

The Colorado State Capitol - at a Glance



Overview:

- This is a working capitol, housing the legislative branch and several offices of the executive branches of Colorado state government. (The governor, lieutenant governor, and state treasurer's offices are located on the 1st floor.)
- Construction started in 1886 and was completed 15 years later in 1901. (The legislature first met in the building in 1894.)
- The architect E.E. Myers designed our capitol, in addition to capitols in Michigan and Texas.

First Floor – Rotunda and Women's Gold Tapestry (located just outside the elevators, north)

- The inner rotunda from the first floor to the star decoration at the top is 181 feet. Building height from ground to top is 272 feet.
- The murals here were painted in the late 1930s by Colorado artist Allen Tupper True and depict the usage of water through Colorado history. The last panel depicts the artist's vision for the future. An accompanying poem, *Here is a Land Where Life is Written in Water*, was written by one-time Colorado State Poet Laureate Thomas Hornsby Ferril.
- The hand-stitched embroidery and applique *Women's Gold Tapestry* was unveiled in July 1977 as part of Colorado's Centennial celebration one year earlier. With over 3,500 individuals contributing stitch work, the piece honors Colorado's pioneering women. (An accompanying brochure is located in the basket below the piece and details the individuals depicted.)

Second Floor – Old Supreme Court Chamber and Heritage Windows

- This room was used by the Colorado Supreme Court for 83 years until 1976.
- Outside the chamber is a portrait of influential educator Emily Griffith. Inside the chamber, the stained glass *Heritage Windows* honor ethnic groups who helped build our state. Plaques located beneath the windows detail the individuals depicted, who were selected by members of their communities.

Third Floor – House and Senate Chambers and Presidential Portrait Galleries

- House and Senate chambers were simultaneously restored to their original appearance in the interim periods from 2014-2016, including a full restoration of the chandeliers.
- The Senate is home to 10 stained glass portraits honoring influential Coloradans, whereas the House contains only one stained glass portrait.
- The presidential portrait gallery on the 3rd floor includes portraits of each president up to President Obama, most painted by artist Lawrence Williams. Williams passed away prior to Obama's presidency. Colorado Springs painter Sarah Boardman was selected by a committee to paint President Obama's portrait and then President Trump's portrait, which is expected to be added to the gallery in 2019.

Fourth Floor – Mr Brown’s Attic Museum

- Above the third floor, accessible by stairs only, is the Capitol museum space, called Mr. Brown’s Attic and named after Henry Cordes Brown. In the late 1800s, he donated 10 acres of his property for the purpose of the construction of the state capitol building, in addition to developing much of what is now known as the Capitol Hill neighborhood and founding the Brown Palace Hotel.

Dome and Circle of Fame:

- The stained glass portraits visible above the 3rd floor are called the *Circle of Fame*. These 16 portraits are some of the first artwork selected for the building, installed in 1900 and honoring prominent individuals in our state.
- The entire dome structure from the 3rd floor roof up is all cast iron, painted to match the original historic paint color of the dome, determined by chemical analysis of paint layers.
- The dome is covered in copper sheets which are then gilded in 99.9% pure gold leaf, in tissue sheets about the thickness of a strand of hair. There are currently around 4 pounds of gold leaf covering the dome, mined in the Cripple Creek/Victor area of Colorado and donated by the AngloGold-Ashanti mining company. The gold is worth about \$120,000.
- The dome is re-gilded about every thirty years.

Materials and General Facts:

- The brass railings and other cast brass pieces are from Kentucky. They are all lovingly polished and cared for by Capitol maintenance staff.
- Brass light fixtures and prominent chandeliers in the building all come from Cincinnati Ohio. The House and Senate chandeliers are matched copies and each weigh 1700 pounds.
- All of the original door and window frames are carved from white oak out of the Missouri and Tennessee Ozarks.
- Interior walls are brick covered in plaster. 12.5 million bricks were used. Each kiln fired locally here in Denver and laid by local area brick workers.
- Much of the material that makes up the Capitol is native to Colorado. Exterior is granite sourced near Gunnison, and brought down on a 200 mile rail line to Denver in rough cut blocks that were anywhere from 3 to 20 tons each. It took 7 years to construct the granite exterior.
- Yule marble covers the floors throughout the building. It comes from near the same place as the granite and was brought down on the same rail lines. It is considered to be one of the finest and purest marbles in the world and was used to construct the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, and the Tomb of the Unknowns in Arlington, VA.
- Rose Onyx or Beulah Red Marble covers the lower portion of the walls through the main floors of the building. Beulah Colorado is the only known source in the world for this stone and our Capitol currently has 99% of the entire supply. It is known to contain images in its veining.