

# IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## REFERENCE SERIES

### IDAHO'S TERRITORIAL CAPITOL

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More than twenty years went by after the Idaho legislature located the territorial capitol in Boise, effective December 24, 1864, before provision was made for erection of a building suitable for the governor, legislature, supreme court, and other territorial officials. After attempts to get the United States to build the capitol had failed, D. P. B. Pride prevailed upon the Idaho legislature to appropriate \$80,000 for a territorial capitol and \$20,000 for an insane asylum at Blackfoot. A \$100,000 bond issue provided funds for these projects, approved by act of February 2, 1885. A bipartisan commission of leading Boise citizens, composed of Peter Sonna, C. W. Moore, R. Z. Johnson, and William H. Ridenbaugh, procured "a competent architect, at a cost not to exceed fifteen hundred dollars" and supervised construction. After a Hailey committee got a temporary injunction, April 1, to prevent issuance of the bonds (because the building was not located in Hailey), the matter was argued in court, after which the injunction was dissolved, April 30. Construction began in June and was completed in 1886. A full account of the building of the capitol appeared in the Idaho Statesman. The part describing the plans and building follows:

"Plans were immediately advertised for, and received from architects in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia, and Detroit. That of E. E. Myers, of Detroit, was chosen, and from his plans the Capital building has been erected with but little modification. The building is in the Norman style of architecture, 123 x 81 feet in dimensions over all, and five stories high, including basement. Contracts for the work were let by sections, after advertisement in Boise, Portland, and Salt Lake.

The first to be let was for work and material on basement, which is of stone. This was let to Finnegan & Cremin, the price being \$6,216.32. Other contracts were let for brick, 600,000, more or less, at \$10 per thousand to Jas. Flanagan; for completion of entire building above basement to James Ninock & Co., \$48,500; for steam heating apparatus to Davis, Cresswell & Co., of Denver, Col., \$5,460; for furniture to L. Harback, of Des Moines, Iowa, \$3,247.25; for carpets and linoleum to David Falk & Bro., (including laying)

\$717.37. The work on the out house aggregated in cost, \$1,261. The grand total so far expended falls but little short of the entire sum appropriated. Mr. C. W. Moore, who is at present in Chicago, is purchasing chandeliers for use in the legislative chambers, supreme court room and corridors, in which every dollar of the remainder of the appropriation will be expended.

These chandeliers will be so made as to admit of having either gas or for electric lighting.

The building is a credit to our territory, not only handsome in outer appearance and convenient in arrangement, but it has been erected for less money than any structure of its size and worth west of the Missouri river. The gentlemen comprising the commission are the subject of congratulation for the exemplary manner in which they have fulfilled an important trust, and for the good judgment displayed in the selection of a plan which combined the essential elements of economy and usefulness, and beauty of design.

Of the building itself but little can be said. It is built of red brick, the basement being of cut stone. The first, second and third floors are lighted by large windows, having inside shutters. The steam heating apparatus is of the most complete description, and is situated in the basement. Here are two large boilers, of Davis, Cressell & Co., Denver manufacture, which are guaranteed to keep the entire building at a temperature of 70 degrees. When run day and night they will consume a cord of wood per diem. The heating is done by steam pipes running from the boilers throughout the building, and steam heaters being located in almost every room. Water is obtained from the Eastman works.

The remainder of the basement will be used for storing the necessary fuel, of which about 50 cords is now on hand.

The first floor has three entrances, south, or front, north, and west. Entering from the west on the right are to be found the executive chambers, three in number, handsomely furnished and carpeted. Directly opposite is the room occupied by the territorial law library, which is by long odds the handsomest room in the building. It is lighted by six large windows, and the ceiling supported by two iron pillars. It has a north and west exposure. Lying immediately east of the library is the office of the territorial secretary which contains a vault and washstand and fire place.

If coming in from the front to the left is the treasurer's office, which also contained a vault.

Right of the entrance is a suite of rooms for the use of the U. S. Attorney General and his assistants, these rooms having south and east exposure. In the east end are rooms for the controller, U. S. Marshal, attorney general, and U. S. Attorney. None of the offices are furnished with furniture, the commission believing it to be better to use the money in making as fine a building as possible. Furniture for the various offices can be obtained at any time at but slight cost.

The first floor is traversed by two corridors, running at right angles to each other, and are about fifteen feet wide. For convenience, all the officers of the territory will be located on the first floor, so that when neither the legislature or supreme court are in session will it be necessary to heat but the lower portion of the building.

The upper portion of the building is devoted exclusively to the judicial and legislative branches of the territory. The south side of the second floor is occupied by the supreme court room, which is 26 x 36 feet in size, carpeted and furnished. It has an entrance from the corridor into the bar, and also an entrance for the general public. Directly back of the bench are the judges chambers, two in number, which are well lighted rooms, furnished tastefully and conveniently. The clerk's office leads off from the east end of the court room and is rather small in size, but well lighted. The east end of the second and third floors are occupied by the house of representatives, which is 35 x 50 feet, exclusive of the gallery, and extends up through both floors. The floor is carpeted, handsome desks and chairs are provided for members, and the arrangements for the presiding officers and employees are models of convenience and luxury. Back of the speaker's chair are two committee rooms, which face north, and directly above them is the gallery of the house. In the body of the house is a small lobby which is fenced off from the floor by an iron railing.

To the west is the speaker's room and the cloak room for members. The entrance is through large doors, which open directly into the corridor. The council chamber is in the west end of the building, 35 x 38 feet, and in appearance much resembles the house chamber. The council committee rooms, however, are on the third floor, where a number of such rooms have been fitted up for that purpose. The council chamber

gallery is at the south end, and entrance is obtained only from the floor above. The third floor is devoted solely to the two galleries and committee rooms. The fourth story is in an unfinished condition, and it will probably be some time before it will be necessary to finish this portion of the structure. further up is the observatory, from which a fine view of the surrounding can be obtained.

In many of the offices, on the ground floor, are open fire places, and in three of the offices are large fire-proof vaults, with chilled steel doors and combination locks on them. These vaults are located in the secretary's, treasurer's, and surveyor general's rooms. In every important office are located one or more steam heaters. Taken all in all, it is the most perfect public building on the coast for the money expended on its construction and furnishing.

The commission worked untiringly, spending their own time and money unsparingly to secure to Idaho the handsomest Capital edifice possible for the means at command, and they have succeeded admirably. Their work speaks for itself, and the people of Idaho owe them a debt of gratitude for the faithful manner in which they have fulfilled this important trust."