

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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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 Nebraska State Capitol

AND/OR COMMON

Nebraska State Capitol

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 1445 K Street

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Nebraska

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

COUNTY

Lancaster

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_ DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_ STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_ SITE
- \_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE
- \_\_\_ BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_ IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_ NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_ AGRICULTURE
- \_\_\_ MUSEUM
- \_\_\_ COMMERCIAL
- \_\_\_ PARK
- \_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_ RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_ INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_ MILITARY
- \_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mr. Stan Matzke, Director of Administrative Services,  
State of Nebraska

STREET & NUMBER

1445 K Street, Room 1315, State Capitol Building

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Nebraska 68509

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTER OF DEEDS, ETC. Register of Deeds, Lancaster County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

555 South 10th Street

CITY, TOWN

Lincoln

STATE

Nebraska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

185

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input 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 site is a four city block area (Capitol Square bounded by 14th, 16th, H and K Streets. Construction was planned in four phases: the foundation of the outer, hollow square was first, then the north and south parts of the outer square. Gaps were left to the east and west to allow removal of the old capitol. The tower base and central crossing area were also part of the second stage of construction. The upper part of the tower was the third step, and the House and Senate chamber wings were the final parts constructed.

A railroad line seven blocks long with more than a mile of switching track was built in 1922 to transport materials to and from the site. The line, nicknamed "the Capitol and H" line, was Nebraska's only state-owned railroad. One of the commissioners estimated that it saved the state one hundred thousand dollars in transportation costs.

The north facade is the principle elevation with 2 and 3 story wings enclosing four inner courtyards. The building is of Indiana limestone, expensive material for those depression years. Trim was granite, marble and plate. The Capitol Archives described the structure as follows: The exterior of the north entrance area serves as an introduction to the building and its theme by relating the historical development of life in Nebraska, incorporating Indian designs and inscriptions translated from Indian ceremonial songs with the settlement of the plains by pioneers. Above the north door is a bas-relief panel with a gold leaf background by Lee Lawrie entitled "The Spirit of the Pioneers."

On each side of the capitol is a facade containing part of the story of the development of law in the world. On the north facade is the spirit of the law; on the west, law in the ancient world; on the south, written and constitutional law; and on the east, legal developments in the modern and new worlds. Two pairs of figures atop the pylons flanking the main entrance from the title for the theme of the facades. Wisdom and Justice on the left and Power and Mercy on the right typify the four great historical sources of law: wisdom from the Hebrew culture, justice from the Greek, power from the Roman, and mercy from the Christian. Eighteen bas-relief panels in the stone at the four sides of the basic square of the building depict great moments in the establishment and execution of laws, from Moses' dispensation of the law as he received it on Mount Sinai to the admission of Nebraska as a state in the Union. Carved above the windows around the entire base of the building are the names of each of the counties in Nebraska.

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(Continued)

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<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      1922-1932                                      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The legacy of classicism from the 1893 Chicago Exposition lasted well into the 20th century. War memorials, federal architecture and its progeny spread across the nation, libraries and State Capitols reflect the Beaux Arts taste. On the other hand, vestiges of romanticism are present in Gothic skyscrapers, university dormitories and study halls and large cathedrals. Goodhue and Ralph Adams Cram when he broke away in 1914. His Nebraska Capitol was an attempt at a new American style--a classical skyscraper. Goodhue's first study for the Lincoln capitol was entirely classical but by 1919 he had designed a vertical tower with low horizontal wings to contain offices--he had seen Eliel Saarinen's work (the Finnish Parliament in Helsinki of 1908). The Chicago Tribune tower competition of 1922 brought designs from the world over, Hood and Howell's Gothic tower won, but Saarinen's entry was the most intelligent design. Goodhue was one of the first American architects who tried to resolve the question of a suitable architectural vocabulary for an original native style.

The Capitol today is a testament to Goodhue's skill. It is a vast complex full of light and natural ventilation, large house and senate chambers were situated to the right and left of the center block from which radiate four interior courts. The huge 400 foot tower rises majestically from the center. The sculptural program was elaborate and wedded to the architecture. The sculptor, Lee Lawrie was to oversee all details--from the large figure of the Sower mounted on the dome to the bison reliefs on the exterior steps, the low relief panels of law givers and philosophers to the handsome and quaint capitals of corn, wheat, sunflowers and buffalo heads. "The plan coordinated varied spaces upon axes, a triumphant demonstration of Beaux-Arts skill, and the elevations were progressive modern developments only occasionally reminiscent of historical architecture."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Burchard, John and Bush-Brown, Albert. The Architecture of America, Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1966, p. 312.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,4	6,9,4	2,0,0	4,5	1,9	9,2,0	B	1,4	6,9,4	2,1,0	4,5	1,9	6,8,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	1,4	6,9,3	9,6,0	4,5	1,9	6,7,0	D	1,4	6,9,3	9,6,0	4,5	1,9	9,2,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From original plat of Lincoln: State House Square West one-half of section 25, township 10, Range 6 East of the 6th principle meridian, Four square city blocks.

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

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

July 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

## 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE 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

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Nebraska State Capitol, Nebr.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Like the exterior, the basic theme of the interior decoration begins at the north entrance. Here, the artwork depicts the efforts of man in Nebraska to obtain a noble and refined way of life. This theme begins in the vestibule with designs on both the ceiling and floor and continues through the foyer or Great Hall to the Rotunda, which contains the entrances to the Senate and House chambers.

Themes in the ceiling and floor are parallel, the ceiling typifying man's endeavors to raise the principles of his life, the floor, the relationship of human life to all other forms of life. These themes, together relating what life is, are climaxed in the Rotunda, in which is depicted life as it has developed in Nebraska. Areas were also left for future generations to fill. Spaces left for wall murals have now become an example of the diversity of pictorial means and impressions through the decades. Niches in the Great Hall are only now being filled with the busts of famous Nebraskans as chosen by the Nebraska Hall of Fame Commission.

In the vestibule, tile designs in the dome depict "Gifts of Nature to Man on the Plains of Nebraska," while the floor designs utilize symbolic forms to express the physical foundations of existence and to initiate thoughts on the origin of creation. This last theme is carried on by floor designs in the foyer and Rotunda.

The floor designs of the three areas are mosaics done in black Belgian marble and white Champville marble from Italy, all of which were cut and laid by hand. Three panels in the floor of the Great Hall express the three divisions of matter: "Spirit of the Soil," "Spirit of Vegetation," and "Spirit of Animal Life," and are introduced by a panel depicting "Cosmic Energy."

The only part of the Capitol complex that remained from the former capitol is the famous "Standing Lincoln" by Daniel Chester French (the pedestal was designed by Henry Bacon) done 1912--the other two casts existing at Chicago and "Chesterwood" in Massachusetts. This is one of French's greatest works along with his seated Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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This structure evolved through an elaborate competition that was widely published in journals and newspapers. First advertised in 1919, after several commissions and over 30 distinguished firms competing, the final decision was made in June 1920 in Bertram Goodhue's favor over John Russell Pope and McKim, Mead and White. The construction was slow--the first sections (north and south) were completed in 1924 actually built around the old 1888 statehouse. The older building was demolished in 1925. The tower was finished in 1930 and Lawrie's Sower (19 feet, 8½ tons) was hoisted to the tower and placed on a 13 foot pedestal. The total cost was about \$10,000,000 appropriated periodically by the Nebraska legislature. The building designs had a great impact on American architecture although its "Modernistic" streamlining was to be replaced by the International Style. Goodhue died in April of 1924 unable to see his achievement barely begun.

The sculptural program was as ambitious as the architectural plan--and was an integral part of the building as were the mosaics, glass, furniture, etc. Lee Lawrie was one of a group of architectural sculptors in this Modernistic style--he had worked with Phillip Martiny on the 1893 Columbian Exhibition and thereafter worked closely with architects (one notable exception is the Atlas in Rockefeller Center). Goodhue first employed Lawrie to design the sculpture for a Rhode Island Library (1900) and continued the professional association until his death. The program for the Capitol sculpture was written by Dr. Hartley Burr Alexander, a professor of Philosophy at the University of Nebraska (he planned the iconography and selected the quotations). The sculpture deals with two general categories--pioneer life in Nebraska and the evolution of Constitutional Law in the Western World. The mosaic decorations, in the rotunda and in the government chambers, as well as the leather doors of both chambers are the work of Hildreth Meiere; the murals were painted by Augustus Vincent Tack.

In 1931, Howell Lewis Shay, wrote: "I consider...Goodhue not only a great student of tradition, but a modernist in every sense of the word, to typify the best and most progressive in our modern work."<sup>1</sup> Oregon, North Dakota and Louisiana built versions of the Nebraska Capitol.

<sup>1</sup>Shay, Howell Lewis, T-Square Journal, January, 1931.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Delaware), Printed by Nebraska State Historical Society Quarterly, Vol. 55,  
No. 3, Fall 1974.

The Nebraska State Capitol. American Architect, October, 1934.

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