

Missouri State Capitol
High Street between Broadway and
Jefferson Streets
Jefferson City
Cole County
Missouri

HABS No. MO-1840

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

HABS No. MO-1840

Location: High Street between Broadway and Jefferson Streets,
Jefferson City, Cole County, Missouri

USGS Jefferson City quadrangle

Present Owner
and Occupant: State of Missouri

Present Use: state capitol

Significance: As the state capitol, this building has served as the symbolic centerpiece of life in Missouri since its completion in 1917.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of construction: 1914-1917; building dedicated 1924
2. Architects: Egerton Swartwout and Evarts Tracy of New York City
3. Contractors: K.F. Gill Construction Company and John Gill Construction Company
4. Original plans and construction: The riverfront portico, which was originally planned to duplicate the one on the south elevation, was redesigned into a semicircular colonnaded porch which echoes the previous capitol. Also, only a portion of the planned balustraded terraces leading down to the river were built.
5. Alterations: The basement was converted to a parking lot. The original cement balustrade surrounding the ground floor on the exterior and access stairways deteriorated and was replaced with stone.

- B. Historical Context: Missouri's second state capitol, designed by Stephen Hills and in use by 1840, burned in February, 1911. A short time later, the state legislature voted to build a new capitol. To that end, a State Capitol Commission was established which toured other state capitols for ideas and sponsored a nationwide design competition. Winners of the 1912 competition were former McKim, Mead, and White associates, Egerton Swartwout and Evarts Tracy. The capitol was completed in 1917 and dedicated October 6, 1924. The building and grounds were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1969.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: Although the building is not a copy of any other state capitol, it exhibits the standard symmetrical form of the type with a main domed central section flanked by two wings for the legislative houses. The classical revival building has four stories and a basement, which cover approximately three acres and comprise nearly 500,000 square feet of floor space. The interior is enriched by its many murals, statues, and paintings which illustrate Missouri's role as a frontier state.
- B. Description of Exterior: The exterior is faced with pale grey Carthage, Missouri limestone, which was also used for corridor floors, rotundas, and stairways. Classical revival detailing includes 134 Corinthian columns and a bas relief sculptured pediment on the extended temple form portico on the west (main) front.
- C. Site: The capitol building and grounds dominate Jefferson City and are situated on a high bluff overlooking the Missouri River. The grounds are formally landscaped, including symmetrical terraces which descend to the river.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Caldwell, Dorothy, ed. Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue. Columbia, Missouri: The State Historical Society of Missouri, 1963.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell and William Seale. Temples of Democracy, The State Capitols of the USA. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976.

Holmes, M. Patricia. "Missouri State Capitol Building and Grounds." National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 1969.

Prepared by: Holly K. Chamberlain, historian
HABS
May, 1988

ADDENDUM TO
MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL
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