



A Guide

to the Renovated Illinois House Chamber and State Capitol

Revised edition, July 2014



Welcome from the Speaker

Thank you for taking the time to visit the Illinois House of Representatives.

The House first met here in 1877. Since that time, the chamber has undergone numerous renovations and changes. In some cases, the work was simply a touch-up to erase the results of wear and tear. At other times, work was needed to repair fire damage or take advantage of new technology.

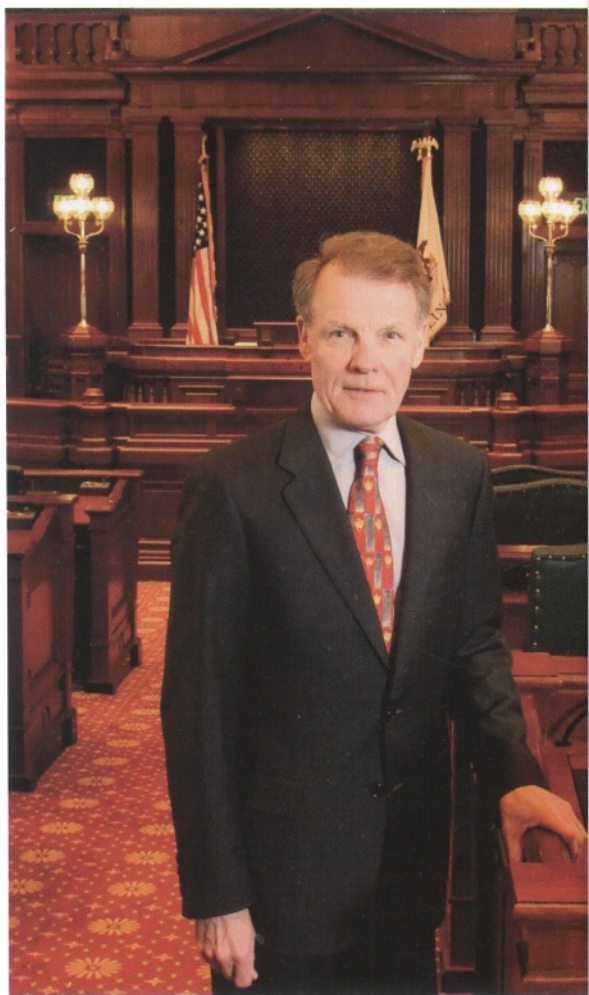
The current restoration was finished on February 6, 2007, when the House convened its first session in the new chamber. Today, the chamber looks almost the same as it did in the nineteenth century, while incorporating the latest technology necessary for the operations of a modern legislative body.

This booklet was prepared to help you learn more about the project's more significant elements, view some before-and-after contrasts, and share a few of the "discoveries" made by the craftsmen and design professionals who worked so diligently to restore the chamber and other parts of the State Capitol to their near-original appearance.

Enjoy your time at the House of Representatives and please visit us again in person or online. Since 2000, all session proceedings have been broadcast via the Internet at www.ilga.gov.

Michael J. Madigan

—Speaker Michael J. Madigan



About the House of Representatives

The House of Representatives is a 118-member body in which, along with the 59-member Senate, the legislative power of the State of Illinois is vested. The House primarily is engaged in the business of enacting laws, amending laws, repealing laws, adopting budgetary appropriations, and considering constitutional amendments. In 1983, the size of the House decreased from 177 to 118 members as a result of a ballot referendum approved by voters in 1980. Members are elected to two-year terms in even-numbered years.



Overview

In 1867, plans to build the sixth Illinois State Capitol in Springfield were approved by the Legislature. The groundbreaking was held the following year. In 1877, the General Assembly met for the first time in its present chamber.

Major renovations to the House chamber took place in 1947 and 1974. After three decades of wear, combined with significant plumbing, electrical, and structural problems, it was decided by the General Assembly that another renovation was needed.

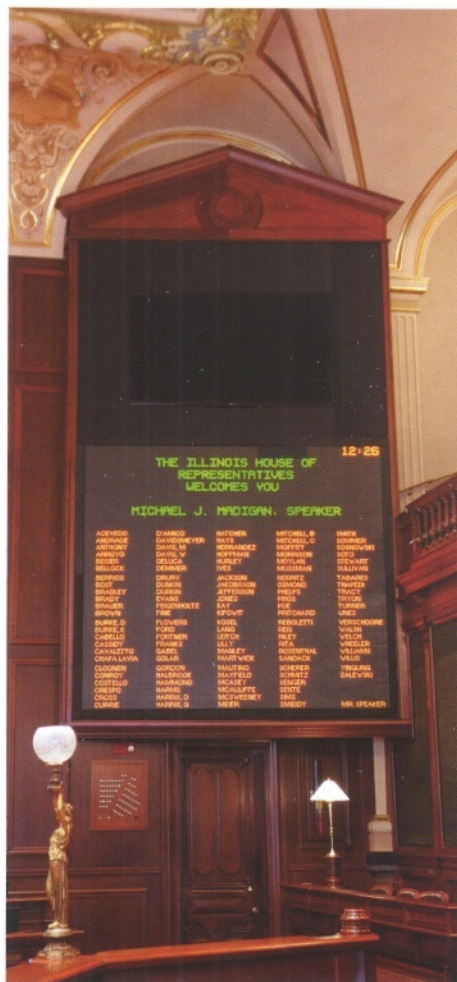
Those charged with the task soon realized that the planned renovation provided an opportunity to restore many of the significant historical details of the original House chamber. The restoration architects dedicated significant research and care to capture the look and feel of the original chamber. While maintaining the appearance of the nineteenth century chamber, modern technologies were integrated to bring the chamber into the twenty-first century.

On February 6, 2007, members of the House of Representatives met for the first time in the newly renovated chamber. Thanks to careful planning and attention to historical detail, Illinois will have an aesthetically pleasing and structurally sound House chamber for decades to come.



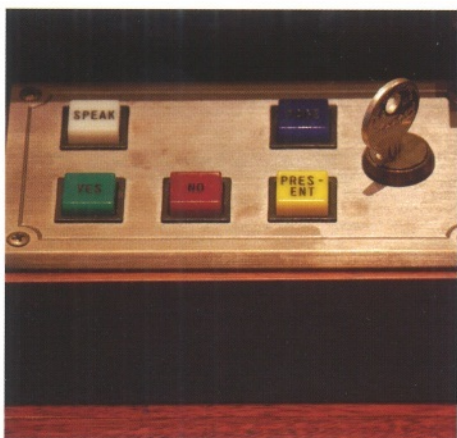


Nineteenth Century Meets Twenty-First...



In the original House chamber, members voted by voice. Since 1951, votes have been cast by electronic switches located at each member's desk. The switches (pictured lower left) are colored green for a Yes vote, red for a No vote, and yellow to indicate a Present vote. Data server racks (right) installed behind the House chamber record and protect the integrity of the votes and reduce the amount of time it takes to process an official vote.

Each member is provided with a laptop computer to research legislation and view bill analyses.

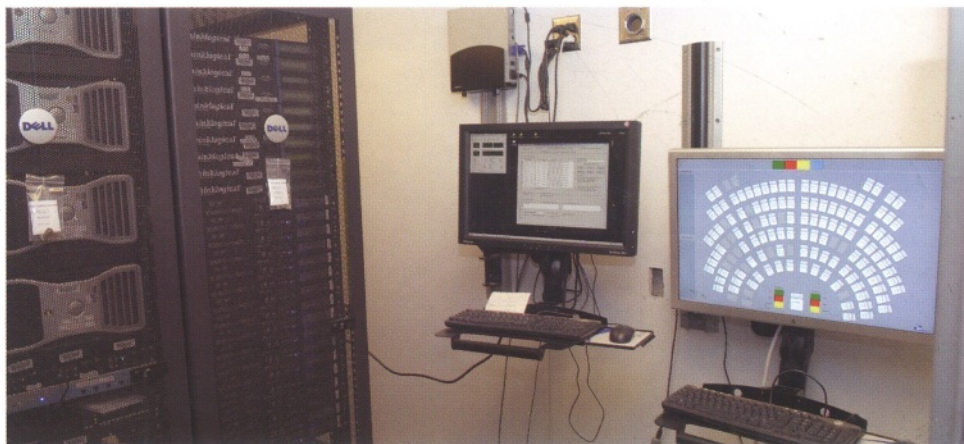


Integrating Old & New



The House chamber renovation project allowed planners the opportunity to upgrade existing technologies and integrate them into the period designs. Taking special care to make the upgrades as unobtrusive as possible, engineers installed computers, data servers, video screens, and audio and transmission cables that allow the House of Representatives to stay connected to a rapidly-changing world.

Many of the electronic upgrades will streamline the work of the House and further open its proceedings to the public. Integrated computer terminals in the chamber rostrum (right pictures, opposite page) allow the House clerk to maintain an efficient flow of business and replace cumbersome and unnecessary paper reports with electronic versions available at the push of a button. The public can follow legislative proceedings in real-time on the Internet thanks to cameras installed in the House chamber.



Behind the Scenes: Electrical, Structural, & HVAC Systems

Among the many necessary repairs to the House chamber was an upgrade of the heating, ventilating, and air conditioning (HVAC) system, which was in urgent need of a complete overhaul. Control panels for the new HVAC system and chamber lighting systems (below) were installed in the attic.

All steel supports and trusses were fireproofed to prevent a collapse of the House ceiling in the event of a fire.

An updated pneumatic tube system, long a feature of the House, is now tucked away in a utility closet in the west front of the chamber. It whisks paper correspondence back and forth from the House floor to the document repository.





While replacing the chamber's floor framing for desk installation, electricians fixed old wiring and installed 24,750 feet (nearly 4.7 miles) of conduit and 66,400 feet (12.5 miles) of electrical wiring and data cables.

In the photo above, a tradesman installs fire-treated floor framing directly below what will soon be a row of new desks for the members.

Renovation Contractors & Artisans

Allied Carpet

AT&T

B & B Electric

Bennett Electronic Service

Brooks Art Glass

Capital Development Board

HDR | Cochran Wilken, Inc.

CORE Construction

Egizii Electric

EverGreene Painting Studios

Gfroerer Company, Inc.

Henneman Raufesen & Associates

Henson Robinson Company

H.F. Fritsch & Sons

J.P. Phillips

J.R. Burrows & Company

Imperial Woodworking

Morton Automatic Electric

Murphy Marble

R.D. Lawrence Construction

Resource One

Signature Craft LLC

St. Louis Antique Lighting Company

Vinci | Hamp Architects, Inc.

Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

Des Moines, IA

Springfield, IL

Springfield, IL

Pontiac, IL

Springfield, IL

Springfield, IL

Springfield, IL

Morton, IL

Springfield, IL

Oak Park, IL

Cincinnati, OH

Champaign, IL

Springfield, IL

Springfield, IL

Franklin Park, IL

Rockland, MA

Palatine, IL

Morton, IL

Chicago, IL

Springfield, IL

Springfield, IL

St. Louis, MO

St. Louis, MO

Chicago, IL

Northbrook, IL

Decorative Lay Light



Created during the Capitol's original construction period between 1867-88, the House chamber lay light is presumed to have been designed by the building's architect, Alfred H. Piquenard.

The original design, including its exuberant art glass and ornamental plaster "crosshair" dividers, allowed natural daylight to penetrate the center of the chamber via a roof-mounted skylight. In the era before electric lighting, the lay light's natural illumination from above balanced daylight admitted through windows along the chamber's side corridors.

The lay light remained in place until a fire damaged the House chamber in the 1930s. Post-fire repairs, however, did not include its reconstruction. In its place, a plaster dome was installed, divided into sections by an eight-spoke, decorative plaster "wheel."

After deciding to reconstruct the original lay light, the design team visited the Iowa statehouse (built from 1871-86), also designed by Piquenard, where a similar, but simpler, original lay light still exists. In addition, historic photographs dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were invaluable in recreating the original lay light.

The black and white photos, however, did not offer direction on glass color. For that, the architects studied the stained-glass palette of the Iowa Senate lay light, the Illinois Capitol's rotunda dome, and also the House chamber's original paint colors. The resulting scheme uses 29 colors of cathedral-style art glass, a type characterized by vibrant, transparent colors and textured with small bubbles and striations.

Because the original roof-mounted skylight has not been reconstructed, the lay light is illuminated from above by a ring of dimmable fluorescent lamps, located in an enclosed room in the attic above the House chamber.

Many professions and trades were involved in the lay light reconstruction, including architects, historians, color consultants, ornamental plasterers, decorative painters, stained-glass craftsmen, and steel workers. Its re-creation is an important highlight in the House chamber's restoration.

Special Lighting Fixtures



The Maiden Newel Post Lights (left) on the House clerk's podium are made of cast nickel with a bronze finish. The lights were originally cast in the 1870s as a gas fixture by the McKenney Co. in Boston, Massachusetts.

Although these particular lights are not original to this chamber, early photos and drawings depict nearly identical maidens affixed to the clerk's podium. In 2006, the lights that appear here now were located in Massachusetts, with their original etched glass shades. They had previously been converted from gas to electric use.



Chandeliers

The original House chandeliers, referred to as "gasoliers" in that period, were manufactured by Mitchell, Vance and Co. of New York. Founded in 1860, Mitchell, Vance became the most prestigious lighting company in America by 1876. The company provided lighting for several state capitol buildings and for the U.S. Capitol.

The fixtures installed in their original locations appear exactly as they did, except that in the 1880s gas was used instead of electricity. Also, the restored or replicated versions in use today have a quartz halogen uplight system that can be turned on to light the ornate House ceiling and add indirect downlighting to the room. After the 1930s fire, the fixtures were shortened from six tiers to just three. About half the equipment from the original chandeliers was salvaged for reuse.

The 2006 House renovation also included the addition of a new winch system to lower each chandelier for service and re-lamping. In addition, wall sconce fixtures, Speaker's rostrum light standards, or "torchers," and new pendant light fixtures for the side aisles were installed.



Chamber Carpet

The new House carpet was designed to resemble the original House carpeting from the late 1800s. It was milled in England (American mills are no longer able to make this type of carpet) and is 80% wool and 20% nylon. The carpet design was extracted from historical photos dating to the 1890s and is similar to Victorian designs of the period. Approximately 5,464 linear feet of hand-sewn carpet was installed on the floors of the House, galleries, and adjacent corridors. Woven at 27 inches wide, a hand sewer stitched together eight to 10 feet per hour. The initial sewing for the floor carpet areas was completed in Ohio, while the galleries and corridors were hand sewn in Des Moines, Iowa.



Decorative Stencil Work



Decorative stencil work can be found throughout the corridors and in rooms adjacent to the House chamber.

The design above the east and west corridor chandeliers (top) was created from the original House ceiling and painted on canvas. The chandeliers are framed with arabesque designs and a gold leaf decorative plaster border.

During reconstruction, the stencil (top right) was discovered on a chamber wall and reproduced in the chamber annexes.

The decorative stencils (bottom three) were hand painted on the walls. Workers created paint exposures, where as many as 16 layers of paint were removed to determine the original palette of colors and designs used in the building. These stencils are from the original designs of the late 1800s.



Annex Rooms

Glass and wood enclosed annex rooms are immediately to the east and west of the rear entrance to the House chamber. They are used by members for meetings or to make telephone calls. Members are able to follow debate and view the chamber's proceedings on closed circuit monitors in the rooms.



The annex walls feature a copy of the original hand-painted stencil for the House chamber. The decorative painters recommended preservation of the artwork. Although originally painted on a green wall with a rust color stencil, the design was re-created using an eggshell tone-on-tone color to complement the woodwork and carpet.

Gallery Balusters

Surrounding the House gallery are original mahogany balusters, or turned spindles. These, with a new matching handrail, replicate the original nineteenth century chamber's guardrail.



Lincoln and Douglas Portraits

Two of Illinois' most famous political figures are depicted by artist Aaron Darling in full-length portraits at the front of the House chamber. These historical paintings of Democrat Stephen Douglas and Republican Abraham Lincoln pre-date the current Capitol Building. They were commissioned by the governor and General Assembly in 1867 and completed in 1869. Originally displayed in the House chamber in the Old State Capitol in Springfield, records suggest that the portraits have been hanging in the current State House since 1877, the first year the General Assembly occupied the building.

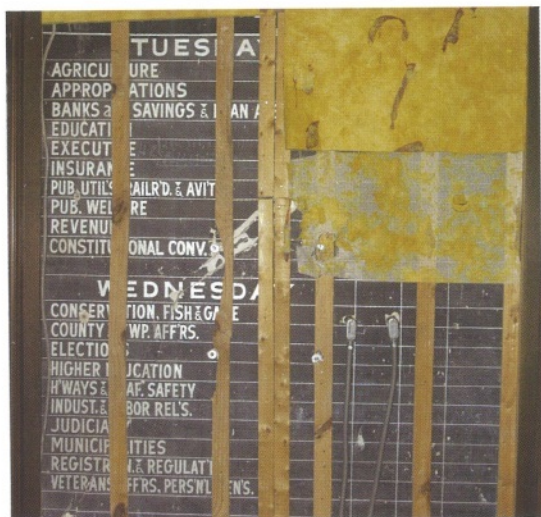


Woodwork Detail

The detailed woodwork was designed to highlight images important to the state of Illinois. Leaves represent the state tree, the white oak. Wheat stalks highlight the importance of agriculture to the development of our state. Nearly every piece of decorative craftwork was chosen to symbolically honor Illinois and the skilled post-Civil War craftsmen who helped make the new State Capitol building among the most beautiful in the nation.



Rear of House Chamber



In the process of removing old fixtures and plaster, workmen discovered chalkboards attached to the walls at the rear of the chamber on either side of the entryway doors (below). It is uncertain how far back they date, but they were in use as recently as the early 1970s. The chalkboards were used to keep track of committee schedules and post general notices for the members.



Hallway Chandeliers

These 12-arm, two-tiered chandeliers in the Capitol's first floor south hallway are authentic replicas of the original 1886 "gasoliers" made by the W.C. Vosburgh Manufacturing Co. of Brooklyn, New York. The gas shades on these nineteenth century fixture replicas, now illuminated by energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps, exhibit hand-cut and etched floral patterns of the Illinois State Flower, the Native Violet. The chandeliers were constructed by the St. Louis Antique Lighting Company.



Hearing Room 114

In 2006, renovation work began on Hearing Room 114. The process is ongoing, with the ceiling restored to its turn-of-the-twentieth century appearance. The walls, cornice plaster detail, plaster frieze, and ornate canvas border were restored to their original configuration and color. Paint exposures allowed the decorative painters to restore the vaulted ceiling to a sunlit blue sky with green ivy emerging through the gold leaf latticework. The new 15-arm etched globe chandeliers and wall sconces are reproductions of turn of the century fixtures.



Covered for decades behind hallway walls, the original windows of Hearing Room 114, pictured below, were discovered during Capitol renovations. Finding they had remained virtually intact, including their intricate etched-glass glazing, the windows were recently restored, returning their beauty and light to the Statehouse and unveiling another piece of the building's original design.



Capitol Hallways



The cornice and ceiling of the second floor south hallway (above) embody the Victorian period. The designs and finishes found here during recent renovations were re-created based on architectural paint analysis that included exposures of the original designs by removing the non-original overpaint and an analysis of the colors and treatments on samples from design elements in the hallway.

Painstaking reproductions of the finely detailed scroll and cartouche panes of the first floor south hallway (below) include portraits and the names of the U.S. presidents up to the time the hallway was painted. Other decorative motifs in the corridor lanes include Native Americans and the Illinois state seal.





Paired pilasters like those seen in the second floor south hallway are a hallmark of French Empire style. These pilasters include red, ocher, and the recently uncovered and restored blue scagliola medallions. The nearly lost art of scagliola, a technique for producing carefully manipulated integrally colored plaster, which is honed and polished to a high sheen to resemble marble, allowed for the artistic use of colors and textures unavailable in natural stone.

Richly embellished pilaster capitals include gold, aluminum and copper finishes. Much of the metallic decoration of the capital is done in metallic leaf, alloyed metal that is hammered to less than one fifty-thousandth of an inch thick and applied to surfaces through the use of a specialized adhesive called size.



Capitol Rotunda



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Taken from the original entry level into the building, this photo of the second floor faces the newly renovated west wing.

Grand Stair - Third Floor



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As a result of the renovation, the grand stair in the west wing has been returned to its original splendor. A mezzanine, not part of the original Capitol design, was removed. It had been accessed from the stair landing under the Gustav Fuchs painting pictured above.

Grand Stair - Second Floor



©tomrossiter

The maiden light fixtures, designed by Piquenard, were considered inappropriate by Illinois Statehouse Commissioners, so the maidens were taken to the Iowa State Capitol, which was also designed by Piquenard. The maidens now in the Illinois State Capitol are exact replicas of the Piquenard originals.

Originally, the main entry into the building, the vantage point from the east entrance at the second floor, was the grand stair. At the base of the stairs are twin maidens, designed by the Capitol's original architect Alfred H. Piquenard. At the landing is a 42-foot-high mural, completed in 1886 by Gustav Fuchs, depicting George Rogers Clark negotiating a treaty with Native Americans at Fort Kaskaskia in 1778.

This painting is actually historically inaccurate, as the Native American culture portrayed was never found in Illinois.



First Floor



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The first floor of the Capitol, originally the basement, was transformed under Capitol Architect W.W. Boyington after Piquenard's passing. Boyington's use of elaborate designs, light vibrant colors and stone wainscoting entices visitors to explore this prominent state treasure.



Column Capital

The original first floor columns highlight a seventeenth century plaster technique known as scagliola, which simulates marble. The column capital leaves are cast iron.

Beneath the Grand Stair



For years, the underside of the first floor grand stair was occupied by a candy stand and newspaper service. This pre-renovation photograph also shows the drab walls and poor lighting levels.

The return of the west wing to its "period of significance" meant relocating these services.



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During the renovation, the candy stand was removed from the first floor and every ceiling, wall and floor surface received significant treatment to bring them as close as possible to the original appearance. The post-renovated west wing offers today's visitors a glimpse at what those visiting the Capitol in the late 1800s would have experienced.

Rathskeller



Before the west wing renovation, the Rathskeller, a limited-service cafeteria-style restaurant and associated seating, occupied a large portion of the west wing basement.

Much of that space was converted into offices, which are currently occupied by members of the press.

Post - Rathskeller



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After the renovation, walls and ceilings are returned to their original appearance with a few modern conveniences. All infrastructure is under the new terrazzo floor and only lighting and sprinkler piping are attached to the original brick arched ceiling. There is no longer food service in the Capitol.

The Capitol Structure

The Illinois State Capitol's structural layout, in the form of a Latin cross, combines modern utility and convenience with the strength and beauty of ancient building styles.

The circular foundation, on which the great dome rests, is based upon solid rock, and the walls supporting the dome are 17 feet thick from the foundation to the first story. The foundation walls are granular magnesian limestone from the Sonora quarries in Hancock County. The outer walls of the superstructure are Niagara limestone, the lower story from the quarries of Joliet, and the upper stories from Lemont.

The building is 379 feet from north to south and 268 feet from east to west. The height from the ground line to the top of the dome is 361 feet – 73 feet higher than the dome of the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. The Illinois Capitol is 405 feet tall to the tip of the flagstaff.

The Capitol consists of a basement, first, second and third stories, a gallery floor and the dome. The basement was used for vaults, engine rooms, a carpenter shop, and storerooms for various purposes, and now also houses office space.

The first floor was devoted largely to offices for various State boards, with the East Wing occupied by the Railroad and Warehouse Commission on the north side and by the Bureau of Labor Statistics and State Board of Health on the south side. The North Wing was occupied by the Superintendent of Insurance on the east side and by the Land Department of the Auditor's Office, the Farmers' Institute, and the Supply Department of the Secretary of State on the west. Occupying the West Wing were the Board of Live Stock Commissioners on the north side and the chambers of the Supreme Court judges on the south, while the South Wing contained the Office of the Clerk of the Supreme Court, the Shipping Department of the Secretary of State, and the War Museum on the west side and the offices of the Adjutant General and the State Board of Pharmacy on the east.

The second floor, called the main floor by Alfred H. Piquenard and originally reaching from the outside by a broad flight of marble steps on the east front, houses the executive offices. The East Wing is still occupied by the Governor's suite of rooms. The North Wing was home to the State Board of Public Charities, the Board of Agriculture, and Agricultural Museum on the east side, and the offices of the Auditor and the Treasurer on the west. In the West Wing were the Attorney General's office on the north side and the Law Library on the west end, while the south side of this wing and the west side of the South Wing were devoted to the Supreme Court. The east side of the South Wing, now home to the Secretary of State's Office, was occupied by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Anti-Trust and Index departments of the Secretary of State.

Cohrs Pitcher

This magnificently decorated and engraved silver pitcher has a unique history with a direct connection to our present-day State Capitol.

In the 1860s, the Illinois General Assembly was looking for larger accommodations, having outgrown its space in what is now the Old State Capitol Building. John B. Cohrs, a state senator from Pekin during the 24th and 25th General Assemblies (1865-1869), worked to make sure Springfield remained the capital city, despite efforts to relocate to Chicago, Peoria and Decatur. Cohrs' legislation to construct the new State Capitol became law on February 25, 1867.

In a gesture of appreciation for his work to ensure Springfield remained the state capital, city officials presented Sen. Cohrs with this silver pitcher. Over the years, the pitcher found its way across the country, eventually ending up with a Washington, D.C. silver dealer, Benjamin Bell.

Thanks to the generosity of Mr. Curtis Bell and the Bell Family, the silver pitcher came back to Illinois. On May 30, 2014, U.S. Sen. Richard J. Durbin presented the pitcher to House Speaker Michael J. Madigan and Senate President John J. Cullerton at its permanent display location in the Third Floor Southwest Corridor.



Hearing Room 118



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Hearing Room 118 is one of two House committee rooms in the west wing, both of which were renovated using historically appropriate lighting and decorative painting. This room is smaller than it used to be because of an emergency egress stairway that was built to its immediate west. This new stairwell goes from the fourth floor to the basement.



©tomrossiter

Washrooms

The ceilings of the current washrooms were restored to their original 1880s appearance, when the spaces had other purposes.

Achievements

- ◆ Showing its commitment to a sustainable future, the State of Illinois pursued and achieved LEED Gold for New Construction and Major Renovation in the west wing renovation project. This is a first for state capitols.
- ◆ The project also received a 2014 AIA Illinois Honor Award.

West Wing Entry Doors



Entrance into the newly renovated west wing is achieved through three pairs of copper-clad mahogany wood doors designed to last hundreds of years. Copper and its close relative – bronze – are used extensively in the Capitol for their longevity and architectural character. These doors will form a green tarnish (patina) naturally over time.



Illinois State Capitol, Springfield · House Chamber Renovation · Completed February 6, 2007

For more information on the Illinois House of Representatives, please contact House Clerk Timothy D. Mapes at (217) 782-8223 or mapes@hds.ilga.gov.