see the original marble floor. Renovated during the 1970s, the floor was lifted so that the wood beneath it could be replaced with cement. Like the elegant staircases, most of the woodwork in the Capitol is cherry, imported by rail from Sandusky, Ohio. Over the past one-hundred years a buildup of varnish diminished the glow of the wood necessitating more than three thousand galloms of varnish remover and hundreds of man-hours to refurbish the wood to its original sheen.



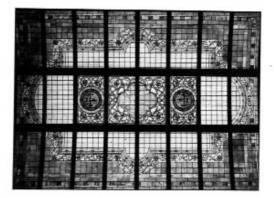
This chandelier hung in the original House of Representatives and later the Supreme Court Room. It is one of the oldest and most elaborate in the Capital. It now hangs in Room 302 which originally housed the Wyoming State Museum.

The intricate designs located just below the dome are all hand painted replicas of the originals. These were all restenciled as part of the major renovation.





Above the center of the Capitol's Rotunda is a sparkling stained glass, easily a work of art within itself. The blue and green hues of the glass which was imported from England is actually two-sided. The upper side glistens with red, orange and yellow shades.

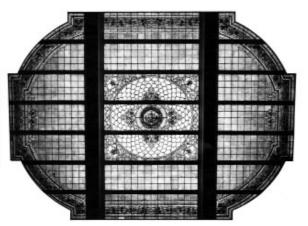


The ceilings of both the Senate (left) and House (right) chambers are in-laid with exquisite stained glass with the Wyoming State Seal displayed prominently in the center of each. The outside of the glass is covered by a plexiglass dome which allows sunlight to show through while protecting the stained glass from the elements.

The west wing of the Capitol (completed in 1917) houses the Senate Chamber. Four large murals by Allen True are on view here, as is a painting by Joseph Henry Sharp titled "Along the Little Big Horn." Purchased by Governor John B. Kendrick for his daughter, Rosa Maye in 1915, the painting was later donated by Miss Kendrick to the state's permanent art collection.



Wyoming's second state legislature adopted the Great Seal of the State of Wyoming in 1893. The two dates on the seal, 1869 and 1890, commemorate the organization of the Territorial Government and Wyoming's admission into the Union as the 44th state. The draped figure in the center symbolizes the political status women always have enjoyed in the state. The male figures typify the livestock and mining industries of Wyoming.





The House of Representatives Chamber was added in 1917. Four murals painted by Allen True prior to 1920 can be found here. Also on display are two oil paintings by artist E. W. "Bill" Gollings of Sheridan.

