

III. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

BACKGROUND

The Utah State Capitol is reminiscent of other state capitols by intention. The original Capitol Commission and architect Richard K. A. Kletting researched and visited other capitols nationally with the intent of extracting from them the most useful design concepts and integrating them into the Utah Capitol. As a result, both the floor plans and the exterior and interior appearances are reflective of traditional capitol designs, yet executed with native materials and custom-designed ornamental features that give the Utah building its own unique character. Other factors influencing the capitol design included the architectural program needed to accommodate the functions of state government, a need for cost efficiency which led to extensive value-engineering, and a desire for a "fire proof" building.

Contrary to previous reports which had the building being erected in two years, the Capitol actually was built over a 3-1/2-year period beginning in May, 1913 and finishing in October, 1916 when it was dedicated. Moreover, certain additional improvements, such as some of the murals, statues and finishes, were installed as much as a year or more following the dedication and occupancy.

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

At the time the Capitol was designed and built, it was described by contemporaries as being "classical Corinthian." This description was apt then and it is consistent with today's modernized architectural taxonomy which considers the building "Neo-Classical Revival." Like most classical revival architecture, the Capitol is symmetrical in its exterior elevations, stately and formal in its expression, and reliant on an eclectic classical decorative vocabulary taken from ancient Greek, Roman and later Renaissance sources.

Its centrally located colonnades of tapered Corinthian columns resembles those of the national capitol and many other state capitols. Likewise the dome, cupola, balustrades, pediments, cornices, upper colonnade, and other exterior ornaments are patterned after classical precedents. Classical detailing also permeates the Capitol's impressive interior where we find a grand, lofty rotunda and atrium with two levels of mezzanines sup-



LUNETTE (WITHOUT MURAL)



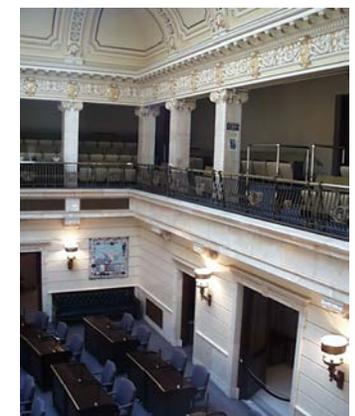
EARLY EXTERIOR VIEW OF THE CAPITOL FROM THE SOUTHEAST



WASHINGTON D.C.



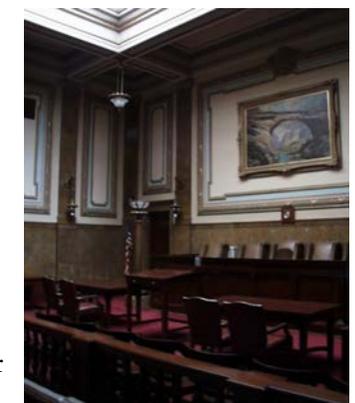
INTERIOR OF THE ROTUNDA AND ATRIUM 1916



SENATE CHAMBER



HOUSE CHAMBER



SUPREME COURT CHAMBER



ANOTHER, MORE ELABORATE COMPETITION ENTRY

ported by monolithic polished marble columns in the Ionic order. Interior atrium cartouches, corbels, arches, balustrades and cornices continue the classical theme.

The influence of Beaux Arts Classicism is apparent in the richly designed House, Senate and Supreme Court Chambers and the Gold Room (State Reception or International Room). Myriad classical motifs are employed in these rooms, whether in arched ceiling and beams, fireplaces, door and window trim, ceiling murals, wall ornament, light fixtures, mirrors, railings, frontispieces, or furnishings.

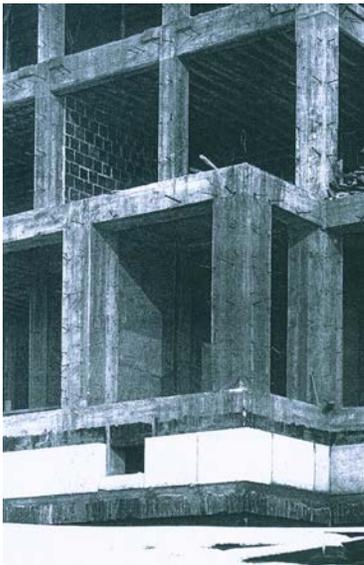
Not as decorative or flamboyant as some other state capitols, Kletting's design was considered to be the most straightforward, simple and dramatic of any presented in the architectural competition. This was considered a virtue then and it remains so today. In a poll taken to rank the nation's most picturesque and attractive capitols, Utah's ranked near the top.

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

While much of the interior of the Capitol has been altered in an effort to house an increasing number of government officials, staff and support personnel, the Capitol's structure, exterior and the interior of the major assembly chambers and public spaces remains largely intact. As designed and built in 1913-16, the Capitol has a steel-reinforced concrete structural frame with concrete footings, foundation walls, upper skeletal wall frame and floors. Infilling the spaces of the skeletal frame to create solid walls are blocks of hollow clay tile, sheathed on the exterior by a veneer of massive granite blocks and covered on the interior by lime plaster. Steel beams and connections exist in such areas as the rotunda where the two levels of mezzanines are supported by twenty-four monolithic granite columns. Other metal connectors pin and secure the stone



DOOR DETAIL, FOURTH FLOOR CORRIDOR



HOLLOW CLAY TILE INTERIOR WALLS AND CONCRETE FRAME



SUPREME COURT ATTIC SPACE, ABOVE THE SKYLIGHT

walls and ornament in place. The roof structure consists of metal trusses which join together at the top in a trussed ring which also supported the cupola.

Parts of Kletting's structural specifications are extant, including desired strengths for the concrete and steel. His architectural drawings, including a revised and marked-up as-built set located in the state's remote archives building, also are highly useful in understanding the structural system. The drawings include sections drawn through the building, wall and structural details. They also include beam and reinforcing bar schedules. What is not known is to what extent the structural design was modified, especially to cut costs. It appears that most of the cost-reducing changes were done near the end of the project, suggesting that most of the structure, at least in the main, five-level building, was constructed as designed, with only the changes (such as new and revised beam schedules) shown on the as-built plans. The building section through the dome was redesigned and redrawn as late as June 8, 1915, however, and the dome's final design was clearly modified from its original intent. For example, the first plans called for twenty columns in the colonnade supporting the dome. The 1915 plans increased the number of columns to twenty-four, the number actually installed.

Built before seismic-resistant engineering and building codes were extant, the structural non-ductile structural system was nonetheless state-of-the-art for its time and it has successfully withstood all forces acting upon it over the past 85 years without any signs of structural failure or significant stress, deterioration or fatigue. Fortunately, no major earthquakes have occurred in the area during this period to test the building's seismic-resisting capacity.

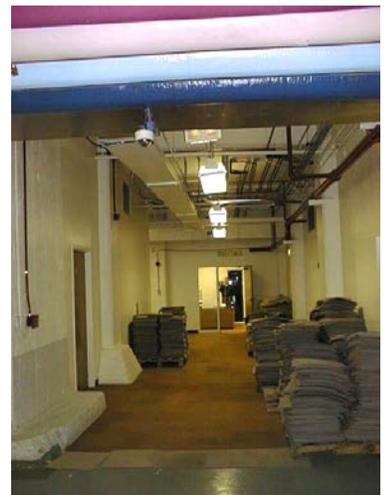
FLOOR PLANS

Basement: The Capitol is a five-level building, including a basement which was originally intended to be unfinished but which was made taller during construction and converted into habitable space over the ensuing years. Although partitioned into a large number of rooms, the basement spaces never achieved the high quality level of design or finished materials found in the four levels above. Much of the basement is used for mechanical and storage space. The basement's floor level changes through a series of ramps running east-to-west with the highest ceiling on the west and the lowest on the east, reflecting the slope of the grade outside the building.

Ground Floor: The second level or Ground Floor is the first finished floor in the building. It is also the floor entered when using the exterior stairs at the east and west ends of the building. In addition, there are entries from the south from under the portecochère or carriage drive-through, and from the north from what is now the parking garage. On the interior, stairways in each quadrant provide access to the floors above and below. When first built,



UTAH STATE CAPITOL
K. KLETTING, Architect
JAMES STEWART & CO., Engineers
112 5-25
DOME UNDER CONSTRUCTION



BASEMENT HALLWAY



GROUND LEVEL SOUTH ENTRANCE UNDER GRAND STAIR

III. BUILDING DESCRIPTION



GOVERNORS OFFICE 1916



GRAND MARBLE ATRIUM STAIR



HOUSE LOUNGE 1916



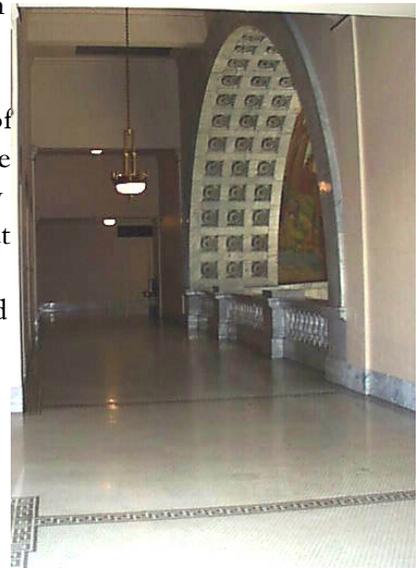
HOUSE LOUNGE 2000

the Ground Floor was mostly occupied by a vast, central exhibit space which spanned the length of the building, included the central area under the rotunda. In each of the corners of the four quadrants were offices for various state agencies (as noted on the 1916 plans that follow this description).

Main Floor: Accessible through the front vestibule via the monumental southern staircase as well as from the plaza to the north, the Main Floor is the first level of the three-story-tall rotunda/atrium area. It also houses the executive branch of state government including the Governor's formal and working offices, Governor's Board Room, Lieutenant Governor's Office, and State Reception Room (Gold Room). These functions and locations are original to the building. In addition, the office suites of the Attorney General, State Auditor and Treasurer occupy this floor as they did historically. Even though the Main Floor's historic uses are largely intact, each area, especially the perimeter offices and meeting rooms, have been altered to accommodate changing staff needs. Unaltered are the two grand staircases to the east and west, and the marble-clad floor and walls of the elegant rotunda/atrium area. It is on this Main Floor that most of the Capitol's statuary is displayed, as documented in the Monuments and Art section (VIII.) of this report.

Second Floor: This is actually the fourth level of the building. Its main features are the wide, public mezzanine and colonnade surrounding the entire, open rotunda/atrium area, and the impressive Senate, House and Supreme Court Chambers in the north, west and east wings, respectively. Wrapped around these three major spaces along the building's perimeter are large lounges and suites of support offices and meeting rooms for the Senate, House and Supreme Court. These less monumental spaces have been largely altered in size and finish.

Third Floor: The so-called Fourth Floor is the fifth and final level of the Capitol. Its four-sided mezzanine provides access to the balcony levels of the Senate and House Chambers. The Supreme Court Room has no balcony but rather a high, open ceiling space at this level. The original arts exhibits areas on this floor have been removed in favor of small offices. As on the lower floors, most of the perimeter rooms on this level have been significantly modified, although the central rotunda/atrium area remains intact.



ARCH TO ROTUNDA FROM FOURTH FLOOR