

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Tennessee	
COUNTY: Davidson	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER 10-741-0013	DATE 7/8/70

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Tennessee State Capitol

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Capitol Hill

CITY OR TOWN:  
Nashville

STATE Tennessee	CODE 41	COUNTY: Davidson	CODE 037
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**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<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 (Specify) _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
State of Tennessee

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Register's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Davidson County Courthouse

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE  
Nashville Tennessee 41

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Building Survey

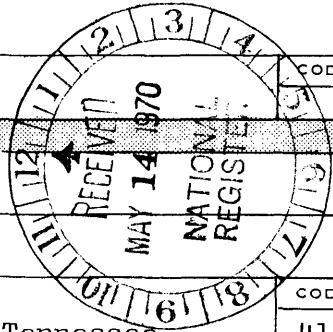
DATE OF SURVEY: ca. 1934  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE  
Washington D. C.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The state house is a parallelogram 109 by 238 feet. Its height from the ground to the top of the tower is 206 feet 7 inches. The main idea of the elevation of plan of the building is a Greek Ionic temple erected on a rusticated basement, which in turn rests on terraced pavements. The end porticoes, north and south, each have eight magnificent Ionic columns. The east and west porticoes each have six columns. These twenty-eight columns are 4 feet in diameter and 33 feet high, and rest on and are capped by entablatures.

The building is crowned by a slim tower over the roof, patterned after the Choragic Monument to Lysicrates erected in Athens in 335 B.C. to house a tripod won by a Greek stage choir led by Lysicrates. The tower, 42 feet high, supports a lantern, or cupola, 37 feet high. The eight engaged Corinthian columns are surmounted by capitals composed of small lotus leaves and a small row of acanthus leaves above. Between each of the acanthus leaves is a flower resembling the Egyptian lotus. The top of the tower is crowned with iron foliated finial ornament composed of four tiers of leaves surmounted by a flagpole. There are four ornamental scrolls between the roof and lower tier of leaves. The cornice is surrounded by an ornamental edge of cast iron Vitruvian scroll.

The plan of the interior is simple and efficient, and like all Strickland interiors, gives beautifully proportioned space and well-built halls. The first and second floors of the building are intersected by a central hall and a longitudinal hall which connect with stairways, porticoes, offices, and the principal chambers.

The plan includes a crypt (now a ground floor) and two stories. The first floor contain the offices of the governor and other state officials. On the second floor are the Hall of Representatives, and the smaller Senate Chamber. The library, located across from the Senate, is the highlight of the interior. The interior is Greek only in the sense that Greek detail was used freely.

The principal stairway from the first to the second floor is a masterwork of design and construction. The first flight, supported from the floor and centered in the west end, leads to a landing, then returns on both sides to the second floor. The second flights are formed of cut stone cantilevered from the walls of the central hall. The marble balustrade is simple and similar to those in the National Capitol in Washington.

The wood doors and windows were originally made of white oak; the roof sheathing was two inch poplar. The iron trusses spanning as much as 70 feet in single spans are one of the marvels of the capitol. The original copper roof, of the finest 20-ounce copper available, failed very soon after completion because of inadequate provision for expansion. In 1885 it was replaced with tin and has since been redone in copper again.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**3. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1845-1854

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Tennessee State Capitol is located on the most commanding site in Nashville and stands as a monument to William Strickland, the most noted architect of the time. This Greek Revival gem is a produce and prime example of the architecture of the Romantic era (1820-1860) in America. In addition the state house is significant for having been the seat of government in Tennessee for more than a century.

An excerpt from Strickland's report to the state legislature on May 20, 1845, gives the following description of the outstanding features of the building:

The architecture of the building consists of a Doric basement, four Ionic porticos, two of eight and two six columns four-feet in diameter, surmounted by a Corinthian tower in the center of the roof, the whole height of which is to be 170 feet from the summit of the site. The porticos are after the order of the Erechtheum, and the tower from the choragic monument of Lysicrates in Athens.

Two of the remarkable architectural features of the Capitol are the "hanging" stairway of stone which leads from the second floor to the tower, and the huge blocks of which the entire structure is built. Both represent unusual feats in engineering. The stone-fossilated limestone, in many of the blocks of which shells and other remains of a by-gone geological era are plainly discernible - was quarried nearby and hoisted in huge blocks weighing from six to ten tons each, into the fortress-like walls of the building.

The cornerstone of the Capitol was laid July 4, 1845, and the building was completed in 1854, nine years after it was begun. Much of the skilled labor, for stone cutting and other equally important details, was performed by convict labor from the State penitentiary. Marble for the interior and glass came from East Tennessee, and the wrought iron in the fences, the grill work in the interior, and the French bronze chandeliers were manufactured according to special orders of the building commissioners and the architect. They were done by a Philadelphia firm and workment were imported from Munich and Berlin to cast some of the

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Dekle, Clayton, "Tennessee State Capitol," Tennessee Historical Quarterly Vol. XXV (1966), No. 4, pp. 213-238.  
 Cochran, Gifford, Grandeur in Tennessee (New York, 1946).  
 Hamlin, Talbot, Greek Revival Architecture in America (New York, 1944)  
 Smith, J. Frazer, White Pillars (New York, 1941).

Folder on Tennessee State Capitol, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	36 °	09 ' 59"	86 ° 47' 03"
NE	° ' "	° ' "			
SE	° ' "	° ' "			
SW	° ' "	° ' "			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 5.

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
May Dean Coop, Director of Programs

ORGANIZATION: Tennessee Historical Commission DATE: 4-20-70

STREET AND NUMBER:  
403, 7th Avenue, North

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville STATE: Tennessee CODE: 41

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Stephen S. Lawrence  
 Title Tennessee Historical Commission  
 Date 4-20-70

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Ernest Allen Connelly  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date JUL 8 1970

ATTEST:  
William J. [Signature]  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date JUN 3 1970

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

H  
 21014

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Tennessee	
COUNTY	
Davidson	
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7. Description (cont.)

During the war the Capitol was very much abused and finally in 1902 some major repairs were made to the heating and ventilation system, and some repair was made to the stonework which was weathering badly. No significant repair or renovation was done from 1902 until 1956 although the deterioration of the exterior stone was a concern of every governor and general assembly.

Beginning in January, 1956, major exterior repairs and restoration was begun. A contract calling for, among other things, the replacement of 90,000 cubic feet of limestone was let. This included all 28 Ionic columns and the pediments and parapets above them, the entire entablature, all projecting cornices and the upper and lower terraces, the engaged columns and entablature on the tower, a new copper roof, new bronze handrails around the upper terrace and in the porticoes, new exterior doors and windows; and floodlights to light the building.

Oolitic limestone from Indiana was used to replace the original limestone. Exact templates were made of all pieces replaced to insure exact reproduction. The new windows were made of white pine, pressure-treated with a wood preservative to increase longevity. White pine precludes the problem of warping that existed from the beginning with the original white oak windows.

While the exterior restoration is authentic in every detail, the problems of providing for a new heating and air-conditioning system and other facilities that were not adequate originally, made it impossible to do a true interior restoration. However, many of the original paint colors were restored and much of the interior is more authentic than the 1902 work.

The offices on the first floor that were remodeled were done in the Georgian style. The new stone floors in the hall are marble replacing badly broken limestone. New light fixtures were placed in the Senate and House chambers. New office space was provided in the basement and a new tunnel provided entrance from street level. In addition, elevators were installed. The restoration was completed in 1960 with the exterior of the Capitol looking almost exactly as Strickland left it.



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8. Significance (cont.)

most important figures.

William Strickland died in 1854, a short time before the Capitol was completed, and, in compliance with his request, his body was placed in the vault in the north east wall of the building which he had prepared. After William Strickland's death his son, Francis Strickland, who had been associated with him in his work, completed the building. The first legislature occupied rooms in the building in 1853, although it was not actually completed until 1859 when the last stone on the terrace was laid.

During the Civil War, when Andrew Johnson was military governor, the Capitol was used as a federal fortress and was known as "Fort Johnson." After the war the Capitol resumed use as the seat of Tennessee legislature. Since that time many prominent people have spoken in the Capitol, e.g., President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1877 and President Grover Cleveland in 1887. Some other famous men have lain in state or had their funeral conducted in the Tennessee State Capitol, e.g., President Andrew Johnson, U. S. Senator Isham G. Harris, and U. S. Senator Robert Love Taylor.

