

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**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  
New York State Capitol  
AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
Capitol Park  
CITY, TOWN Albany  
STATE New York  
VICINITY OF  
COUNTY Albany  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

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

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
State of New York  
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Albany  
VICINITY OF  
STATE New York

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Albany County Court House  
STREET & NUMBER  
Eagle Street between Pine and Columbia Streets  
CITY, TOWN Albany  
STATE New York

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
National Register of Historic Places  
DATE 1979  
 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
CITY, TOWN Washington  
STATE D. C.

# 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
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>1867-1899</u>

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

The Capitol covers five and a half acres. The structure measures four hundred feet in length by three hundred feet in width. The walls are load-bearing masonry. Construction was begun in 1868 and proceeded until 1874 in the Second Empire style. In 1876 the style was altered, particularly the interiors and was completed in 1899 in the French Renaissance or Francis I style. The finished structure was supervised by Isaac Perry, State Architect.

The structure suffered a disastrous fire in the State Library (western side) in 1913. It was rebuilt in the Beaux Arts style under L. F. Pilcher, State Architect.

The main part of the building consists of five stories plus a basement and attic. The towers consist of four stories plus a basement and attic.

The east (main) elevation is fifteen bays wide.

The building is square in plan with a central courtyard and a tower located at each corner, the walls are constructed of masonry faced with dressed granite blocks.

A modified hip roof crowns the structure.

The east entrance consists of seventy-seven steps which lead up to three arched entrance ways.

The building has tall stone gabled dormers along each elevation.

The Capitol interiors are the work of both Leopold Eidlitz and Henry Hobson Richardson. Eidlitz designed the Assembly and Senate stairs, the second floor "golden corridor" (demolished), the Court of Appeals, the Assembly Parlor and Assembly Chamber which contains the world's largest stone vault. Richardson is responsible for the South and West rooms and their facades, the Governor's Suite, the Court of Appeals, the original State Library and the great western stair. This "million dollar stair" was inspired by the great stair in the Paris Opera House and was elaborately carved by Louis J. Hinton and his assistants incorporating ornamental busts of famous Americans and former governors of New York. Other busts of distinguished New Yorkers were modelled by Otto B. Baumgartel, a New York City sculptor.

The great rooms and corridors are elaborately finished with marble and mosaic, the floors are inlay marble. Elevator shafts and cages are carved and embellished with wrought iron.

# 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
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 1868-1899

BUILDER/ARCHITECT T. Fuller, H.H. Richardson,  
L. Eidlitz, F.L. Olmsted

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The New York State Capitol and Philadelphia's City Hall are two of the most lavish structures produced in 19th century America. They were also two of the last massive load-bearing structures constructed on a monumental scale.

James O'Gorman has described the complicated history of the complex as follows:

"The New York State Capitol was begun by Thomas Fuller (1822-1898) in 1867. By 1875 the exterior walls had reached the top of the second story, but the original appropriation had been expended. In that year Lieutenant Governor Dorsheimer, new head of the Capitol Commission, appointed an Advisory Board consisting of F.L. Olmsted, L. Eidlitz and H.H. Richardson to make a 'critical review' of Fuller's accomplishments and proposals. William Edward Dorsheimer (1832-1888; A.M. Harvard '59), a lawyer, was a major figure in Richardson's early career. He is associated with at least five commissions by 1875; his own house in Buffalo (1868) and a later house project presumably for Albany, the Buffalo State Hospital (1870 et seq.), the Buffalo Civil War Memorial and the Capitol.

"On March 2, 1876, the Board signed its 'Report,' stating that 'in September last we exhibited to you sketches, illustrating the manner in which we thought the general exterior appearance of the Capitol might be improved.' They were instructed at that time to work up their proposals in large-scale drawings, which they presented with the 'Report.' The perspective view of their project was published in the American Architect and Building News, March 11, 1876. According to the 'Report,' probably written by Olmsted, the new design achieved 'repose and dignity.' as well as economy, by eliminating from Fuller's design many features such as balconies.

"Fuller was dropped, and Eidlitz & Company (Olmsted as Treasurer) finished the building. Although Fuller was not officially dismissed until July 1, on March 26, 1876, Richardson wrote to Olmsted that he had 'already begun sketching on the dormers & roofs & know that something good can be done--I am trying also to unite the principal & upper windows of Senate & Assembly Chambers or in some way mark on the exterior the existence of the large rooms. That however is more difficult & I am not too hopeful--many things hamper me....'

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Albany Chamber of Commerce. Albany, Albany, N.Y.:n.d.  
 Roseberry, Cecil R., Capitol Story. Albany, N.Y., State of New York, 1964  
 Weise, Arthur James, History of the City of Albany. Albany:E.H. Bender, 1884  
 O'Gorman, James F., Henry Hobson Richardson and his office. Boston, Harvard  
 College Library Catalogue. 1974

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A              
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B              
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C              
 D              
 VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archeology & Historic Preservation

DATE

January 1979

STREET & NUMBER

440 G Street, N.W., Pension Building

TELEPHONE

343-6404

CITY OR TOWN

Washington,

STATE

D. C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_

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

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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New York State Capitol

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"Politics delayed work on the building. The Legislature entered the debate over style when it insisted in 1877 that the Capitol be finished in Italian Renaissance. Richardson winked to Olmsted in a letter of March 10 of that year: 'I do believe entre-nous that the building can be well finished in Francois I or Louis XIV which come under the head of Renaissance.'

"Division of design responsibility on the interior left Richardson with the Governor's suite, the Senate Chamber, the Western Stair and the New York State Library. Work on the Senate Chamber began in the spring of 1876. By May 21, Richardson wrote Olmsted that Stanford White had arrived 'with several suggestions for changing the senate chamber....Carrying piers from ceiling to floors between windows, I do not think best, as it cuts the room into a series of huge panels, at the loss of simplicity and quietness. A simple big unbroken wainscoating (sic) is a very imposing thing, & I propose carrying one of oak up to the string course under the upper tier of windows. The part above the spring of the arches of the lower windows, should be richly carved...we proposed making 1/4 scale sections... and Mr. White will return tomorrow (Monday) night, with everything ready to put in Mr. Eidlitz's hands.' He ended, as he did so often, with news that he was not in good health: 'I am sick...all I have written & will do today & tomorrow is the work of a sick man, in considerable pain, and trust you will remorsefully (sic) change as you think best.' Five days later he wrote Olmsted that he did not 'fear the low ceiling' in the Senate, and asked Eidlitz 'to take my two sketches of roofs the finished one and the one in pencil they may be wanted' (presumably in Albany).

"He was still working on the Senate Chamber in the fall and had studied other rooms as well. He thanked Olmsted in a letter of November 26, 1876, for a plan of the Governor's room. 'My mornings and evenings have been given entirely to the Senate & reception room & Friday I sent to my office in New York completed sketches for everything.' Presumably his afternoons were spent with La Farge at Trinity Church. In a postscript he was more specific. 'All drawings & specifications for Senate & Governors reception room will be ready Dec. 10th 1876.' In fact, they were in Eidlitz's hands by the 9th, as we learn from a letter to Olmsted of the 15th: 'More time would have improved them as some things particularly the ends needed study---but that I can give them later--the Senate is improved I have as you see reduced the rich carving to a simple bank--I enclose one of my rough sketches.'

"These drawings were far from the final design, however, for on May 2, 1877, Richardson wrote Olmsted that he had received the Senate plans and was 'at work making the changes suggested by Dorsheimer.' Again, a year later the room

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was restudied. In May 1878, according to Charles Baldwin, White wrote to Augustus Saint-Gaudens in Paris that he had 'just been paying a last and final visit (White was planning to join Saint-Gaudens) to the abode of the Great Mogul (H.H. Richardson) at Brookline, and there tackled the Albany Senate Chamber, and between us I think we have cooked up something pretty decent...it would be a good thing to let a certain feller called St. Gaudens loose on the walls...There are about one hundred and fifty feet by twenty feet of decorative arabesque, foliage and the like, and work in panels....There are two marble friezes in the fireplaces; and one damn big panel for figures--Washington crossing the Delaware or cutting down a cherry tree--about forty feet by eight feet, also in colored cement, and a lot of little bits beside. The whole room is to be a piece of color....'

"Funds were not appropriated for the Senate until 1880. The room was first used in March 1881, fully five years after the initial drawings. Saint-Gaudens never worked there. The Governor's room contains the date 1880; the Court of Appeals (now moved out of the building) was finished in 1881.

"Grover Cleveland took office as Governor in 1883 and quickly appointed Isaac Perry as sole Commissioner of the Capitol. Perry directed the work of finishing the building, including the Western Stair, begun in 1884. He embellished it with sculpture not shown on any of Richardson's drawings. It was not finished until 1898. The New York State Library was executed after Richardson's death and destroyed by fire early in this century."1

The building of the New York State Capitol was described in a contemporary newspaper as "one of the most imposing, commodious and costly structures in the United States." The Capitol has functioned for almost 100 years as the seat of government for the State of New York and is currently being resoted and refurbished.

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1. O'Gorman, James F. Henry Hobson Richardson and his Office. Selected Drawings, Catalogue for Exhibition in Harvard College Library, 1974. Department of Graphic Arts, Harvard College, Boston, pp. 121-124