

THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME TWELVE | NUMBER THREE | AUGUST 2020

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue Chosen Architect

With the choice of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue as architect for the third Nebraska State Capitol made on June 26, 1920, the Nebraska Capitol Commission had completed the first part of its 1919 Legislative mandate to construct a new statehouse. Thomas Rogers Kimball, the Commission's Architectural Advisor had successfully guided the Commission through a competition in which seven prominent national architectural firms and three leading Nebraska firms had participated. At its next meeting on July 15, 1920, the Capitol Commission, Governor Samuel McKelvie, Walter W. Head of Omaha, William E. Hardy of Lincoln and State Engineer George Johnson, with William H. Thompson of Grand Island absent, voted to retain the services of Architectural Advisor Thomas Rogers Kimball until the contract with Bertram G. Goodhue was signed. The Commission then approved payment of \$2,000.00 to all participating architects, including the competition jury.

Because building a new Capitol was of such great importance to the state and would take many years, the Commission wanted to elevate the process above politics and postponed their next meeting until November 15, 1920, after the

upcoming election. The Commission wanted everyone in the state to understand the competition and be part of the process. So during those few months of waiting, they saw that all designs and exhibits from the competition were presented to the public. The Commission also used this time to develop the "Conditions of Agreement between Owner and Architect."

On November 15, 1920 Bertram G. Goodhue arrived in Lincoln to discuss and sign the contract outlining the responsibilities of the "Architect" and the "Owner," as the Capitol Commission was known in the document. The "Owner" intended to complete a new State Capitol as authorized by state legislation, and agreed to pay Goodhue \$25,000 per year for five years for his services, which included: design documents, specifications, certifications, administration of the business and supervision of the work. The "Architect" was also given control and guidance of the collaborating sculptors, painters, and landscapists; and he was to oversee furnishing the building. Additionally, the "Owner" expected the "Architect" to advise and counsel the Commission in matters pertaining to the creation of the new State Capitol. 

Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

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Michael Heavican
Chief Justice Supreme Court
Vice-Chairman

Katherine Ankerson
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Nebraska State Historical Society

Doug Carey
Congressional District 1

Thomas Sanderson
Congressional District 2

Trent D. Loos
Congressional District 3

Robert C. Ripley
Capitol Administrator
Secretary



Competition Designs

At their July 15, 1920 meeting, the Capitol Commissioners indicated a desire to retain the architectural drawings and exhibit materials each architect had prepared for the final competition. They instructed Thomas R. Kimball to contact the individual architects and secure their drawings. Kimball's requests were not successful. Later, at the December 10, 1920, Capitol Commission meeting, the Secretary of the Commission was instructed to return all drawings to the competitors, with the understanding that Goodhue's drawings would be returned to Nebraska once they were no longer needed by the architect for his work the Capitol project. Because the Commission was unable to retain the entire collection of original architectural documents, the Nebraska Capitol Archive is missing a major component of the competition.

Current Capitol Preservation Architects and the Capitol Archivist have collected images from periodicals and newspaper articles published at the time showing the alternate submissions. Office of the Capitol Commission Preservation Architects have also contacted universities, libraries, and other archives holding the papers of the competing architectural firms to seek additional material for our collection. We have received copies of Nebraska Capitol-associated materials from their collections to add to our understanding of the process which led to our third Nebraska State Capitol. The Office of the Capitol Commission and the Capitol Archivist continue to add to the collection and welcome donations of materials associated with Bertram G. Goodhue's Capitol. 



John Russell Pope, NYC
2nd Place



McKim, Mead & White, NYC
3rd place



Paul P. Cret, Zantzinger, Berie and Medary, Philadelphia, PA



H. Van Buren Magonigle, NYC



John Latenser & Sons,
Omaha, NE



Bliss & Faville, San Francisco



Ellery Davis, Lincoln, NE



John & Alan McDonald,
Omaha, NE



Tracey & Swartout, NYC

Goodhue's Winning Design

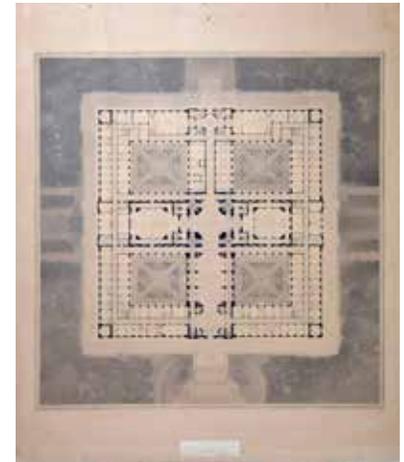
Each of the ten competing architects was asked to provide a plot plan, a principal floor plan, a principal elevation, a principal section, other floor plans, a rear and side elevation, and a detail drawing. The submissions were to be presented in a uniform format, black and white drawings on white drawing paper mounted on stiff white cardboard, for the Jury to review. As evident in the images of Goodhue's submissions from the Nebraska Capitol Collections Archive, below, a century has changed the color of the paper and mounting boards, but the not special and unique qualities of the design.

In their report to the Commission, the official competition jury, architects Waddy B. Wood, James Gamble Rogers and Willis Polk, stated "... the design of the winner shows the greatest utility

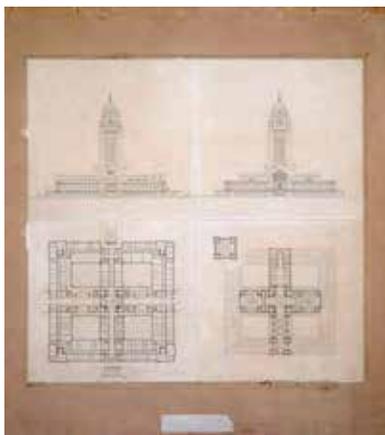
of any of the plans; that it shows him to be able, to design a monument worthy of Nebraska, and it shows him to be capable of giving the fullest consideration as to proper expenditure. While he sacrificed nothing in area and nothing in utility and nothing in beauty, he has been able to produce a building that is less than 75% of the size of the average building in this competition. He has produced for this land a building as free from binding traditions as it is from prejudice, an edifice that expresses his capability of designing any kind of a monument that may later develop as suitable, after a study by him in collaboration with the Commission, of the particular requirements... it also is a proper symbol of the Capitol of Nebraska, the center of the United States." 



Above, Plot Plan
Right, Principal Elevation



Principal Floor Plan



Rear and Side Elevation
Other Floor Plans



Above, Principal Section
Left, Entrance Detail



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Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924

Courtyard Landscape Planting Begins

Flowers and shrubs have arrived and have been planted in the southwest courtyard. As the installation of irrigation and edging progresses through the other three courtyards, plants will follow. In September all courtyards should have the interior landscape completely planted. The southwest courtyard may have the shrubs around the perimeter planted, since the window repair component of the HVAC Project is almost complete in that quadrant. The exterior shrub installation in the other three courtyards will await the completion of the HVAC work in that quadrant. 

Guided Tours are offered Monday-Friday hourly from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except at noon. Saturday and Holidays from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., except at noon and Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Please call 402.471.0448 or visit www.capitol.nebraska.gov

The Capitol Sower, published by the Office of the Capitol Commission, is available online at www.capitol.org. Contact the Tourism Supervisor at [<roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov>](mailto:roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov) for more information.

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments about the content. All images are property of the Office of the Capitol Commission.



Above, with the petunias planted, the crew starts setting the privet hedge in place. Over the course of two days the landscapers installed almost 300 shrubs, 300 petunias and 80 roses.



Left, viewed from second floor, the installation of the flowers and shrubs is a step closer to courtyard restoration. Below, viewed from inside the courtyard, the colors of the petunias and roses hint at next year's beauty.

