



COLORADO STATE CAPITOL VISITOR GUIDE

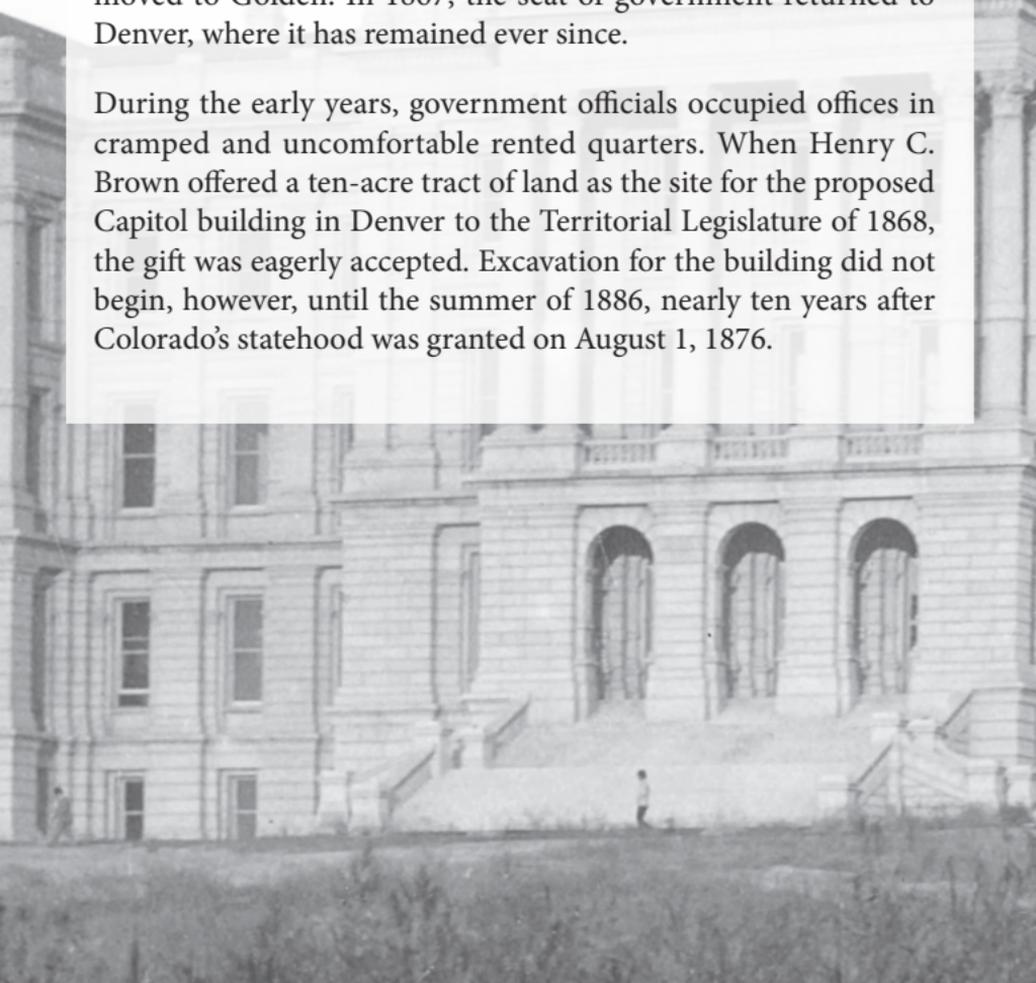
HISTORY

Native Americans were the first to make their homes in the place that would become Colorado. Indigenous peoples like the Ancestral Puebloans, Apache, Arapaho, Cheyenne, Comanche, Lakota, Shoshone, and Ute have lived in Colorado throughout history. Colorado's first permanent settlers of European origin were Hispanic settlers who moved northward from New Mexico, establishing the village of San Luis in 1851.

The discovery of gold near Denver in 1858 brought fortune seekers across the plains to the Rocky Mountains. Settlements developed throughout the region. The largest communities were established near mining areas. The area that is today Colorado was originally divided amongst the Kansas, Nebraska, Utah, and New Mexico territories. In 1861, Colorado was designated a territory by the United States Congress with its present boundaries. After much debate, the "Pike's Peak Region" was named Colorado, a Spanish term meaning "colored red." Many of the area's Indigenous groups and Hispano settlers were forcefully removed from the land following the gold rush of 1859.

The first Territorial Legislative Assembly met in Denver on September 9, 1861, to debate the location of the capital city. The delegates decided to locate the first territorial capital in Colorado City, now a part of Colorado Springs. A year later the capital was moved to Golden. In 1867, the seat of government returned to Denver, where it has remained ever since.

During the early years, government officials occupied offices in cramped and uncomfortable rented quarters. When Henry C. Brown offered a ten-acre tract of land as the site for the proposed Capitol building in Denver to the Territorial Legislature of 1868, the gift was eagerly accepted. Excavation for the building did not begin, however, until the summer of 1886, nearly ten years after Colorado's statehood was granted on August 1, 1876.



The Capitol building was designed by Elijah E. Myers, and its construction lasted nearly 15 years until 1901, although many offices were in use in 1894. The building committee decided to use as much material as possible from Colorado in the construction of the new Capitol and chose granite from Gunnison for the outer walls, sandstone from Fort Collins for the foundations, marble from the town of Marble for the floors, and rose onyx from Beulah for the wainscoting. Only the ornamental brass, white oak woodwork, and marble stair treads and panels were shipped to Denver from other states. The granite cornerstone, located at the northeast corner of the building, weighed 20 tons in its rough state.

The Colorado Capitol was designed on an axis in the form of a Greek cross measuring 383 feet long by 315 feet wide, and resembles the basic design of the nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C. The cost of construction was about \$3 million. The cost of replicating this building today is impossible to determine.

PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Photographic contributions: Donn Bruns, Lon Engelking, Debbie Grunlien, Kristal Kraft, Roger Whitacre, Theresa Holst, and History Colorado.





THE CAPITOL AND ITS PURPOSE

The Capitol is the center of Colorado's state government. The building houses the Senate, the House of Representatives, the Office of the Governor, the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, and the Department of the Treasury. The elected officials in the building work to make laws and administer state government.

The Colorado Supreme Court was located in the Capitol until 1977. The Judicial Branch, including the Colorado Supreme Court, is now located in the Ralph L. Carr Colorado Judicial Center at 14th Avenue and Lincoln Street. The vacated court chamber in the north wing of the second floor of the Capitol is used as a legislative hearing room.

THE LEGISLATURE

The Colorado General Assembly consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The General Assembly has 100 elected members, including 35 Senators and 65 Representatives. The boundaries of the Senate and House districts are adjusted every ten years, based on changes in the distribution of the state's population.

The legislative session convenes annually for 120 days starting in early January. The Colorado General Assembly is a part-time, citizen legislature, and most of the members have other jobs. Members of the General Assembly may serve no more than eight consecutive years in the Senate or the House of Representatives.

The main entrance to the House and Senate chambers is on the second floor. Legislators' offices are located on the second and third floors of the Capitol, as well as in the State Services Building at 1525 Sherman Street and the Legislative Services Building at 200 E. 14th Avenue.



(L. to R.) Senate President Stephen Fenberg, Boulder; Senate Majority Leader Dominick Moreno, Commerce City; Senate Minority Leader Paul Lundeen, Monument.

THE SENATE

The Colorado Senate consists of 35 Senators who are elected to serve four-year terms, with one-half of the Senators elected every two years. Each Senate district contains approximately 165,000 Coloradans. The presiding officer of the Senate is called the President. The President is a member of the majority party elected by his or her colleagues every two years. The majority and minority leaders serve as spokespersons for their political parties.

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Colorado House of Representatives consists of 65 members who are elected to serve two-year terms. Each House district contains approximately 89,000 Coloradans. The presiding officer of the House of Representatives is called the Speaker. The Speaker is a member of the majority party elected by his or her colleagues every two years. The Speaker appoints the chairperson and members of all House committees.



(L. to R.) Speaker of the House Julie McCluskie, Dillon; House Minority Leader Mike Lynch, Wellington; House Majority Leader Monica Duran, Wheat Ridge.

THE GOVERNOR



Governor Jared Polis

The Governor of Colorado is elected by a statewide vote to serve a four-year term. The Governor represents Colorado in dealing with other states, the federal government, and other countries. The chief executive recommends a budget to the General Assembly at the beginning of each legislative session, and every year outlines legislative priorities in a State of the State speech. The Governor often presides at ceremonial functions and meets with citizens daily.

The chief executive has the power to veto legislation and to call the General Assembly back into a special legislative session. In addition, the Governor also appoints many administrators of state departments, members of boards and commissions, and judges when vacancies occur.

Governor Jared Polis was elected for his second and final term in November of 2022. He is an entrepreneur, education leader, public servant, and Colorado native. After launching several successful companies, Polis founded schools for at-risk students and new immigrants and started nonprofits to help veterans and entrepreneurs. Prior to serving as Governor, Polis served on the State Board of Education where he worked to raise pay for teachers and reduce class size for students, and represented Colorado's 2nd Congressional district where he was rated the most effective member of the Colorado delegation.

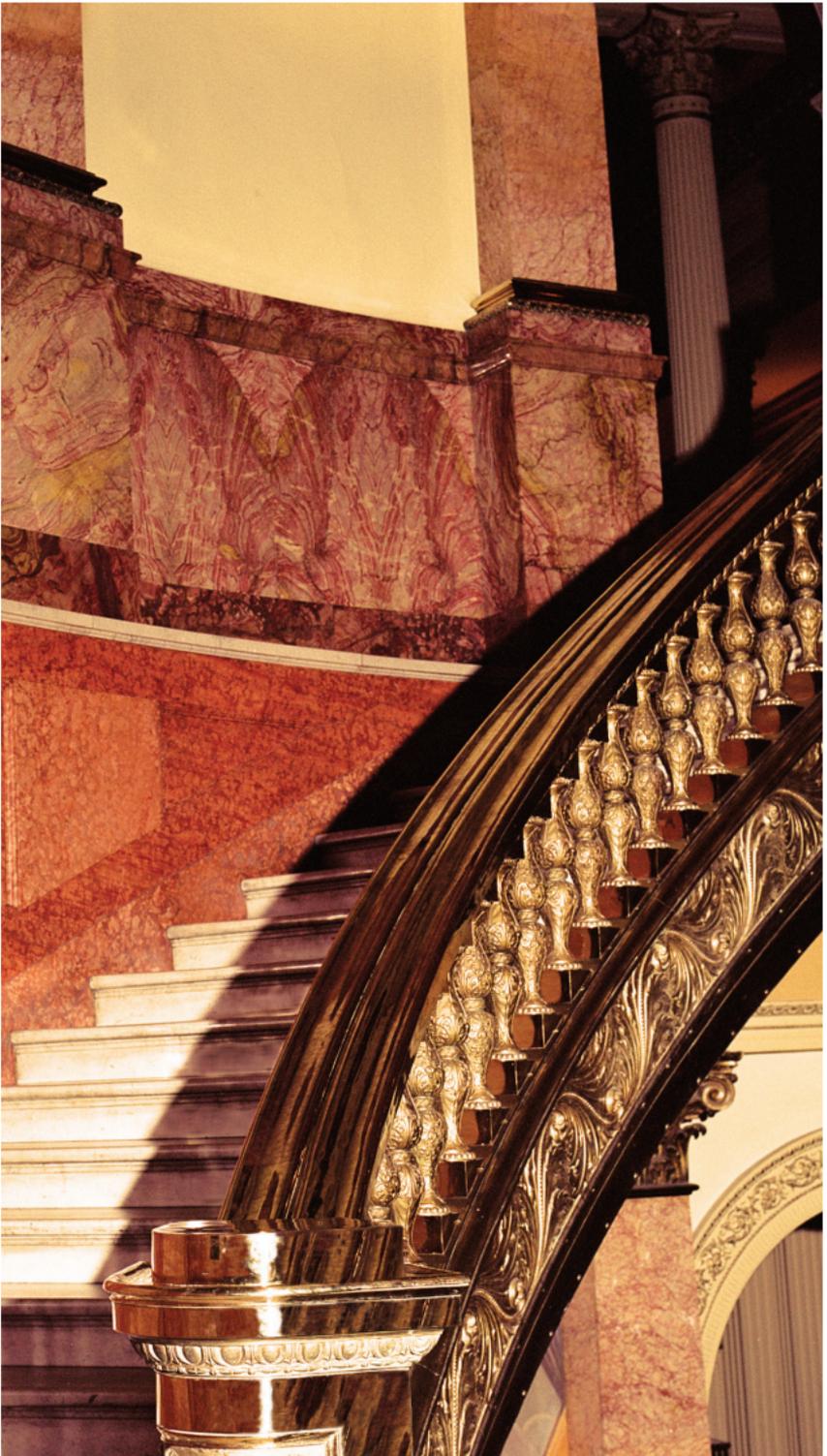
The Governor's office, the Lieutenant Governor's office, and the State Treasurer's office are all located on the first floor.



CAPITOL ARTWORK

Artwork and memorials adorn the Capitol halls and chambers as well as the surrounding grounds. Private contributions have made much of this artwork available to the public.

State law requires individuals interested in donating or loaning artwork or a memorial to the Capitol to submit a proposal to the Capitol Building Advisory Committee for approval. The Capitol Building Advisory Committee was established in 1991 to ensure that the historical character and architectural integrity of the Capitol building and grounds is preserved and promoted.



GRANITE, ONYX, MARBLE, AND BRASS

The exterior walls of the Capitol are constructed of granite quarried near Gunnison, Colorado. More than 200 stone cutters from Maine, Vermont, California, and Texas were employed to construct the five-foot thick walls. The builders believed that the durable stone would endure for a thousand years.

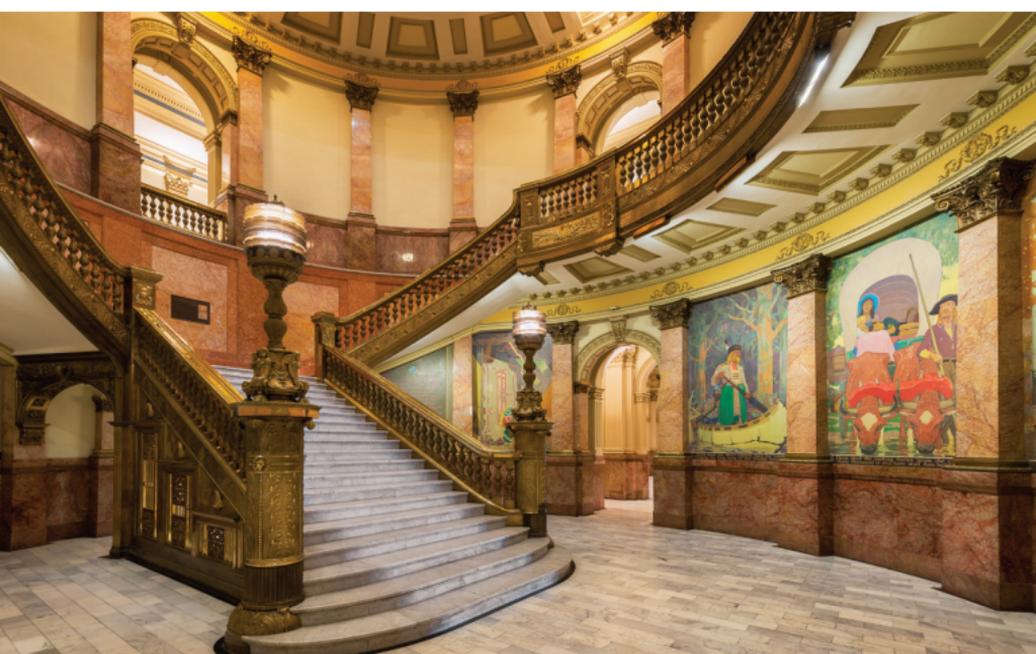
The pink stone seen throughout the Capitol is rose onyx discovered near Beulah, Colorado. This coloration of onyx has never been found anywhere else in the world. The installation of the rose onyx took seven years to complete. More than a thousand likenesses have been found in the stone that resemble famous people, animals, and objects. Among the most famous are the faces of George Washington (west wing rotunda wall) and Molly Brown (west wing archway).

The floors of the Capitol are constructed of yule marble from Marble, Colorado. The builders decided to use native marble even though it would have cost less to ship marble from Italy than it cost to transport it from the Colorado mountains. Yule marble, noted for its beauty and durability, was also used in the Tomb of the Unknowns and the Lincoln Memorial.

Two other building materials of interest in the Capitol are the brass and white oak. The brass was cast in Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio. The brass was used in the light fixtures and balusters. The white oak is from the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas and Missouri. The oak was hand carved and used for most of the interior wood work.

GRAND STAIRCASE

The impressive grand staircase stands in the center of the first floor rotunda leading to the second floor. Adorned with oak leaves and acorns cast in brass, the marble staircase consists of 57 steps and 176 brass balusters.



LIGHT FIXTURES

Electricity became available in Denver in 1886, the year construction on the Capitol began. However, the builders did not trust the reliability of electric lighting and insisted that gas be used. As a result, all of the light fixtures were originally constructed with the capability of being powered by either gas or electricity. Over time, all fixtures were converted from gas to electricity. The last gas fixture was converted in 1930.



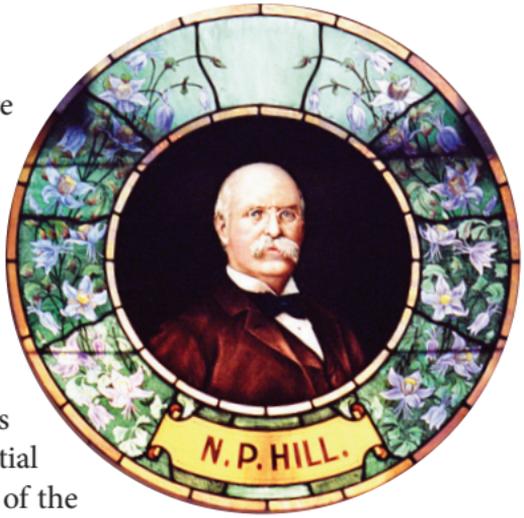
MURALS

The eight striking murals on the first floor rotunda walls were completed in 1940. The story of Colorado's water is told in picture and in verse through the collaboration of the artist Allen True and the poet Thomas Ferril. Every panel stresses the importance of water throughout Colorado's history. The pictures were painted on canvas then attached to the rotunda walls.



STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

Stained glass windows are located throughout the Capitol on the second and third floors and at the base of the dome. Located in the dome, the Colorado Hall of Fame contains stained-glass portraits of 16 individuals who contributed to the initial growth and development of the state. These windows were placed in the dome in 1900.



WOMEN'S GOLD

This handstitched wall hanging tells the story of prominent Colorado women in the first 100 years of statehood. More than 3,500 people put at least one stitch in the tapestry.



MILE HIGH MARKER

Denver is renowned as the “Mile High City.” Visitors often photograph the markers on the granite steps on the west side of the building that identify 5,280 feet or one mile above sea level. Currently, there are three markers. The first marker was installed in 1909 on the 15th step. The marker was stolen several times and in 1947, the words “ONE MILE ABOVE SEA LEVEL” were inscribed on the step.



In 1969, engineering students from Colorado State University resurveyed the steps and determined that the mile-high step was actually the 18th step and a second marker was installed. A final attempt to precisely locate one mile above sea level was made using the new national vertical datum. Surveyors identified the 13th step as one mile above sea level. A third marker was installed and dedicated on September 29, 2003.



THE GOLD DOME

Rising 272 feet above the ground, the gleaming gold dome on the Colorado Capitol is a fitting tribute to the history of our state. The dome was originally topped with copper. The citizens of Colorado objected to the selection of copper, since it was not a primary metal in Colorado. In 1908, the building committee decided to instead cap the building with gold. Colorado miners made a gift of 200 ounces of gold to gild the dome.

The gold coating the dome is thinner than tissue paper and is delivered in rolls. The gold was replaced in 2013. Although 149 rolls were needed to cover the 2,842 square feet of surface area, the job only required 64.5 ounces of gold.





CLOSING ERA STATUE

First exhibited at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, this bronze sculpture of a Native American with a bow examining a slain bison stands on the east lawn of the Capitol grounds. The statue is the work of Preston Powers. The cast for the monument was made by artists in Florence, Italy.

CITY AND COUNTY BUILDING

The building directly west of the Capitol is Denver's City and County building, set against a backdrop of the majestic Rockies. On a clear day the view from the Capitol dome is spectacular.



FLAG

The Colorado flag was designed by Andrew Carlisle Carson, and adopted in 1911 by the 18th General Assembly. The flag's colors symbolize different natural features of the state: the blue skies, white snow-capped mountains, red soil, and abundant golden sunshine. The red and blue of the flag match the color of the flag of the United States.



THE GREAT SEAL OF COLORADO

The State Seal of Colorado is an adaptation of the Territorial Seal approved by the First Territorial Assembly on November 6, 1861.

The circular seal contains the eye of God within a triangle. Below the triangle is a Roman fasces or scroll, the insignia of a republic form of government. The fasces is a bundle of birch or elm rods, and a battle axe. The bundle of rods symbolizes strength that is lacking in a single rod. The axe represents authority and leadership. Written on the red, white, and blue bands surrounding the fasces are the words "Union and Constitution." A heraldic shield lies below the scroll and bears three snowcapped mountains and mining tools. The seal also includes the Latin phrase "Nil Sine Numine," which means "Nothing without Providence (or Deity)," and the year that Colorado gained statehood, 1876.



BUILDING INFORMATION

BUILDING AND DOME TOURS: Historical tours of the Capitol are available Monday through Friday. Tours are free of charge. Dome walks are included on each building tour. Reservations are required for all groups of ten or more. Please visit www.leg.colorado.gov/visit-learn for more information about Capitol tours.

MR. BROWN'S ATTIC: Open to the public between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mr. Brown's Attic is an exhibit space dedicated to the history and significance of the Capitol building. It is located between level three and the dome, and is accessible by stairs only. A video tour is available for visitors with impaired mobility.

SENATE/HOUSE GALLERIES: Public viewing galleries are located on the third floor.

RESTROOMS: Ground level, north end beyond the cafeteria. Accessible to individuals with disabilities. Stairway to ground level is behind the grand staircase in the center rotunda of building. A second ADA accessible restroom is located on the third floor, northwest side.

ELEVATOR: Serving all floors, except Mr. Brown's Attic and the dome, located in the east wing behind the rotunda.

CAFETERIA AND SOUVENIRS: Located on the ground level.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES: The building is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ground level entrance in the south wing under the stairs of the Capitol provides a ramp for visitors who are unable to climb stairs.

CAPITOL HISTORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Several items of interest to visitors are available for sale at the Capitol Visitor Services Information Desk, including —

■ The Pride of Our People

A 48-page first edition soft-cover book containing 70 photographs, including 32 in color, and a narrative of the building's colorful history and rich architecture.

■ The Colorado State Capitol: History, Politics, Preservation

A 244-page book which traces the establishment, planning, construction, and history of the Capitol. Written by Derek R. Everett and published in 2005.

■ Mile High Marker

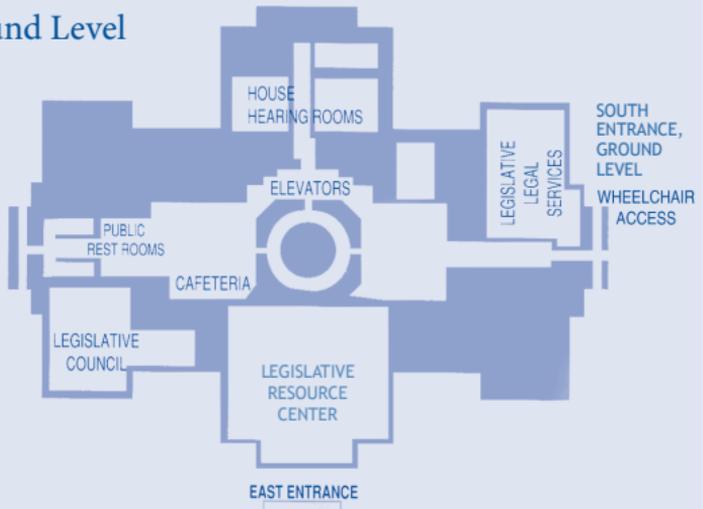
An exact replica of the brass marker on the 13th step of the west stairs including a wooden stand. The marker reads, "State of Colorado; 5,280 feet above sea level; 2003 mile high marker."

■ Note Cards and Postcards

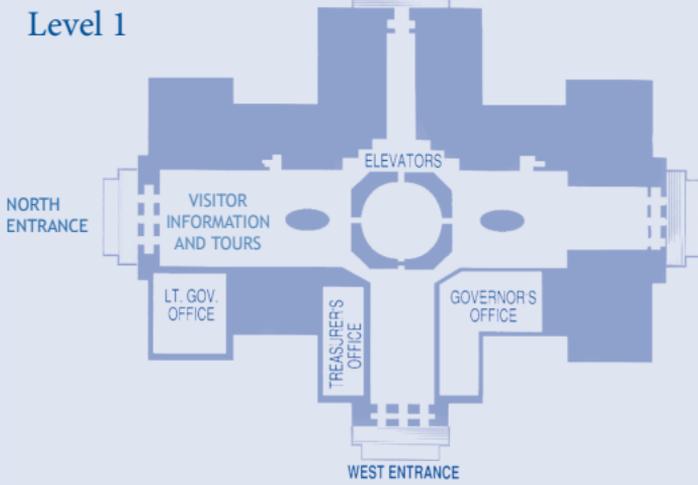
We offer sets of note cards and postcards with Colorado and Capitol themes.

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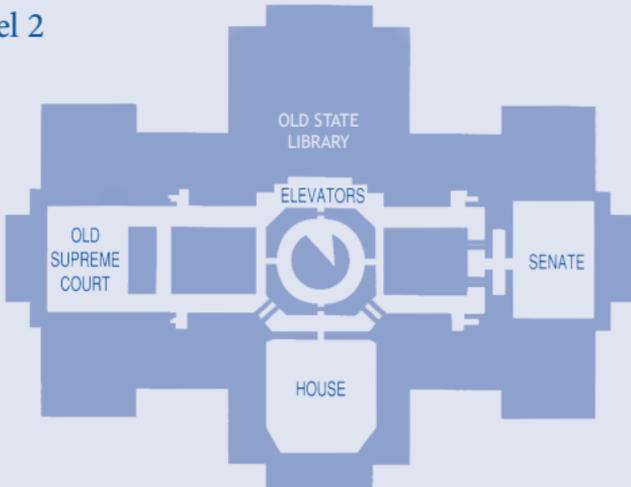
Ground Level



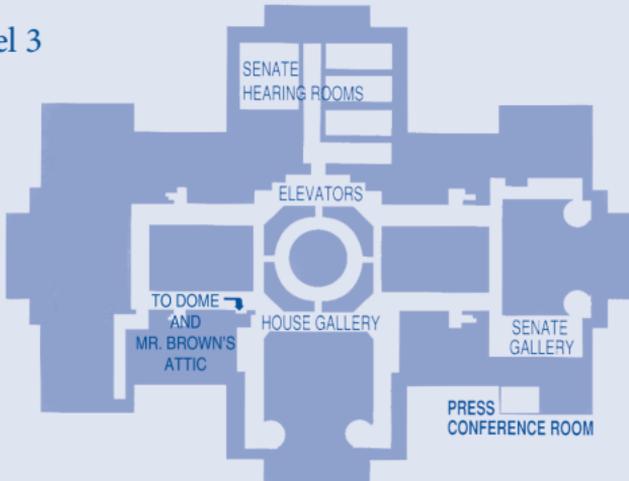
Level 1



Level 2



Level 3



COLORADO FACTS



Colorado:	Spanish word meaning “colored red”
Population:	Approximately 5.8 million (2020)
Nickname:	Centennial State (admitted to the Union in 1876)
Motto:	NIL SINE NUMINE: Nothing without Providence (or Deity)
Colorado Day:	August 1, observed first Monday in August
Flower:	The Rocky Mountain Columbine, adopted 1899
Songs:	“Where the Columbines Grow,” by A.J. Fynn, adopted 1915 “Rocky Mountain High,” by John Denver, adopted 2007
Bird:	Lark Bunting, adopted 1931
Tree:	Colorado Blue Spruce, adopted 1939
Animal:	Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, adopted 1961
Gemstone:	Aquamarine, adopted 1971
Fossil:	Stegosaurus, adopted 1982
Grass:	Blue Grama, adopted 1987
Folk Dance:	Square Dance, adopted 1992
Fish:	Green Cutthroat Trout, adopted 1994
Insect:	Colorado Hairstreak Butterfly, adopted 1996
Tartan:	Patterns and colors symbolic of Colorado, adopted 1997
Mineral:	Rhodochrosite, adopted 2002
Rock:	Yule Marble, adopted 2004
Reptile:	Western Painted Turtle, adopted 2008
Winter Recreational Sports:	Skiing and Snowboarding, adopted 2008
Amphibian:	Western Tiger Salamander, adopted 2012
Summer Heritage Sport:	Pack Burro Racing, adopted 2012
State Pets:	Dogs and cats adopted from Colorado animal shelters and rescues, adopted 2013
State Cactus:	Claret Cup Cactus, adopted 2014