

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0674648

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED MAY 10 1979  
DATE ENTERED JUN 22 1979

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Washington State Capitol Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

Capitol Campus

**2 LOCATION** *State Capitol and environs*

STREET & NUMBER

Capitol Way

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3rd-Donald L. Bonker

STATE

Washington

CODE

53

COUNTY

Thurston

CODE

067

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

State of Washington

STREET & NUMBER

State Capitol Committee

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98504

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Washington State Department of General Administration

STREET & NUMBER

General Administration Building

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington 98504

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

November 1974

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington 98504

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Washington State Capitol Historic District is a cohesive collection of government structures and the formal grounds surrounding them. Located in Olympia, the state capitol, the district's main building is the most prominent architectural feature of the city and is visible for several miles.

The elevation of the district is about 120 feet above sea level, and its topography is fairly flat. To the south and east the topography extends beyond the borders of the district without noteworthy change in elevation. To the north, the land slopes downward gradually to downtown Olympia, which has an elevation of about 20 feet and is about a half-mile away. Immediately to the west of the district boundary is the edge of a cliff, below which is Capitol Lake. The lake, which was created from tidal mud flats, is virtually at sea level. Because of the district's location atop a hill, the prominence of its buildings is enhanced, particularly when viewed from the west and northwest. From these perspectives, one sees a huge dome rising above a wooded hillside, which falls away abruptly to a sizeable lake.

The main approach to the Washington State Capitol Historic District is Capitol Way, an important north-south arterial for the Olympia urban area. The district lies entirely to the west of Capitol Way, which forms part of the district boundary. Viewed from Capitol Way, the district appears as a vast expanse of carefully-tended lawn and beyond, as an imposing cluster of classic architecture dominated by a huge dome. Two roads lead diagonally into the district from Capitol Way, one from the south and one from the north. The two meet in a traffic circle, in the center of which is a large bronze sculpture on a granite pedestal. In the foreground is a circular fountain. Gently curving across the lawns are pedestrian walks connecting Capitol Way with the buildings at the west end of the district. Tall evergreen trees dot the fringes of the lawns and carefully-pruned black locust trees line the north approach street. A large sunken garden to the west is a colorful contrast of warm colors in the cool greens of the lawns and trees. These grounds were designed by Olmsted Brothers, a successor firm to that of Frederick Law Olmsted, America's foremost landscape architect. Within the open areas are several notable features.

### TIVOLI FOUNTAIN REPLICA

Identifying number on nomination map: #7

Assessment: Recent compatible

This large fountain is located near the east side of the district. Constructed in 1953, it is a replica of a fountain in Tivoli Gardens, Copenhagen. The fountain is circular with an outer ring of 540 spraying water jets. Inside the circle are several jets hidden inside rings of upward-pointing slender leaves of brass. These surround a larger central jet of similar design. Conceived by local businessman, Peter Schmidt, the fountain was a gift to the state by the Olympia-Tumwater Foundation.

### WAR MEMORIAL SCULPTURE

Identifying number on nomination map: #8

Assessment: Recent compatible

This is a bronze sculpture of three larger than life-sized World War I fighting men and

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a nurse under the protective hand of an even larger winged victory. The base of the sculpture is circular and rests on a high granite pedestal. Designed by Vitor Alonzo Lewis, the sculpture was completed in 1938.

**TOTEM POLE**

Identifying number on nomination map: #9  
Assessment: Not applicable

Erected in 1940, this 71 foot totem pole was carved from a large cedar tree by Chief William Shelton of the Snohomish Tribe. This is a fine reminder of Northwest Coast Indian culture. It is appropriate that the seat of state government should have such a reminder. While the totem pole is not compatible in style with the Graeco-Roman architecture of the district, it is located on the northern edge of the district among large trees and does not intrude visually.

**THE GROUP**

(See individual entries following general discussion)

To the west of these open grounds are the buildings that constitute the architectural heart of the historic district. These buildings, all of classical design, were intended to compliment each other. Instead of one large capitol, the state of Washington has a cluster of buildings. Taken together, these buildings are called the Washington State Capitol Group.

The Group is dominated by the Legislative Building, an impressive structure with a high dome. It is the largest of the five buildings in the Group. To the north of the Legislative Building is the Temple of Justice; to the east, the Insurance Building; and to the south, the Public Lands Building and the Public Health-House Office Building. A sixth building was planned to the west, but was never built. The symmetry of this arrangement is obvious, particularly when seen from the air. In addition to the rational arrangement of their siting, the buildings of the Group are unified by common textures, structural elements and decorative features. All are faced with Wilkeson sandstone, a fine-grained stone with a creamy, faintly rose-colored tint. All have impressive colonnades with unfluted pillars that are slightly tapered at the top. All have exclusively Doric Order capitals, except for some Corinthian Order capitals on the Legislative Building. Although these buildings are considered individually below, they were intended to be and truly are parts of an organic whole, the Washington State Capitol Group. The landscaping around the buildings is particularly notable for the flowering Japanese cherry trees and the size and variety of rhododendrons.

**INSURANCE BUILDING**

Identifying number on nomination map: #5  
Assessment: Secondary

The Insurance Building is a rectangular structure oriented with the longer axis running

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north and south. To the north is the War Memorial Sculpture and to the south, a parking lot. Parallelling the west side of the building is Cherry Lane, which separates it and the Legislative Building. The north and south ends of the Insurance Building have colonnades supporting an unembellished frieze and pediment. The east and west sides consists of rows of windows. The building is four stories tall and has an interior designed with utilitarian office needs in mind. Begun in 1921, it was the second building of the Group to be constructed.

**PUBLIC LANDS BUILDING**

(Name on the frieze is "Public-Lands-Social Security".)

Identifying number on nomination map: #4

Assessment: Secondary

The Public Lands Building is sited so that it and its mirror-image, the Public Health Building, form a courtyard with the Legislative Building, which is located to the north. The Public Lands Building is shaped like two squares connected by a wide diagonal in a form termed the "double-spearhead type". The main axis of the building runs northeast/southwest. On the east and north facades are colonnades and other features similar to those of the Insurance Building. Along the north side of the diagonal are pilasters. Inside, some of the main floors and walls are finished in Alaskan marble, and some fixtures are of Art Deco design. The building was designed by Joseph Wohleb, well-known Olympia architect, in conformity with specifications established by Wilder and White, architects by the Group Plan. The Public Lands Building was completed in 1937.

**PUBLIC HEALTH-HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING**

(Name of the frieze is "Public Health".)

Identifying number on nomination map: #3

Assessment: Secondary

This building is the mirror-image of the Public Lands Building, to which it is connected by an underground tunnel. Its main axis runs northwest/southeast. Similar in most respects to the Public Lands Building, this structure was completed in 1940.

**TEMPLE OF JUSTICE**

Identifying number on nomination map: #6

Assessment: Primary

This building is located to the north of the Legislative Building, and between the two is a grassy courtyard and drive. The Temple of Justice is a long rectangle, with the longer axis running east/west. The south elevation is the front of the building and is remarkable for the grand colonnade along the entire facade. These are the same unfluted columns with Doric capitals that are used throughout the Group. A broad stairway leads to the central entrance on the south facade. Inside, a central hall, entirely of white and gray Alaskan marble, affords passage to the offices and public rooms of the building.

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Of the latter, the most notable is the State Supreme Court, although the Law Library is also very handsome. These beautiful interior spaces feature high ceilings, rich woods, deep carpets and other appointments that lend that great dignity appropriate to the purpose of the rooms. Balancing what might otherwise be a ponderous mood is the fact that these spaces are flooded with natural light. Large casement windows with a southern exposure assure plenty of light on even the darkest winter days, and the huge Legislative Building across the plaza is a dominating presence, even from inside the Temple of Justice. The first of the Group to be built, the Temple of Justice was begun in 1912 and completed in 1920. The architects were Wilder and White.

**LEGISLATIVE BUILDING**

Identifying number on nomination map: #1  
Assessment: Pivotal

The Legislative Building, centerpiece of the Washington State Capitol Group, is a rectangular building of impressive dimensions, many of which are listed below. The longitudinal axis runs east/west and parallels that of the Temple of Justice. Construction began in 1922 and was completed in 1928.

The roof is flat around the periphery of the building, but low gables extend to the east and west from the base of a large central dome. A square base rises above the ridges of the gables and supports a circular foundation for a single tier of columns. Above these is the dome proper, which is topped by a lantern.

All four elevations present colonnades across their entire facades. The columns are the same unfluted type used in the other buildings in the Group, and, with notable exceptions, the columns have the same Doric capitals. The exceptions are the columns encircling the dome and those at the north and south entrances, which have Corinthian capitals.

The Legislative Building displays somewhat more decorative carved stone than the other buildings in the Group. One example is the use of more ornate Corinthian capitals on some of the columns. Also, the main roofline has anthemion cresting, as does the pediment at the main entrance on the north side of the building. The gable ends are fringed with dentilled cornices, and there are bands of stone relief work around the dome and around its base. At the four corners of the base are dome-shaped ornaments with decorative buttresses.

The principal entrance is on the north facade, which has a broad flight of granite steps. At the landing, entry is made to two spacious L-shaped terraces. One extends out from and spans the entire east facade and part of the north facade; the other mirrors this arrangement on the west facade. Entry is gained to the building through massive bronze doors with bas-relief representations of industrial activity in the state, the first capitol and an early homestead cabin.

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The south facade has a high porte-cochere supported by massive columns with Corinthian capitals. The size of these capitals and the intricate stone carving can best be appreciated here, since they can be viewed at close range from inside the State Reception Room. A huge chandelier is another notable feature at the porte-cochere.

Inside the Legislative Building, flights of marble stairs lead up to the Rotunda from the south and north entrances. Embedded in the center of the floor is a bronze reproduction of the state seal, and directly above it is a five-ton bronze chandelier hanging from the center of the inner dome. In the corners of the rotunda are elaborate bronze light standards which are reproductions of Roman firepots. Stairs to the east and west lead up to the legislative chambers. The floors and walls of the Rotunda are faced with a variety of marble called "Tokeen", which was quarried in Alaska. The several kinds of marble used in the Legislative Building are listed below. The marble walls of the Rotunda extend up to the base of the dome. Above that the walls are plaster. There are no murals, but there is considerable decorative molding work around the base of the dome. Below the dome proper is a circle of columns finished in plaster. Natural light streams through huge arched windows below them, reflecting off the marble and giving the rotunda an open feeling. Another aspect of the rotunda, which is much appreciated by sound engineers and musicians, is its unusually good acoustics.

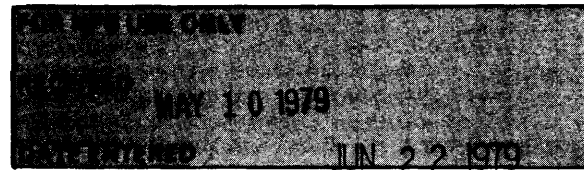
To the west of the rotunda is the House Chamber and to the east, the Senate Chamber. These are high-ceilinged rooms with galleries. The chandeliers, woodwork and polished marble walls are particularly noteworthy. To the south of the Rotunda is the State Reception Room. This impressive room has parquet floors and marble walls and fireplaces. Crystal chandeliers light the room. It is furnished elaborately, and its long casement windows and glass doors are hung with rich draperies.

The footing for the dome is a huge reinforced concrete mat on which rest four massive concrete piers. The mat is 130 feet square and was necessary to distribute the enormous weight of the dome over a sufficiently large area. The piers are 19 feet square. In building this footing, numerous problems in concrete masonry had to be overcome, including the logistics of having enough concrete for a continuous pour, building forms strong enough to hold the concrete until it set, and getting the concrete high enough to pour at the upper levels. The walls of the Legislative Building are constructed of brick, a fact which is not evident, since the walls are faced with sandstone on the outside and with marble on the inside.

The outer dome is built of brick faced on the exterior with cut stones. The inner dome, also of brick, is finished with plaster on the interior. Between the two is a steel cone that supports a concrete slab upon which the lantern rests. The narrow gap between the eye of the outer dome and the concrete slab is lined with greased lead. This arrangement allows the outer dome to expand or contract without affecting the lantern. A similar arrangement can be seen in drawings of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, although the cone of St. Paul's is brick.

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Access to the lantern is gained by a circular stairway inside the southeast pier. At the top of this stairway is an exit that leads to a circular gallery high above the rotunda at the foot of the columns supporting the inner dome. From here one enters a dark area between the inner and outer domes. Continuing up through a passageway in the cone, one soon emerges into daylight among the columns of the lantern. Here one has a fine view of two snow-capped mountain ranges, the blue waters of Puget Sound, lush green meadows and forests, and the city of Olympia.

The Legislative Building is not significantly altered in any externally visible way from its original form. However, the stone lantern had to be repaired following a severe earthquake in 1949. The stone roof was considered too heavy, so it was replaced with a steel one, the texture of which seems somewhat incongruous with the rest of the building. Repairing the lantern was an interesting problem in itself and involved building an incline railroad right up the side of the dome. Another major alteration was a massive reinforcing that was undertaken following another earthquake. Studies suggested that the central section of the building was moving separately from and rubbing against the two ends, so the attempt was made to tie the three parts together in the hope that the entire building would move as a single entity in any future earthquakes. This was done by wrapping each end with a U-shaped wall of reinforced concrete and then tying these walls to the support columns of the dome with 80-foot steel ceiling struts. To accomplish this, much of the marble facing inside the building had to be removed, but it has now been replaced without noticeable aesthetic impairment.

LEGISLATIVE BUILDING DATA

	Feet
Length of terrace level . . . . .	339
Width of terrace level ends . . . . .	176
Width of terrace level center . . . . .	235
Height of main roof above terrace . . . . .	60
Height of central roof above terrace. . . . .	90
Height of square base of dome above terrace . . . . .	102
Height of base of lantern above terrace . . . . .	231
Height of top of lantern above terrace. . . . .	278
Height of terrace above grade at north. . . . .	9
Height of terrace above mean high tide. . . . .	113
Diameter of base under dome colonnade . . . . .	110
Diameter of base of dome. . . . .	80
Diameter of base of lantern . . . . .	31

Story heights:

1st floor 12 feet 6 inches; 2nd floor  
18 feet 0 inches; 3rd floor 18 feet  
0 inches; 4th floor 12 feet 0 inches

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	Cu.Ft.	Pounds
Brick & concrete in dome . . . . .	150,000 . . .	18,000,000
Stone in dome . . . . .	80,000 . . .	12,800,000
Total weight of dome . . . . .		30,800,000
Brick in building below dome . . . . .	250,000 . . .	30,000,000
Concrete in building below dome . . . . .		51,000,000
Stone in building below dome . . . . .	235,000 . . .	37,300,000
Total weight of building below dome . . . . .		118,300,000
Total weight including dome . . . . .		149,000,000
Total weight including dome . . . . .		74,500 tons

MARBLES USED IN LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

<u>Name</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Where Quarried</u>	<u>Where used in Legislative Building</u>
Token	White and light gray	Alaska	Rotunda
Escolette	Tan	France	House Chamber
Rose Fomosa	Dark gray with rose highlights	Germany	Senate Chamber
Bresche Violette	Cream and dark grays and violets	Italy	State Reception Room

THE GOVERNOR'S MANSION

Identifying number on nomination map: #2  
Assessment: Altered Historic

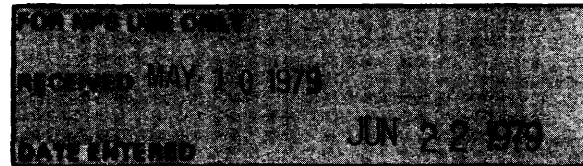
The Governor's Mansion is situated to the west of the Legislative Building, but is screened from view by tall evergreen trees and by the fact that it is at a somewhat higher elevation. This attractive brick house of Georgian character was built in 1908 and is the oldest structure in the district. In the original Group plan, it was intended that the Governor's Mansion would be demolished and replaced by a stone building similar to others in the Group. This has not been done, and there are no current plans to do so.

The Governor's Mansion, a sizeable dwelling, is three stories tall and shaped like a flat H with the horizontal bar running east/west. Both vertical bars have gables



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running north/south. The eaves are boxed and have large dentils. The gable ends and the many gabled dormers have eave returns. There are large covered porches on the sides and each has a flat roof with a railing. A similarly designed extension in the front is a carriage entrance with a roof that serves as a private balcony for the governor. This entrance and the porches have plain columns with Doric capitals. The carriage entrance has twelve such columns.

Fenestration is generally double-hung, six-over-six windows, although there are many arches and other variations. One somewhat unusual feature is that arched windows have a single white marble keystone and square windows have three marble wedges above them. These elements are in marked contrast to the red brick.

With its many dormers, porches, railings, window panes, and decorative touches, the house has a decidedly "busy" look. This is not unattractive and has the tendency to make the house look smaller than it really is. The eye seems to concentrate on details, rather than on the whole. The house wears a modest, "homey" demeanor.

A considerable addition was recently added to the rear of the house. This addition is of brick and does not detract from the appearance of the principal north facade.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
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<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

## SPECIFIC DATES

## BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, the significance of the Washington State Capitol Historic District lies in the fact that its buildings and landscaping embody distinctive characteristics in an unusually high state of development. The architectural history of the district is of considerable interest in terms of both its technical and its aesthetic aspects. The historic significance of the district relates to the fact that it has been the scene of many important events and that these events are closely associated with the existing buildings. Beyond that, the buildings in the district have themselves been the object of political controversy. Thus, they are not merely the scene of events in the political history of the state, but the focus of them.

Shortly after Washington became a state in 1889, a design for a new state capitol was approved and construction was begun. Only the foundation was completed, however, before construction was stopped.

The architect for the original design was Ernest Flagg and, when the project again became economically feasible, he was called back to discuss changes in the original plans. The principal problem was that the original design was too small to meet the growing needs of state government for office space, but a legislative mandate required that the already-completed foundation be used. To overcome this dilemma Flagg suggested a new idea in state capitol design--a group, rather than a single large building. This suggestion had the advantage of allowing construction to proceed as space was needed.

The Capitol Commission accepted Flagg's suggestion, but did not engage him to design the Group. Instead, they invited two sets of designs in a new nationwide competition--one for the Temple of Justice and the other for the Group Plan. The competition for both designs was won, not by Flagg, but by the firm of Wilder and White, New York. In judging the 37 different designs submitted, the Commission was advised by the following architects: Charles H. Bebb (Seattle), Kirtland Cutter (Spokane), and W.B. Faville (San Francisco). Bebb later became an associate architect working under Wilder and White and a staunch defender of their plan. The principals of the winning firm were Walter R. Wilder and Harry K. White. They worked for many years together as draftsmen for the firm of McKim, Mead and White before they formed their own partnership in 1909.

The Wilder & White plan called for a large, domed building in the center of a group. The objective was to give the impression from a distance that there was just one broad base below the massive dome. To the extent that it has been completed, the Wilder & White plan has been faithfully followed. The plan involved much more than the existing structures, however. In addition to a sixth structure planned for the site of the Governor's Mansion, the plan called for a terrace behind the Temple of Justice and two grand staircases down the side of the hill. An artificial lake was to be created and a

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

## BOOKS

Hitchcock, Henry Russell and Seale, William. Temple of Democracy: The State Capitols of the USA. New York: Hancourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

Miller, John Walter. The 49 Capitol Buildings of the United States. Harrisburg, PA: Capitol Publishing Co., Inc., 1938.

(continued)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about 29

QUADRANGLE NAME Tumwater, WA

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1: 24,000

### UTM REFERENCES

DA 1,0 | 5,0,7,1,7,0 | 5,2,0,9,2,5,0

AB 1,0 | 5,0,7,6,5,0 | 5,2,0,9,2,3,0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C 1,0 | 5,0,7,1,5,0 | 5,2,0,8,7,8,0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
B 1,0 | 5,0,7,6,4,0 | 5,2,0,8,7,6,0

E    |    |   

F    |    |   

G    |    |   

H    |    |   

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property included in this nomination is described by the red line on the base map for the nomination.

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

J. H. Vandermeer (Historian)

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

DATE

December 1978

STREET & NUMBER

111 West 21st Avenue

TELEPHONE

(206) 753-9685

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington 98504

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE   

LOCAL   

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE Jeanne M Welch

DATE 5/2/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

acting  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 6-22-79

ATTEST: W. Ray Luce  
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 6/19/79

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landscaped esplanade was to lead to a new railroad station near downtown Olympia. The lake has been created and there is an attractive park on its northeast corner, but the rest of the vision remains unfulfilled. What was to be the grand esplanade and main approach to the Capitol is now a railroad yard.

The Group has very impressive mass and the dome of the Legislative Building is enormous. There are very few great domes in the West. Many other states, of course, have capitols with large domes, and the desire to compare them is natural. However, comparative studies involving specific criteria are not available, so it is impossible to say which dome is the biggest. Nonetheless, it seems safe to say that Washington's is among the top twenty.

Of the domed state capitols, Washington's was next to the last to be built. The architectural tradition ended with West Virginia's capitol, which was completed in 1932. It is possible that West Virginia was influenced by the experience in Washington state. In any case, they adopted the group concept pioneered by Washington. As for the many domes that precede these two, Rhode Island's may have influenced the design of Washington's. Wilder and White worked for McKim, Mead & White, while the firm designed the Rhode Island capitol. Moreover, certain features are similar. The rotundas of both resemble each other, and both have the state seal embedded in the floor of the central crossing. Outside, the Rhode Island capitol has four small domes supported by columns at the base of the great central dome. The original plans for Washington's capitol called for these features, too, but the final execution, while retaining the small domes, eliminated the columns. Another common characteristic is that they both have solid masonry domes, an unusual feature for modern construction.

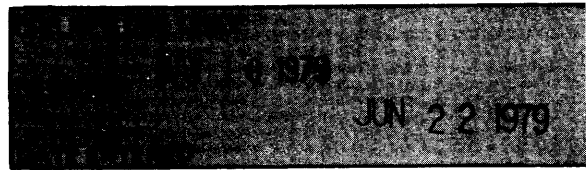
In general, Washington's capitol seems to be more restrained than most comparable statehouses in the use of decorative elements. The original plans called for more ornamentation. Perhaps its elimination was a reflection of simpler twentieth-century tastes or merely of a desire to cut costs. There may also have been a shortage of skilled labor. By the 1920's stone carving was becoming a rare art, and craftsmen from union locals all over the west had to be brought to Washington to work on the Legislative Building.

The buildings in the Capitol Group and the Governor's Mansion are intrinsically associated with the political history of the State of Washington. Every governor since 1909 has lived in the Governor's Mansion; every state law enacted by the legislature has been debated under the great dome. The buildings of the Washington State Capitol Historic District are clearly of National Register importance because of these associations.

Like any large undertaking, moreover, the buildings of the historic district have a political history of their own. Work on the design of Ernest Flagg began in 1893 under the Administration of Governor John McGraw. By 1896, when Populist Governor John Rogers assumed office, the country was in a depression and Rogers opposed further construction

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in the name of economy. In spite of his opposition, the legislature appropriated funds to continue work, so Rogers vetoed the appropriation bill. By 1911 the need for space had become a serious problem, and the legislature authorized the competition that ended in the adoption of the Wilder and White plans for the Temple of Justice and the Group. This time, construction plans were frustrated by the State Supreme Court, which declared that appropriations in 1913 and 1915 violated the state constitution. The legislature, which only meets every other year, appropriated only enough in 1917 to complete the Temple of Justice. It had stood naked of exterior stone since 1912 for lack of funds. Perhaps the legislature's reluctance to authorize more expenditures is explained by the fact that war was imminent and erection of large public buildings may have seemed an inappropriate diversion of resources. The 1919 appropriation was used for the relatively modest Insurance Building. Appropriations in the 1920's were sufficient to complete the Legislative Building. Although construction proceeded smoothly and was not marred by any major scandals, Governor Roland Hartley was greatly distressed by the cost of the Legislative Building. His statement at its completion in 1928 used such terms as "a monument to extravagance", "profligacy", "extravagance beyond belief", and "criminal waste of public funds". Hartley made the Legislative Building a political issue in his 1928 re-election campaign. Taking a brass spittoon from the Legislative Building and attaching it to the roof of his car, he travelled about the state criticizing the large expenditure of public funds involved in construction of the building. What he termed the "golden spit box" became his symbol for waste, and his entourage was dubbed the "Cuspidor Caravan". Hartley, a Republican, was re-elected. However, 1928 was a Republican year, and Hartley ran behind the rest of the ticket, so it appears that the cost of the Legislative Building was not an overriding concern among the voters.

Much of the political controversy surrounding funding of the Group revolved on questions of interim construction financing. When the U.S. Congress made Washington a state, it authorized the new state government to select 132,000 acres of Federal land to be used for the erection of buildings at the state capital. Well-timbered lands were chosen and, with the development of highways and railroads, appreciated in value. At issue was the question of whether or not the sale of the land or its timber would bring a sufficient price to cover the money which, at that point, would already have been expended. It appears they did. The Capitol Building Trust today still has 109,000 acres of productive timber land.

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