1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Michigan State Capitol

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Capitol Ave. at Michigan Ave. Not for publication:N/A

City/Town: Lansing Vicinity:N/A

State: MI County: Ingham Code: 065 Zip Code: 48909

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private:___
Public-local:___
Public-State: X
Public-Federal:___

Category of Property
Building(s): X
District:___
Site:___
Structure:___
Object:___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
4	2	objects (monuments)
5	2	Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: Downtown Lansing

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Certifying Official Date

_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

_____ _____
Signature of Commenting or Other Official Date

_State Historic Preservation Officer_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I, hereby certify that this property is:

____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Determined not eligible for the _____
National Register
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

_____ _____
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Government Sub: Capitol

Current: Government Sub: Capitol

7. DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification:
Renaissance

Materials:
Foundation: Limestone
Walls: Sandstone
Roof: Copper
Other Description:
Dome: Cast and sheet iron

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The 1872-1879 Michigan State Capitol, one of the first statehouses to be modelled after the national capitol in Washington, D.C., is a Renaissance Revival building built on a cruciform plan, with a tall, graceful dome surmounting the intersection of its major north-south and shorter east-west axes. The building is symmetrical, with a ceremonial main entryway in the eastern projecting central pavilion and balanced wings to the north and south housing the House and Senate chambers. The wings are three storied, while the central pavilion rises to four, with a ground floor basement story underlying all. The capitol was built to a careful budget: materials were chosen for quality and economy, rather than for their Michigan pedigree. Walls are constructed of solid brick masonry, with the exterior walls faced with South Amherst, Ohio, sandstone. The slender, ribbed dome, although constructed of cast and sheet iron, is painted to resemble the sandstone facade, presenting a harmonious and unified whole. Although restrained in overall effect, exterior detailing is rich, complex, and skillfully executed. In the interest of economy, interiors were finished with plaster and Michigan pine, intricately handpainted in a wide variety of decorative finishes and techniques, and so varied that each room was rendered unique. Skylights and a brilliant palette produced a lively interior, full of color and light. The architect, Elijah E. Myers (1832-1909), designed many appointments and furnishings to complement the building. Although built too small to accommodate Michigan's rapidly growing population and evolving economy after the Civil War, the capitol escaped major alterations until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when offices were overfloored and "modernized." A major restoration, begun in 1988 and scheduled for completion in 1992, is returning the capitol, including exterior, interior and grounds, to its original appearance, and reversing years of neglect.

Standing in the center of an 11 1/4 acre site near the heart of downtown Lansing, surrounded by churches and public buildings, the Michigan State Capitol surmounts a rise in elevation overlooking the nearby Grand River. The elevation, although modest, is higher than the surrounding terrain. Unfortunately, the development of downtown Lansing has not always honored the dignity of the site, and the intended prominence of the capitol has been somewhat obscured by more recently constructed buildings. The site, termed "Capitol Block" or "Capitol Square," is bounded on the east by Capitol Avenue, on the north by Ottawa Street, on the west by Walnut Street, and on the south by Allegan Street. The site was set aside for the eventual construction of a new capitol when Lansing was selected as the seat of state government in 1847. The building's principal elevation faces east at the head of a long boulevard, Michigan Avenue, which even before the capitol was constructed was established as a major east-west center line connecting Lansing to East Lansing several miles away. East Lansing was at the time the home of Michigan Agricultural College, established in 1855 and today known as Michigan State University. In this way, the capitol's siting became symbolic of expected eastward expansion and the link

between the college and the capital city. The western elevation of the capitol faces and anchors the eastern end of the Capitol Complex, a long mall lined with state office buildings constructed from the 1950s to the early 1980s.

Capitol Square itself was originally surrounded on all four sides by a double staggered row of trees to form a shady promenade, left open at the corners for unobstructed views of the building located centrally within. In general, the enclosed lawn was free of shrubs or trees. An exception was a catalpa planted on the front lawn while the building was under construction. Today it survives as a National Champion tree, certified by the American Forestry Association as the largest of its kind in the nation. Over the years, the indiscriminate addition of lawn and foundation plantings, coupled with the construction and gradual enlargement of a surface parking lot behind the capitol, obscured the original plan. Several monuments, almost all war-related, were also added to the grounds over time; most line Capitol Avenue and face east like the capitol itself. Most important is the statue of Austin Blair, a popular hero and Michigan's Civil War governor. The work of Massachusetts sculptor Edward Clark Potter, the statue was placed squarely in front of the capitol in 1898 and, like the capitol, looks east down Michigan Avenue. Flanking Blair are monuments to the Civil War--the First Regiment of Michigan Engineers (1912) and the First Michigan Sharpshooters (1915)--as well as the Spanish-American War Hiker Memorial (1946), and the Michigan Veterans Memorial (1982) dedicated to veterans of World Wars I and II, as well as the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. Additionally, along Allegan Street is a boulder dedicated to the Grand Army of the Republic (1924) and an unmarked sandstone astronomical surveyor's post installed in 1875 as part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Lake Survey.

Under construction from 1872 to late 1878, the Michigan State Capitol took as its model the newly-enlarged national capitol in Washington, D.C., particularly in its symmetrical design and lofty central dome. Oriented along a long north-south axis and crossed midpoint by a shorter east-west one, the resulting cruciform plan is surmounted at its point of intersection by a slender, elongate dome. The building is organized into three parts. The east-west axis is formed by pulling the central portion of the long axis forward on both sides. This portion is elevated one floor to form a four-story central pavilion. The central portion of the pavilion is then pulled forward again on both sides and surmounted by a triangular pediment. Similarly, the last three bays at both ends of the long axis are also pulled forward on both sides to create three-story wing-like end pavilions, also capped by triangular pediments. Seen from above, the effect is that of three parallel rectangles with narrower connecting links. Entrances are located in the central pavilions on all four sides, but the eastern elevation is considered the front, and here a two-story colonnade has created a ceremonial main entrance, featuring a balustraded portico with an entrance porch at the first floor level, a covered balcony at the second, and an open balcony at the third. The surmounting pediment is sculpted with a bas-relief depicting an allegorical Michigan

rejecting the symbols of her wilderness past and embracing those of progress. On the rear elevation, the colonnade is narrower and only one story in height.

Strong horizontal banding at each story unifies the building, with the horizontal effect reinforced by the classical order which defines each level. Pilasters exemplify supercolumniation, with Doric on the first story, Ionic on the second, Corinthian on the third, and Composite on the fourth, or attic, story. Similarly, carefully detailed windows are treated differently from story to story, and columns on the entrance portico match in their order the pilasters on the corresponding walls. Even the treatment of the stonework itself changes as the building rises, with the general effect of moving from less to more finely finished surfaces. The facade's coursed ashlar stonework is rusticated at the base, with rusticated quoins defining the corners of the central pavilion, while the first floor displays deeply sunk joints and the upper floors feature flush, almost invisible joints. Finely executed modillion cornices define the balustraded roofline.

The dome and drum are unusually narrow for their height, although the drum is strengthened visually by surrounding it in a colonnade accented by paired columns at the cardinal points of the compass to create four porch-like extensions. The ribbed dome is punctuated by windows and topped by an elegant octagonal lantern, in turn topped by a two-layered set of bracketed cornices and a final ball and finial. The dome and the roof are decorated with ornamental urns, and cupolas top the ventilator shafts at either end of the roof. The overall effect is simple and restrained, without unnecessary ornamentation as the original building commissioners demanded, but fine attention to detail and skillful execution has produced results which are both rich and subtle.

The plan of the building, including porticoes and steps, measures 420 feet along its north-south axis and 274 feet along its east-west axis, enclosing a space covering about 1 1/6 acres. As constructed, the building contained 87,524 feet of usable space. It is 269.9 feet to the tip of the finial above the dome.

Exterior walls are constructed of solid brick masonry, faced with light yellowish grayish brown Berea sandstone from South Amherst, Ohio, surmounting a Lamont, Illinois, limestone foundation. The base course and outside steps and landings are of Joliet, Illinois, limestone, with the remainder of the entrance porches made of the same Ohio sandstone. The Quincy, Massachusetts, granite cornerstone, carved with the dates of construction, occupies the northeast corner of the building. The drip apron surrounding the building is of Ohio bluestone, as were the original walks. The cast and sheet iron dome is painted to resemble the buff sandstone facade, providing a unifying effect and creating the impression that the dome is also made of stone. A copper roof was originally specified, but, in the spirit of economy which drove many of the decisions made by the building commissioners overseeing the original construction, tin was

actually used. Interior walls are also constructed of solid brick masonry (altogether, a total of almost 15 million locally-produced bricks are used throughout the building), and the floors are of vaulted brick arches supported by iron beams.

All four first-floor entrances lead through broad corridors, lined with offices, to the 44 1/2-foot-wide central rotunda, although the eastern entrance corridor is the widest and most elaborate, with a colonnaded approach and a pilaster respond on the walls. Visitors are drawn inward toward the rotunda, which dominates the interior space, rising from a first floor of glass blocks set in a cast iron frame to the oculus at the top of the inner dome 150 feet above. It is almost impossible to move from one portion of the building to another without passing through this lofty, richly-decorated space. The rotunda is lined on the first floor with eight cases displaying Civil War battle flags, and it is encircled by balustraded galleries at each floor above. The generous corridors and soaring rotunda provide a sense of monumentality disproportionate to the building's actual size.

The balanced exterior symmetry of the building is repeated in the interior. The rotunda is flanked by two monumental cast iron staircases rising from the first floor to the fourth--one in the north and one in the south wing. The symmetry is extended by placing a legislative chamber in each wing: the House Chamber in the north wing and the Senate Chamber in the south. Rather than placing the chambers in the rectangular spaces formed by the pavilions at the end of the wings, they are placed within the mass of the building itself. Both start on the second floor and rise 41 feet through the third floor, to terminate in coffered ceilings with etched glass panels designed to admit natural light through skylights in the roof above.

The east and west wings are also balanced: the east wing is traditionally occupied by the governor's offices, except on the third floor where the old Supreme Court Chamber, one of the largest and most elegant rooms in the capitol, is located. The west wing was the home, on the second and third floors, of the original State Library. At 100 feet long and 45 feet wide, it was also galleried on multiple levels and open to skylights set in the roof above. Most of the first floor is devoted to office space--as it was originally--except for the Military Museum in the south wing, designed to display Civil War memorabilia but converted to office space by the turn of the century. Originally, the remainder of the second and third floors was devoted to office space as well, and this remains true today. The architect intended that the fourth floor and the basement be used for storage and other miscellaneous functions, but, as crowding became an increasingly serious problem, they too were eventually pressed into service to house offices and committee or hearing rooms.

In contrast to the restrained exterior, the interior is lively and ornate, even sumptuous. This is achieved despite the economy of the materials (primarily plaster and Michigan pine) used to finish the interior surfaces. To create this effect, detailing,

especially on the cast iron columns, plaster pilasters, and door and window frames, echos the classical motifs established on the exterior. But most importantly, walls, ceilings and woodwork are extensively and intricately painted using virtually all the High Victorian techniques at the disposal of the decorative painters of the day. Gilding, stenciling, striping, glazing, marbling, and freehand work were used to transform plain plaster rooms into jewel-like masterpieces of color and design, while graining transformed the humble pine woodwork into English walnut. This work, which did not really begin until after the building was dedicated and occupied in 1879, extended over a number of years and employed so many colors and patterns that no two rooms are identical. Nevertheless, a distinctive color palette--terra cottas, corals, blues, browns, buffs and such metallics as gold, silver, bronze, copper and pewter--and the manner in which motifs were repeated and arranged served to unify the building and created a harmonious whole. Color was so important that it was used as the primary and most efficient means of distinguishing between the two legislative chambers, which were otherwise architecturally almost identical. The liveliness of the interior is enhanced by natural light, admitted into the building through windows and skylights and by the crystal, brass and glass lighting fixtures. The interior's lush painted decoration was never entirely obliterated and is currently being completely restored.

The Senate and House chambers are among the most carefully designed spaces in the building. The House Chamber, the single largest space in the capitol at 70 feet wide by 75 feet long, is approximately 30 per cent larger than the Senate Chamber, at 70 feet wide by 57 feet long (this is at the second floor: both chambers are longer on the third floor because they extend over the chamber entries below). Both chambers feature rostra and desks designed by architect Myers (the House rostrum is a replication of the original), shuttered windows, grained wainscot and trim, original and replicated lighting, highly decorative painted walls and ceilings, and a public gallery on three sides of the upper level. The replicated ruby and white etched glass ceiling panels in each chamber display the coats-of-arms of the states--not only those in existence in the 1870s, but all 50 states--scenes of Michigan, and Victorian designs. Legislative desks are arranged in both chambers in the fanshape layout originally devised by Myers.

Many of the elements found in the legislative chambers are repeated in other rooms in the capitol. Like the chambers, most rooms feature wall-to-wall carpeting, shuttered windows, highly decorated walls and ceilings, and grained wainscot. Grained wainscot is also found in the main corridors. The basement corridor is floored with tile which mimics the slate originally specified by Myers, but the upper corridors are floored with their original black and white Vermont marble tiles. The architect considered more than just the building itself and designed the appointments in various rooms and even some furnishings. Gas lighting originally illuminated the capitol, but when the building was wired around the turn of the century

fixtures were converted to electricity. Most notable among these are 20 large, magnificent cast metal chandeliers hanging in the main corridors. Designed expressly for the capitol, they feature motifs taken from the state's coat-of-arms, including the motto "Tuebor." Meaning "We Will Defend," it is the name of the winning plan Myers submitted for the design competition for the capitol, and it is repeated again and again throughout the building--even on the carpeting and the custom cast doorknobs and door hinges. Ten crystal and brass chandeliers hanging in the legislative chambers--four in the senate and six in the house--are also original, but are more or less standard fixtures not unique to the capitol. Fine arts, primarily in the form of portraits of former governors and other elected officials, are placed where they will enhance, rather than compete with, the building's decorative arts. The Gallery of the Governors on the rotunda's second and third levels features the portraits of 16 former Michigan governors. High above, eight allegorical paintings, rendered on canvas and mounted directly on the curving metal surface of the inner dome, portray various institutions important to nineteenth-century Michigan: the arts, sciences, education, law and justice, commerce, labor and industry, agriculture and communication. Other portraits are found in the legislative chambers and entries, but those once hanging in the Supreme Court chamber and other rooms and offices have long since disappeared from the building.

Crowding, intense use, aging, and improper maintenance slowly eroded the original elegance and detail of Myers' design. However, the exterior of the building has remained largely intact, instantly recognizable as the building Myers designed for Michigan in the 1870s. Even as late as 1966, preservation architect Richard C. Frank, writing in the Michigan Society for Architects *Bulletin*, could state that "for the architectural historian to find a structure which is as cleanly and as clearly original as the capitol building of Michigan...is truly an amazing and exciting find."[1] Some changes had been made: the cupolas were removed from the roof in the early 1950s, and the dome painted white at the same time as part of a project to floodlight the dome at night. A relatively inconspicuous annex was added at the north entrance in 1976. Roof urns were removed at various times and the roof itself--including the chamber skylights--was covered with tar and eventually a rubber membrane in an effort to control chronic leaking. The most dramatic and extensive changes, however, took place inside the building. In the 1950s and 1960s, the original etched glass panels in the legislative chamber ceilings were discarded and replaced by plastic and plywood. Then, from 1969 to 1971, a program was undertaken to create more space in the seriously overcrowded capitol. With the exception of public spaces like the chambers, main corridors and rotunda, most rooms were horizontally subdivided, or overfloored, to create additional offices. Years

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[1] Richard C. Frank, "Committee on the State Capitol: A Report," Michigan Society of Architects *Monthly Bulletin* (December 1966): 21.

of overpainting and neglect had obscured the original decorations on walls and ceilings: what was left was now covered by panelling and drop ceilings. The old State Library, by then the Law Library, was completely gutted and subdivided. Historic woodwork and trim were covered or replaced, hardware discarded, and holes punched through masonry walls for new doorways, plumbing and wiring. Much of the original character of the capitol's interior space was hidden and almost forgotten.

A major restoration, begun in 1988, and the culmination of years of planning and preparation, is returning Michigan's third state capitol to its original beauty, reestablishing its historical character, and preparing it for the future as the state's permanent seat of state government. Scheduled for completion in 1992, the project has involved the removal of overfloors throughout the building and the reinstallation or replication of original furnishings, lighting fixtures, window treatments and carpeting. Decorative painters are painstakingly returning original colors and patterns to walls and ceilings, and the woodwork is being regrained. Where original painted surfaces have survived, they are being conserved. Plaster cornices have been repaired, and walls replastered where necessary. New, thermally efficient wooden windows have replaced anachronistic metal ones. In each legislative chamber, original desks were refinished and arranged in a fan shape facing the rostrum, rather than the grid employed in recent years. Etched glass ceilings were replicated from photographs and a few surviving samples, although the panels now display the coats-of-arms of all 50 states. Chandeliers were restored and new ones replicated from historic photographs. In the rotunda, the glass floor is being repaired, and the oculus has been reopened to allow natural light to enter the space once again. Hallway chandeliers have also been restored.

As restoration gradually rediscovers the original qualities of the interior, the exterior is also being restored, including the repair and cleaning of the sandstone facade and porticoes. Badly deteriorated portions of the entrance portico has been repaired with sandstone taken from the same Ohio quarry as the original, and historic lighting fixtures replicated from photographs. The roof and dome once more display decorative urns, and the ventilator cupolas have been replicated and replaced. Modern, thermally-efficient skylights replace the originals, too deteriorated to save. Most important of all, the dome has been repaired, stripped of layers of white paint, and repainted its original light buff. Finally, the rubber membrane roof is being replaced by the copper that Myers originally specified.

The original site plan is also being reestablished as part of the capitol's restoration: foundation plantings have been removed, historic lighting is being reinstalled, the central lawn reopened, and the promenade reestablished. Although all current statues and monuments will be preserved, future memorials will be located elsewhere. The Blair statue was restored in 1989 and the Hiker in 1990, as well as the metal plaques on the remaining

memorials--even the catalpa is being carefully supported and protected by a decorative fence.

Much of the restoration, however, involves changes not readily apparent to the casual observer, but necessary if the building is to be safe, efficient, comfortable and easily adaptable to future technological innovations. Heating, cooling, and electrical and plumbing systems have been completely updated, and almost invisibly integrated into the building through the use of chases cut into the walls and raised computer flooring. Fire and safety protection systems have been added and updated. The construction of new interior fire stairs will soon allow the removal of unsightly exterior fire escapes. Anachronistic elements have been ingeniously concealed: the Senate chamber has been provided with full computer capability, but a newly designed console unit conceals the computer at each legislator's desk. Voting boards in the chambers are concealed behind tinted acrylic shields and are nearly invisible when not in use. State-of-the-art acoustical and speaking systems, as well as TV lighting, have also been unobtrusively provided. Some changes are unavoidable: speaking tubes, cuspidors and gas lighting, and the once-magnificent State Library will not be returned to the capitol. The state departments which once occupied the building will not return, and even the number of legislators with offices in the building has been reduced as overfloors were removed. However, in spirit as in form, the building once again accurately reflects its past as it functions for the future.

Contributing Resources:

State Capitol
Austin Blair Monument (object)
First Regiment Michigan Engineers Monument (object)
First Michigan Sharpshooters Monument (object)
Grand Army of the Republic Monument (object)

Non-contributing Resources (less than 50 years old):

Spanish-American War Hiker Memorial (object)
Michigan Veterans Memorial (object)

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A___ B___ C X D___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A___ B___ C___ D___ E___ F___ G___

NHL Criteria: 4

NHL Theme(s): XVI. Architecture
M. Period Revivals
G. Renaissance Revival

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1872-1878

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Elijah E. Myers, architect

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Michigan State Capitol, under construction from 1872 to 1878, was dedicated on January 1, 1879, and has served as Michigan's seat of state government ever since. The Michigan capitol was the first of three state capitols designed by architect Elijah E. Myers in the 1870s and 80s. Its successful completion established Myers' reputation as the premiere capitol-builder of the post-Civil War period, and secured his career as one of the country's most successful architects of public buildings. No architect was responsible for more state capitols than Myers, and no single architect had more influence on their design in the latter years of the nineteenth century. Myers was among the first to use the national capitol in Washington, D.C., as a model, and his design for Michigan would help establish the standard for state capitols for decades to come. The Michigan State Capitol reflected--and inspired--the national trend after the Civil War for monumental fireproof buildings, constructed to house state governments growing in size and complexity, as well as to serve as suitable repositories for mementoes of the war itself. The interior embellishment of the Michigan State Capitol, undertaken over a period of several years after the dedication and occupation of the building, involved the extensive use of decorative, or architectural painting. So skillful and elaborate were the techniques and patterns employed, and so effective their color palette, that the building, as now restored, ranks today as one of the best surviving displays in the United States of the Victorian painted decorative arts. Although the interior was extensively remodelled in the late 1960s through the construction of overfloors, the exterior has been but little altered over the years. An extensive historical restoration, begun in 1987 and scheduled for completion in 1992, is returning both the interior and exterior to their original appearances, while adapting the building for the future as Michigan's permanent state capitol.

The Michigan State Capitol in Lansing is only the third in the state's history, and the only one which has survived. The first, a territorial courthouse in Detroit, was pressed into service when Michigan became a state in 1837. As the new state's largest city, Detroit expected to remain the state capital, but the State Constitution of 1835 contained a provision that a permanent seat of state government should be located by the legislature by 1847. After intense and acrimonious lobbying by rival communities, the capital was relocated to an almost completely undeveloped area in the middle of the state, later to become the city of Lansing. This surprising choice was largely prompted by a lack of consensus for any other location among the warring factions; a desire to develop the interior of the state; the need to improve the defensibility of the capital by removing it from its proximity to the Canadian border; and a strong determination to remove the capital from Detroit's sphere of influence, which was viewed with jealousy and suspicion by the majority of the state's legislators. The capitol built at Lansing--a small two-story wooden frame building with a tin cupola--was meant to be a

temporary expedient until a permanent, more suitable statehouse could be constructed. But "temporary" must have seemed a misnomer: Michigan's second capitol would serve the state from 1848 to late 1878, a period of thirty years. Both of these early capitols were eventually lost to fire.

After the Civil War, as Michigan's economy diversified and evolved from an agricultural to a manufacturing base, the state's growing population and relative prosperity led to a concomitant growth in state government and in the importance of public records. These changes were mirrored in states across the nation, although particularly in the Midwest, and led to widespread interest in the construction of large, fireproof public buildings to house expanding governments, their institutions, and their public records. As public monies became available for these projects, construction began on a multitude of state and county buildings--including many new state capitols. In response to such opportunities, the field of architecture itself was growing and changing. Up to that time, most architects learned their profession by apprenticing themselves to other architects. Although this began to change after the Civil War with the establishment of the first American schools of architecture, the men who would design the public buildings springing up across the country often began their careers as builders or carpenters, with little or no formal training. As the monetary stakes rose, competition--accompanied by charges of bribery and corruption--between architects increased, and efforts were made to regulate professional ethics. Design competitions were introduced to ensure that the public procured the best product at the fairest price, but often these served only to further intensify architectural rivalry. Architects were starting to recognize that their profession was as much a business as an art and a premium was placed on their ability to "sell" their product. The architect as entrepreneur had fully arrived, and nobody would exemplify this more in the post-Civil War period than Elijah E. Myers, the man who would design Michigan's new state capitol.

The inadequacies of Michigan's second capitol, stigmatized by many as a crowded firetrap and an "old barn," led Governor Baldwin in 1871 to call for a new, permanent, and fireproof building large enough to house all of state government, protect its state records, and suitable to serve as a proud symbol of progress for the state.[1] Accordingly, the Board of State Building Commissioners was augmented by the appointment of three men --banker Ebenezer Grosvenor and builders James Shearer and Alexander Chapoton--whose job it would be to oversee the construction of the building and to make sure that its budget was adhered to. In 1871, a national competition for the design of a new state capitol for Michigan was announced in New York,

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[1] Allen L. Bours, Inaugural Proceedings at the Dedication of the New Capitol of Michigan At the City of Lansing, on the first day of January, 1879, (Lansing: W.S. George and Co., 1879), 34.

Chicago, Detroit and Lansing and, by December, twenty submissions had been received.

The board, eager to procure a handsome building but mindful of the cost overruns commonly attendant on public construction projects, had issued strict guidelines to the competing architects: avoid "unnecessary ornamentation" and design a building capable of construction for no more than $1,200,000--a bargain, considering that county courthouses had been known to cost as much or more. The winning submission was selected unanimously, primarily because it was the simplest design and the only one which the board felt could actually be built within the advertised budget. It was the work of a relatively little-known architect, Elijah E. Myers, who titled his plan "Tuebor," after the motto on the state's coat-of-arms. Meaning "We Will Defend," the motto referred to Michigan's role as a border state in defending the nation from foreign invasion, and revealed Myers' skill in marketing a plan in which even the title was calculated to appeal to his client. On January 24, 1872, the board announced its choice and, by March, 1872, the legislature had appropriated the money for the construction of the new capitol, to be paid for through an annual tax levied at the rate of 16 1/4 cents per citizen per year for six years. Myers was retained as architect and general superintendent, while the contract for actual construction was awarded to low bidder Nehemiah Osburn and Company of Rochester, New York. On July 15, a contract was signed with this company for $1,144,057.20, and actual work began in August of 1872.

The cornerstone for the new capitol was put into place on October 2, 1873, an occasion marked by a huge public celebration. Lansing would not see another like it for fifty years. People from all over the state flocked to the city by the tens of thousands to watch the ceremony. Afterward, construction moved smoothly forward, with the board taking great care to procure the best materials and skills for the best price--even if that meant seeking them outside Michigan. The board even dictated that, if copper rose above 25 1/5 cents per pound by the time the building was ready for its roof, a more inexpensive material would be substituted. This is exactly what happened and, instead of the copper Myers specified, Welsh tin was used. These policies caused some parochial resentment, but when the new capitol was finished on schedule in late 1878, great pride was taken in its scandal-free construction and budget price tag, with total expenditures amounting to just under $1.5 million. The Board of Building Commissioners and the architect were complimented on a building not only free of debt, but also free from "the odor of fraud and the taint of rings." They were also congratulated for a handsome building which perfectly symbolized Michigan's pride in its accomplishments, belief in progress and the future, and the power and importance of its government.

The success of the new capitol, which was greeted with approval and acclaim on all sides, virtually assured the success of its architect as well. Elijah E. Myers was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on December 22, 1832. Little is known of his early

life and, indeed, relatively little is known of his subsequent career, despite its considerable impact on American architecture. Myers apparently studied law for a time, but soon apprenticed himself to prominent Philadelphia architect Samuel Sloan, studying architecture while working as a carpenter and joiner. During the Civil War, he may have joined the Union Corps of Engineers--he would sometimes later refer to himself as "Colonel Myers"--although no record of his service has been found. Myers was surely aware, however, of the value of such service--real or implied--to a budding business or political career after the war. In 1863, at the age of 31, Myers moved to Springfield, Illinois, where he displayed his skills as a gifted draftsman and began to win competitions to design public buildings, including several county courthouses. Upon securing the new capitol at Lansing, however, the young architect moved to Detroit in order to better oversee its construction, and Detroit remained his base of operations until his death on March 5, 1909.

The Michigan State Capitol, according to Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale in their landmark study of state capitols, *Temples of Democracy*, launched Myers' national career and established his reputation as an architect who could deliver an honest building at a reasonable price. An astute entrepreneur, Myers tirelessly marketed his designs throughout the country, and became one of the most successful architects of his day at winning commissions for public works. His career flourished, particularly in the 1870s and 1880s, eventually spanning a period of 45 years. During that time, he is known to have designed county courthouses and other large-scale public buildings in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, Nebraska, Colorado, and California. According to a newspaper obituary notice, he designed a major public building--including city halls, asylums, hospitals, and over 100 courthouses--in every state of the Union, with the exception of Maine. Myers ranks as one of the most prolific designers of public buildings in post Civil War America, and many of these buildings survive today.

But it was as a designer of state capitols--those most monumental of all public buildings--that Myers' reputation most securely rests. The new Michigan State Capitol established Myers, in the words of Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, as the "prime protagonist...and greatest capitol-builder of the Gilded Age."[2] Based on his Michigan success, Myers won the competitions for the Texas State Capitol (NHL) in 1881, the Idaho Territorial Capitol in 1885, and the Colorado State Capitol in 1886. In 1888, Myers was also selected to submit plans for the Utah Territorial Capitol, although that building was never constructed.

In its design, Myers' Michigan capitol reflected the growing importance of the national capitol in Washington, D.C., as a symbol of national ideals and of the Union itself. From 1851 to

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[2] Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy: The State Capitols of the USA*, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 174.

1863, the national capitol in Washington, D.C., was extensively remodelled. A monumental dome replaced a much smaller one, and balanced wings were created to house the two legislative chambers. These changes were observed by the thousands of Union soldiers--almost 100,000 from Michigan alone--who encamped in Washington during the Civil War. For them, the immense dome became a symbol of the Union they were fighting to preserve; of the power and grandeur of government; and even of the democratic institutions which make up the American system of governance. It was no accident, therefore, that a design based on the symmetrical scheme, central building mass, large dome, and balanced wings of the national capitol met with such approval by the leaders of state politics and business after the war, many of whom were veterans themselves. Myers was not the first to seize upon the newly-remodelled national capitol as the model for a statehouse, but--in his design for Michigan--he helped establish it as the very symbol of the democratic form of government which, along with its monumental scale, set the standard for virtually all of the state capitols to be built until the mid-1890s.

Although the Michigan State Capitol was occupied by late 1878, and was dedicated at the turn of the new year, it would be years before it was actually completed. Ever mindful of the budget and fearful of public censure which might attend the expenditure of tax money for "mere display," the plaster walls and ceilings of most rooms had been left bare and unadorned. However, legislators and the public eventually tired of the unrelieved white expanses of plaster and, in June 1885, a commission was established to consider the decoration of the capitol. The State Capitol Decoration Commission--consisting of the governor, auditor general, and the board of state auditors--was charged with overseeing the task and $25,000 was appropriated for the purpose of decorating the "ceremonial" areas of the capitol--the Senate and House chambers, rotunda, Supreme Court chamber, governor's reception room, and the front entrance corridor on the first floor. A national search for decorative artists was conducted and advertisements were placed in newspapers in Detroit, Chicago, New York, and elsewhere. On October 26, 1887, a contract for $20,000 was awarded to William Wright of Detroit. Wright soon set to work, his task expanded to include offices, halls and alcoves. Although records are incomplete, it is clear that this work was undertaken over a number of years.

In later capitols, a heretofore unseen degree of opulence was created through the use of lavish--and expensive--materials. But Michigan wanted opulence at a bargain, and this was achieved by the extensive and skillful use of every type of decorative painting in high fashion at the time. Eventually, walls and ceilings throughout the capitol were elaborately decorated with stencilled and handpainted designs, executed in a vibrant palette of brilliant colors and enhanced by gilding, metallic paints and glazes. Pine woodwork was carefully hand grained to imitate more expensive walnut. Over the succeeding years, this work fell out of fashion and the skills necessary to maintain it were lost. Colors and designs fell victim to age, remodelling, and, in some cases, clumsy efforts to preserve them. As part of the current

project to return the capitol to its appearance in the years just after its dedication, a significant part of the budget is being devoted to the restoration of the building's decorative painting. The Michigan State Capitol stood as a monument to the Victorian decorative painted arts of the late 1800s, and ranks as one of the best examples of those arts surviving in the United States today. The stunning results of the decorative paint restoration are focussing new interest on the ancient techniques which produced them, and have contributed to a national reawakening of interest in a nearly-forgotten art form acquiring new validity today.

Despite the changes wrought in Myer's Michigan capitol by age, weathering, crowding, constant use, changing tastes, and changing technologies, the building has largely retained its architectural and historical integrity over the years, resisting even a determined attempt to replace it with a modern "Atomic Age" capitol in the 1960s. Much of the credit for the perseverance of the capitol must go to Myers for creating a handsome and powerful symbol of state government, combined with careful construction (at least in the case of Michigan), and finding practical solutions to the challenges of building large, attractive, safe, efficient and comfortable quarters to house government itself. The Michigan State Capitol, like the other Gilded Age capitols of Myers' design, are still part of the American scene; in fact, they are quite notable for their permanence. Before the Civil War, it was not uncommon for state capital sites to relocate frequently as warring communities vied for the benefits which attended such an honor. The substance and scale of the post-war capitols, however, represented a considerable investment of public monies, and made it difficult to justify their abandonment. The construction of these monumental statehouses had the effect of putting to an end the constant pressure for relocation and replacement. Furthermore, the form of these buildings--like the national capitol which was their prototype--is still widely recognized as a valid symbol today. For many Americans, these buildings still represent, in architectural form as well as in function, their democratic form of government.

In 1987, culminating years of effort on the part of the Friends of the Capitol, a public nonprofit organization established in 1982 to promote the restoration of the Michigan State Capitol, the Michigan Capitol Committee was established. This bipartisan, bicameral legislative-executive body was created to oversee the restoration and maintenance of the capitol. The restoration is not only removing the assaults of time and circumstance, but is also refocussing attention on the merits of the capitol's architectural form and rediscovering the meaning which underlies it. And, finally, it is revitalizing that form by providing it with the means to continue to function as the seat of Michigan state government into the twenty-first century and beyond.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

___ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
_X_ Previously Listed in the National Register.
___ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
___ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
_X_ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # MICH-230
___ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #_____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

___ State Historic Preservation Office
_X_ Other State Agency
___ Federal Agency
___ Local Government
___ University
_X_ Other (Specify Repository): Michigan State Library, Archives, Michigan Capitol Committee

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 11.25 acres

UTM References:

	Zone	Northing	Easting		Zone	Northing	Easting
A	16	4734020	700000	**B**	16	4734030	700240
C	16	4733810	700240	**D**	16	4733800	700000

Verbal Boundary Description:

Block 249, City of Lansing, bounded by Ottawa, Walnut, Allegan, and Capitol. Dimensions are 742.5 feet east and west and 600 feet north and south.

Boundary Justification:

Entire historic and present-day capitol block or square.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Black and White Photographs:

Historic Name: Michigan State Capitol
Location: Lansing, Ingham County, Michigan

Photographer: Thomas Gennara
Date of Photographs: February 10, 1992
Location of Original Negatives: Thomas Gennara, Photographer, 1305 South Cedar, Lansing, Michigan 48910

#1: East facade
#2: Northeast facade
#3: Southeast facade
#4: South facade
#5: Architectural detail, east facade
#6: Inner dome, rotunda
#7: Supreme Court Chamber
#8: West facade

Photographer: Dietrich Floeter
Date of Photographs: May, 1990
Location of Original Negatives: Dietrich Floeter, Photographer, 318 West Eleventh Street, Traverse City, Michigan 49684

#9: Senate Chamber
#10: House Chamber
#11: Elijah E. Myers Room (Senate Majority Caucus Room)

Photographer: Unknown
Date of Photograph: Unknown (ca. 1885)
Location of Original Negative: Michigan State Archives, 717 West Allegan, Lansing, Michigan 48918

#12: East facade

Photographer: Unknown
Date of Photograph: 1899
Location of Original Negative: Michigan State Archives, 717 West Allegan, Lansing, Michigan 48918

#13: Senate Chamber
