

THE LEGISLATIVE BUILDING  
STATE CAPITOL GROUP, OLYMPIA, WASH.

The group arrangement adopted by the State of Washington for its Capitol buildings is so absolutely unique among State Capitols that many of the problems presented are quite without precedent. Before proceeding to a detailed description, therefore, the most important of the general considerations may be briefly rehearsed.

Among them the most obvious is that the breaking up into a series of smaller buildings the space usually provided in one large structure, involves a very serious danger of the loss of that magnificence that comes from great magnitude. On the other hand, if these smaller units can be so grouped and in their design so related to each other that from any point without they appear to be a single structure, greater magnificence than in a single building can be obtained owing to the greater area covered. This has been the motive governing the design of both the Temple of Justice and the Insurance Building, whose unbroken roof line and similarity of treatment prevent their standing out too strongly as individual buildings. If the remaining administrative buildings are kept in harmony the final effect will be much the same as that of a single building covering an area far greater than any existing State Capitol.

Unfortunately great size in two directions alone is hardly sufficient and neither convenience of occupancy nor the accommodations required of each unit warrant any material increase in their height. For a corresponding magnitude in this direction there is fortunately that feature associated with government buildings of all periods since its invention and one that combines more elements of magnificence than any other - namely the Dome.

This is naturally made part of the central unit of the group and this building has therefore been reserved for those departments where State Government initiates, the Legislature and the Executive Offices.

While the broad base formed by the other buildings will justify a dome surpassing all others in size, there are two limitations, that of cost and that of the comparatively small building from which the dome will rise when viewed at close hand. This latter limitation has been the chief concern, for it has been assumed that the State of Washington wished its Capitol to compare favorably with those of other states and the ultimate sources of the funds for its erection were entirely adequate. As the study of the problem progressed new possibilities developed and the height of the dome increased from 155 feet in the original competition drawings of 1911 to 205 feet in the revised drawings of 1912, to 246 feet in the sketches of 1920 and to 267 feet in the present design. No opportunity has yet been had to study this feature in a model as is quite essential and unless a limit of cost will govern it may prove possible to increase the height still more to the distinct advantage of the whole effect. Such increase would not be unreasonable as compared with other domes, as for example those of the State Capitols of Minnesota 223 feet, Missouri 262 feet, Utah 208 feet, Wisconsin 238 feet, of the National Capitol 307 feet, or those of St. Paul's at London 319 feet and St. Peter's at Rome 408 feet.

In the effort to harmonize this dome with its substructure, the difficulty of which can be easily appreciated in view of the fact that the dome originally designed for these same foundations was but 135 feet high, use has been made of a broad base of masonry projecting well above the adjoining roofs and the abrupt change from a horizontal to a vertical motive relieved by small towers at the angles. As stated above, models are essential to a proper study of this feature and may result in modification of the design even if no increase in height is made.

The substructure is not subject to much revision unless some radical increase in the accommodation is desired. Use of the existing foundations has been made so far as possible and these have fixed the main dimensions of the building, namely 273 feet east and west

and 161 feet north and south. While there are four full stories in the Legislative Building, harmony with the other units has been preserved by maintaining the same height of the columns at either side. At the north and south porticos a suggestion of the central dome and its importance has been given by increasing the columns to forty feet. These higher porticos and the colonnades on all sides give to the substructure proper importance relative to the other buildings without destroying the unity which must be preserved throughout the group. In addition to these features, stone terraces at both this building and the Temple of Justice opposite will add a dignity as compared with the four administrative buildings and give a solidity to the group not obtainable in any other way.

Approaching the Legislative Building it is to be noted that there is no front or rear, each entrance being designed to be equally important. The pedestrian will naturally use the north entrance where arriving at the terrace the Ground Floor is accessible at either side and the great vestibule of the First Floor is reached by steps to the north portico. By automobile the approach will be to the south portico, where entrance is given to the vestibule at the foot of the Grand Stairway on the Ground Floor, and the first flight of steps leads directly to the Memorial Hall beneath the Rotunda on the First Floor.

A brief description of this last feature of the plan is essential to a proper consideration of the interior arrangements. It is hardly to be denied that the impression carried away by a visitor to any capitol building is on the exterior that of the Dome and in the interior that of the Rotunda. To the degree that these are magnificent will be his impression as a whole of the building and the greatest effort must be centred here for all effect beyond that of practical convenience. In the Temple of Justice only an entrance hall is devoted to purely public space while in the Insurance Building and presumably in the other administrative buildings there is and will be no public space beyond the practical requirements. In this one building, small as it is, must be crowded all the interior grandeur

that the group will have, and much will depend upon the treatment of the Rotunda. Here the limitations of the building are even more pronounced than in the design of the Dome, for while the space devoted to the Rotunda seems out of proportion to the balance of the plan, it is none too large, being only 56 feet in diameter as compared with 60 feet at Minnesota, 68 feet at Missouri, 62 feet at Utah, 76 feet at Wisconsin, and 96 feet at Washington.

Taking the First Floor arrangement in detail one enters the Rotunda - or Memorial Hall - either from the vestibule at the north entrance or by the Grand Stairway from the south entrance. Opening from the Rotunda and located in the corners of the building with the maximum of outside light are the four executive departments, that of the Governor on the north east, the Auditor on the south east, the Treasurer on the south west and the Secretary of State on the north west. Each department has approximately equal space containing reception rooms, private office with connecting toilet, and clerical space subject to practically any desired subdivision. Large vaults are provided and an automatic elevator for each department gives easy access to other floors. This is especially advantageous to the departments of the Auditor and Secretary of State, whose more purely administrative branches are on the floor below. A private stairway is also provided from the Ground Floor to the Governor's office.

A feature not found in other capitol buildings is the location of the legislative locker rooms on this floor directly beneath their respective chambers, to which direct access is possible by means of private stairways and the automatic elevators referred to above without passing through any public corridor. Connected to these locker rooms are adequate toilet facilities, while public toilets for men and women occur on each floor accessible from the Rotunda.

The Grand Stairway leads also from this floor to the Second or Legislative Floor, in addition to which two large public elevators on the south side and two smaller stairways on the north side give

adequate access to all floors. Telephone booths, news stands, and similar conveniences have ample provision for their accommodation.

On the Second Floor the Rotunda takes its full importance and with the Grand Stairway at the south, the State Reception Room at the north, the Senate Chamber at the east and the House Chamber at the west, there is possible a monumental effect second to none in the country. The elevators, stairways, toilets, newstands, etc. are as described on the floor below.

The two Chambers are identical in size and should be similarly treated, for while the seating capacity required for the House is much greater than for the Senate, the dignity of the latter justifies a room of equal proportions. The foyers on either side of the Chambers, however, have been kept open on the House side and separate on the Senate side, thus reducing the actual floor space in the latter without detracting from its effect. These foyers are accessible direct from the Rotunda and by the private stairways and elevators from the locker rooms below, and open to Lounging and Committee Rooms on the north and clerical force and private offices on the south, all of which are quite subject to any rearrangement. Private stairs as well as the elevators give access to the galleries and committee rooms on the floor above without passing through public space.

On the Third Floor are the Public Galleries to the two Chambers and various Committee Rooms with private toilet facilities and separate access to the Chambers below. A long well lighted gallery at each end not only gives cross communication but excellent clerical space in direct connection with the Committee Rooms.

Including as units the two galleries as above, the locker rooms on the First Floor and the Lounging Rooms, Private Offices and Clerks' Office on the Second Floor, there are a total of 44 units provided as compared with 28 units in the present Capitol Building and all of greater size. In addition it is possible that on a floor above and reached by both stairways and the public elevators, some eight large or sixteen small Committee Rooms can

be provided in the base of the dome, all of which will be well lighted and command magnificent views. This however, awaits the further study of the dome itself.

On the Ground Floor in addition to the administrative bureaus of the Auditor and Secretary of State, there will remain some 4000 square feet of unassigned well lighted space at the east end. A possible use of the area below the Rotunda is for a lunch room as indicated, which will be easily accessible to all of the state departments and can be as well lighted and ventilated by artificial means as any part of the building.

Another feature of importance is the use of the space below the Terrace for a garage. This can be approached from either end and a corridor brought direct to the Ground Floor by an easy ramp, a great convenience either for passenger use or shipping.

In the construction it is probable that a steel frame for the Dome and the two Chambers will be most satisfactory. The balance of the building will probably be of brick supporting walls and reinforced concrete floors and roofs. As to the facing unity of effect will be insured if Wilkeson Stone is used but it will be quite possible to use a light granite in this building if desired. It is obvious that the existence of the present foundations or what will be the Ground Floor make further construction impossible until sufficient stone to face these walls is delivered and set in place.

In the landscape treatment of the Group this will naturally develop as the buildings are erected, but one or two main considerations are worthy of thought at this time. The location of the Group on its elevated point above Puget Sound is most unique and this distinction will be quite lost unless advantage is taken of the location. To that end, the natural forest growth to the west of the Group should be opened up to permit of views in that direction and that on the northern slope the same. The wide open space west of the Group and particularly that of the newly graded part to

the east tend by comparison to give the group itself a confined appearance and for that reason an early planting of both these spaces in a natural park like manner is greatly to be desired as the final result will require many years of growth.

Wilder & White, Architects,  
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