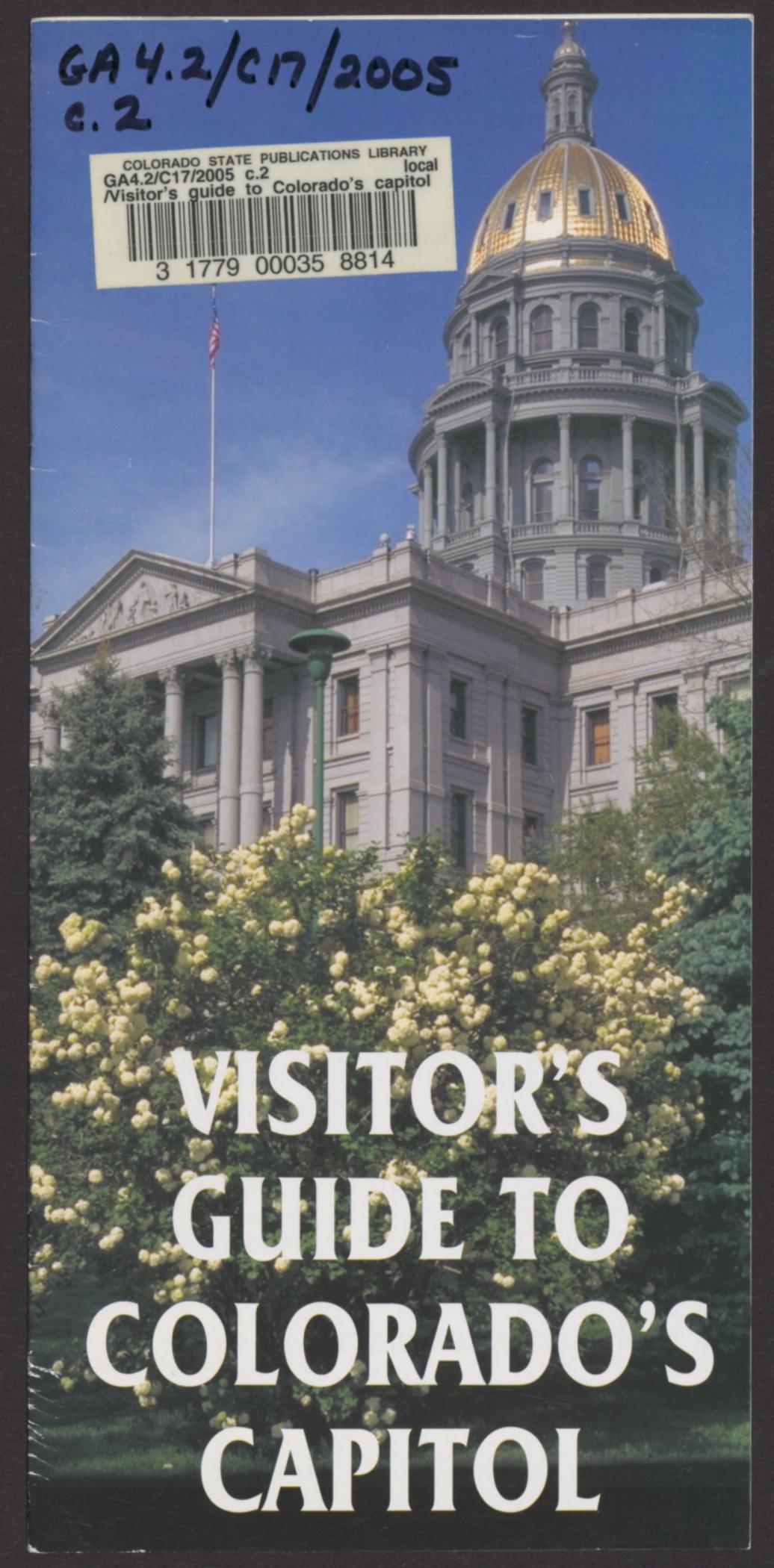


GA 4.2/C17/2005  
c. 2

COLORADO STATE PUBLICATIONS LIBRARY local  
GA4.2/C17/2005 c.2  
Visitor's guide to Colorado's capitol



3 1779 00035 8814

A photograph of the Colorado State Capitol building, featuring a prominent gold-domed cupola and classical architectural elements like columns and a pediment. The building is partially obscured by green trees and a large bush of yellow flowers in the foreground. An American flag is visible on a tall pole to the left of the building.

**VISITOR'S  
GUIDE TO  
COLORADO'S  
CAPITOL**



## **PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Photographic Contributions: Donn Bruns, Colorado Historical Society, Lon Engelking, and Roger Whitacre.

## HISTORY

The discovery of gold near Denver in 1858 brought many fortune seekers across the plains to the Rocky Mountains. Settlements developed across the region with the largest settlements established near mining areas. The land of current day Colorado existed in the territories of Kansas, Nebraska, Utah and New Mexico. In 1861, the "Pike's Peak Region" assumed the status of Territory and was given the name Colorado, a Spanish term meaning "colored red." Statehood was granted 15 years later on August 1, 1876.

The first Territorial Legislative Assembly met in Denver on September 9, 1861. The delegates to the Assembly debated the site of the capital city. As a result, the first territorial capital was located in Colorado City, now part of Colorado Springs. Later Golden City was the location, and finally in 1867, Denver was selected as the permanent capital.

During the early years, governmental officials used cramped and uncomfortable rented quarters. When Henry C. Brown offered a 10-acre tract of land in Denver to the Territorial Legislature of 1868 as a site for the proposed Capitol building, the gift was eagerly accepted. Excavation for the building did not begin, however, until July 5, 1886, nearly 10 years following Colorado's statehood.

Designed by E. E. Meyers, the Colorado Capitol required approximately 22 years to complete, although many of the offices were in use by 1894. Amid the noise and dust of stone cutters and carpenters, the 160 rooms of the statehouse were soon occupied. Determined to use as much material as possible from Colorado, the building committee chose Gunnison granite for the outer walls, sandstone from Fort Collins for foundations, marble for floors from the town of Marble, and wainscoting of exquisite rose onyx from Beulah. Only the ornamental brass, steel girders and white oak woodwork 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.

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



## THE CAPITOL AND ITS PURPOSE

The state Capitol is the center of Colorado 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 Treasury. The skills of these Coloradoans, elected by their fellow citizens, combine to make laws and administer state government. The actions of these elected officials contribute to the political, economic, and social history of Colorado.

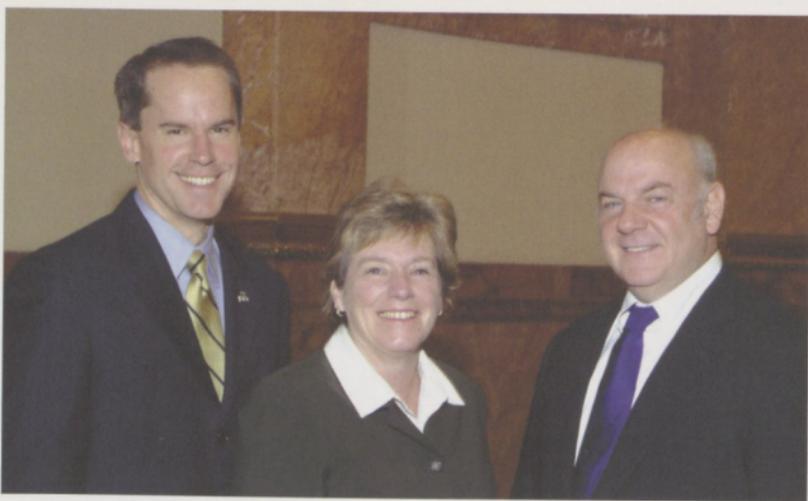
The Colorado Supreme Court, located in the Capitol until 1977, is now housed in the Judicial Building at 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lincoln Street. The vacated court chamber in the north wing of the second floor is used as a legislative hearing room.

## THE LEGISLATURE

The Colorado General Assembly consists of the Senate and the House of Representatives. The General Assembly has 100 elected members. The boundaries of the 35 Senate districts and the 65 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. Since the General Assembly is considered a part-time, citizen legislature, most of the members have additional occupations. Members of the legislature may serve no more than eight consecutive years in the Senate or the House of Representatives.

The main entrances into the House and Senate chambers are on the second floor. Legislators' offices are found on both the second and the third floors.



(L. to R.) Senate Minority Leader Mark Hillman, Burlington; Senate President, Joan Fitz-Gerald, Golden; Senate Majority Leader, Ken Gordon, Denver.

## 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 senatorial district contains approximately 123,000 Coloradoans. The presiding officer of the Senate is the President. The President is a member of the majority party elected by the Senate every two years. In the president's absence, the President Pro Tempore, who is also a member of the majority party, presides. The majority and minority leaders serve as spokespersons for their political parties.

## THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The Colorado House of Representatives has 65 members who are elected for two-year terms. Each house district contains nearly 66,000 Coloradoans. The presiding officer in the House of Representatives is called the Speaker. The Speaker is a member of the majority party who is elected by his or her colleagues. The Speaker appoints the members of all House committees and the chairman. The House also has a majority and a minority leader.



(L. to R.) House Minority Leader, Joe Stengel, Littleton; Speaker of the House, Andrew Romanoff, Denver; House Majority Leader, Alice Madden, Boulder.



## BRASS, GRANITE, ONYX AND MARBLE

The exterior walls of the Capitol are constructed of granite quarried in 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 Colorado rose onyx discovered near Beulah, Colorado. This coloration of onyx has never been found anywhere else in the world. The installation of this stone required seven years of labor to complete. More than a thousand designs have been found in the stone that resemble famous people, animals, and objects. The faces of George Washington (west wing rotunda wall) and Molly Brown (west wing archway) are easily seen.

The floors and stairs of the Colorado Capitol are constructed of marble from Marble, Colorado. Although Italian marble could be shipped to Colorado for less money than the cost of bringing it from our mountains, native marble was used. Colorado marble, noted for its beauty and durability, was also used in the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Lincoln Memorial, and many New York skyscrapers.

The two other building materials of interest found in the Capitol are brass cast in Cincinnati, Ohio and white oak from the Ozark Mountains in Arkansas and Missouri. Throughout the Capitol brass was used in the light fixtures, balusters and as adornment. The oak was hand carved and used for most of the interior woodwork.

## 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.



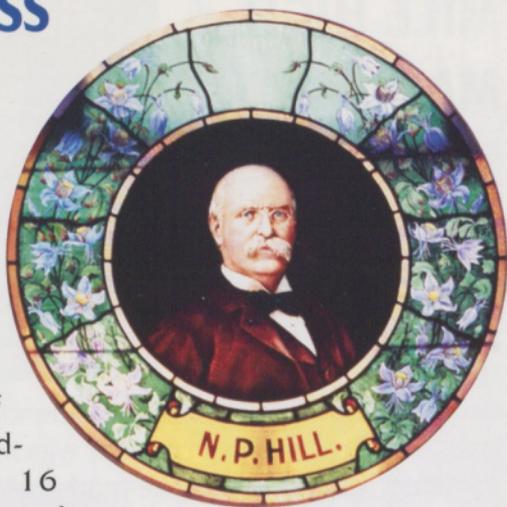
## MURALS

The eight striking murals on the first floor rotunda walls were completed in 1940. Through the collaboration of the artist Allen True and the poet Thomas Ferril, the story of Colorado is told in picture and in verse. Every panel stresses the importance of water to the development of the West. 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 pioneers 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 wall hanging.



## MILE HIGH MARKER

Denver is renowned as the "Mile High City." Visitors often photograph the granite steps on the west side of the Capitol that identify "One Mile Above Sea



Level." Currently, three markers identify one mile above sea level. The first mile high marker was installed in 1909 on the 15<sup>th</sup> step. Unfortunately the marker was stolen several times and in 1947, the words "ONE MILE ABOVE SEA LEVEL" were inscribed into the step.

In 1969, Colorado State University engineering students resurveyed the steps and determined that the actual one-mile high step was the 18<sup>th</sup> step. A brass marker was installed. Finally, in a recent attempt to identify the step that is exactly 5,280 feet above sea level, surveyors, using the new national vertical datum, identified the 13<sup>th</sup> step as one-mile above sea level. The 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. When the Capitol was under construction, copper was placed on the dome. Citizens objected to the selection of copper, since it is not a primary metal in Colorado.

The building committee decided to top the building with Colorado gold. The original 200 ounces of gold was a gift from Colorado miners.

The gold applied to the dome is much thinner than tissue paper and is delivered in rolls. The dome was most recently regilded in 1991. Although 160 rolls were needed to cover the 2,842 square feet of surface area, the job required only 47 ounces of gold.





## CLOSING ERA STATUE

First exhibited at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago, this bronze sculpture of a Native American examining a speared buffalo 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 adopted in 1911 by the 18th General Assembly embodies the colors of the national flag, the blue of the Colorado skies, the gold of her metal, the white of mountain snows, and red of the soil.



## THE GREAT SEAL OF COLORADO

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

The Seal contains the eye of God within a triangle. Below the triangle lies a Roman fasces, a bundle of birch or elm rods and battle axe which are the insignia of a republic form of government. 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 its statehood, 1876.





## THE GOVERNOR

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.

Colorado's current Governor, Bill Owens, was elected for his second term in 2002. Prior to being elected Governor, he served as State Treasurer for four years, was in the Colorado Senate for six years and spent six years in the Colorado House of Representatives. Governor Owens and his wife, Frances, have three children.

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

## CAPITOL ART WORK

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

State law requires individuals interested in donating or loaning art work or a memorial to the Capitol to submit a proposal to the Capitol Building Advisory Committee for approval.

## BUILDING INFORMATION

**TOURS** – start on the first floor, no charge, groups by appointment, telephone 303-866-2604, fax 303-866-2167.

**SENATE/HOUSE GALLERIES** – open during the legislative session, the galleries are on the third floor.

**REST ROOMS** – basement, north end beyond the cafeteria. Accessible to the disabled. Stairway to basement is behind the grand staircase in the center rotunda of building.

**ELEVATOR** – serving all floors, except the dome, located in the east wing behind the rotunda.

**CAFETERIA AND SOUVENIRS** – basement

**PUBLIC TELEPHONES** – all floors; basement, first and third floors near elevators; second floor in southwest corner of the building. TDD phone on second floor.

**WATER FOUNTAINS** – found near the elevators on each floor.

**ACCESSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES** – the building is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Basement entrances in the north and south wings of the Capitol provide ramps for visitors who prefer not to climb stairs.

## CAPITOL HISTORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Three items of interest to Capitol visitors are for sale at the Capitol Tour Desk and Room 271.

### *The Pride of Our People*

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

### *Women's Gold Brochure*

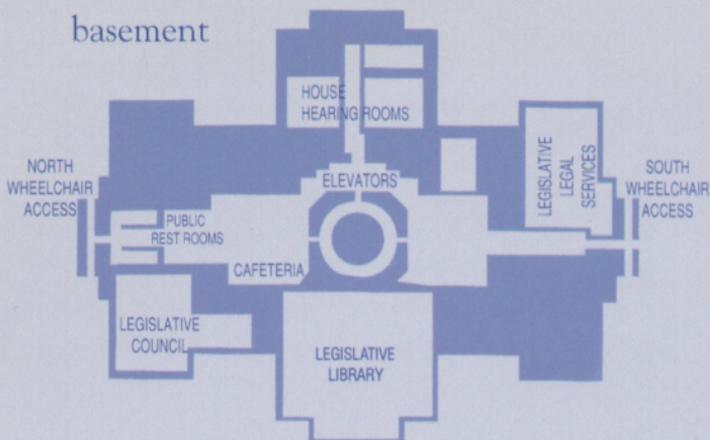
The Women's Gold wall hanging is a tribute to the achievement of Colorado's women. The brochure tells a story in photographs and narrative of eighteen women honored in the wall hanging. The tapestry celebrated in the brochure took two years to make and required 4,500 hours of labor.

### *Note Cards*

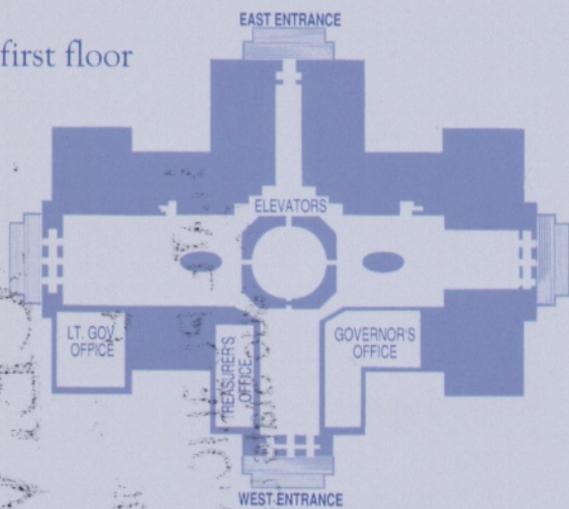
Boxes of five or ten note cards with Colorado themes.

**This visitor's brochure is provided by the Colorado General Assembly. Produced by the Colorado Legislative Council, Room 029 Capitol Building, Denver, CO 80203. Designed by the state IDF Design Center.**

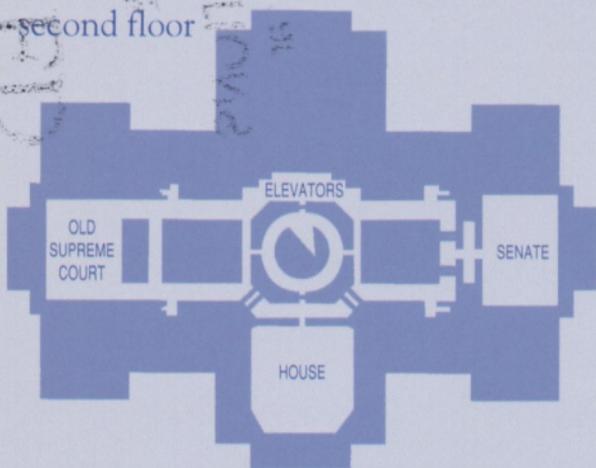
basement



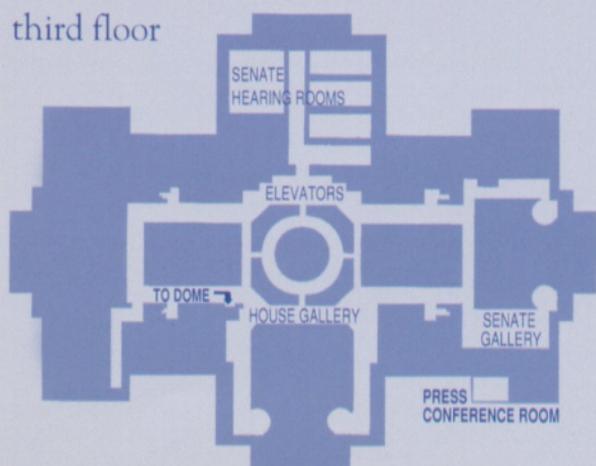
first floor



second floor



third floor



# COLORADO FACTS

**Colorado:** Spanish word meaning "colored red."

**Population:** 4.5 million.

**Nickname:** Centennial State (admitted to the Union in 1876).

**Motto:** NIL SINE NUMINE: Nothing without Providence (or Deity).

**Colorado Day:** First Monday in August.

**Flower:** The Rocky Mountain Columbine, adopted 1899.

**Song:** "Where the Columbines Grow," by A.J. Fynn, adopted 1915.

**Bird:** Lark Bunting, designated 1931.

**Tree:** Colorado Blue Spruce, adopted 1939.

**Animal:** Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep, adopted 1961.

**Gemstone:** Aquamarine, adopted 1971.

**Fossil:** Stegosaurus, proclaimed by the Governor, 1982.

**Grass:** Blue Grama, designated 1987.

**Folk Dance:** Square Dance, adopted 1992.

**Fish:** Green Cutthroat Trout, adopted 1994.

**Insect:** Colorado Hairstreak Butterfly, adopted 1996.

**Mineral:** Rhodochrosite, adopted 2002.

**Rock:** Yule Marble, adopted 2004.