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Description: State of Oregon Capital Cornerstone Dedication

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HISTORIC CAPITOLS OF OREGON

... an illustrated chronology



researched and written by
William Allen Bentson

with an introduction by
Senator Mark O. Hatfield

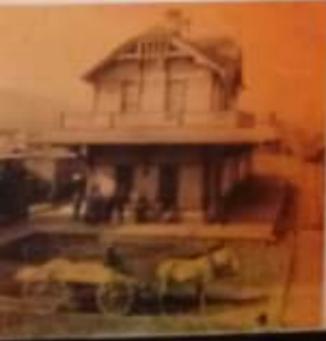
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Historic capitols of Oregon



OREGON THE WAY IT WAS

by
EDWIN D. CULP





Salem, 12:30 P.M. Wednesday, October 8, 1873; Ceremony of laying the cornerstone for the state capitol by Masonic Grand Lodge of Oregon. The stone was placed in the northwest corner of the building by Most Worshipful Grand Master Thomas McFadden Patton. So much interest was shown by Oregon people that the Oregon & California Railroad operated a special train from Portland to Salem. This was the second capitol at this location. Today the third capitol occupies approximately the same location as the other two buildings.

The capital's location was assured to Salem in 1864 when this city, then a tiny village, received a majority of the votes cast on the question of the location of the seat of government and was declared "the permanent seat of government."²⁶

One of the most important acts of the legislature of 1872 provided for the construction of a permanent and durable statehouse. In September 1872, the legislature authorized construction of the new building with an appropriation of \$100,000.²⁷

The capitol building was to be constructed on the site of the original capitol on ground donated to the state by Dr. W. H. Willson for the purpose of the erection of public buildings.



Artist's conception of new Capitol Building.

Lafayette F. Grover was the governor when the new capitol building was authorized and he appointed General John H. Miller, Henry Klippel and Samuel Allen as building commissioners. The first report of the commissioners contained the original design, estimated cost, and progress report for the first two years of construction of the capitol building and covered the years 1872 through 1874.²⁸

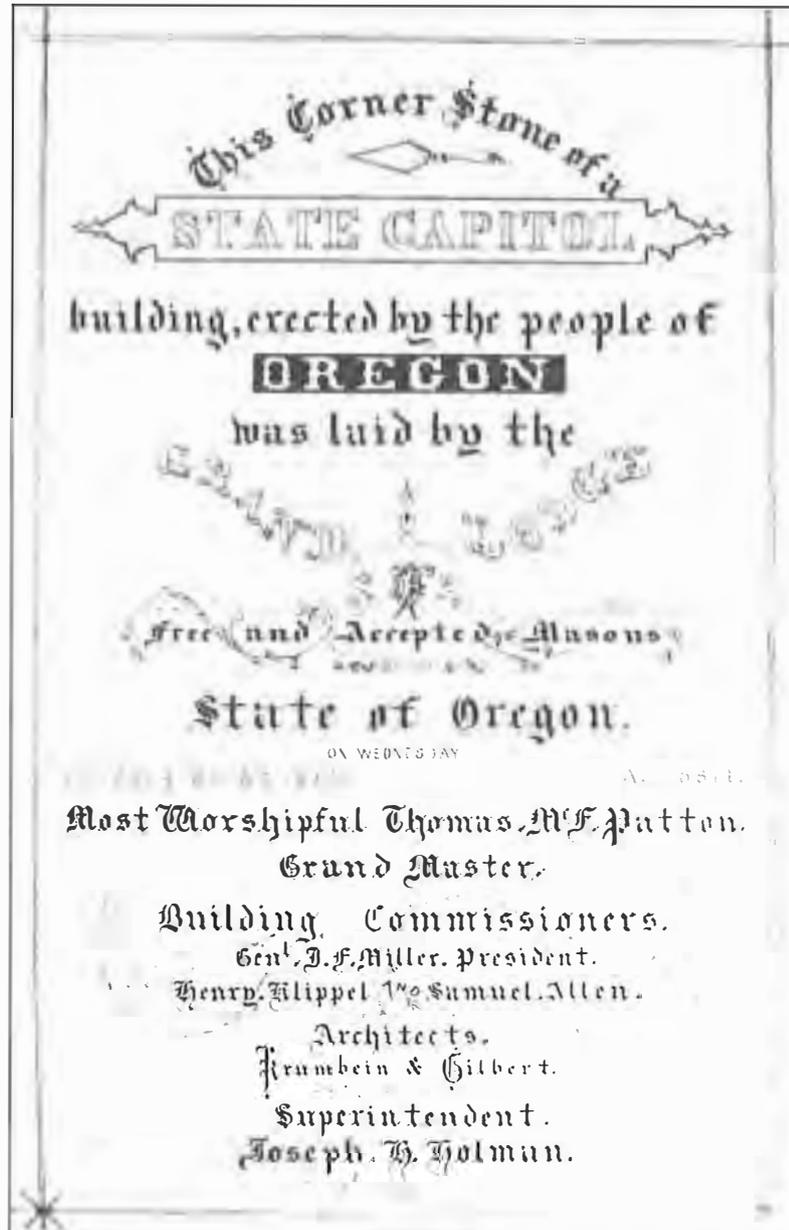
The architects for the new capitol building were J. Krumbein and W. G. Gilbert. The building was designed in the form of a cross. The main structure was 264 feet long and 75 feet wide, with north and south wings 80 by 100 feet and the east and west wings 40 by 60 feet. The structure in the main was to be brick; sandstone and limestone to be used in the facing and trimmings.

²⁶Ibid, Sec. 1, Article XIV.

²⁷SALEM DIRECTORY of 1874.

²⁸The report was signed by Henry Klippel, Samuel Allen and E. L. Bristow, who had replaced General John H. Miller on the committee.

Excavation for the building was started shortly after the plans were adopted on May 1, 1873, and convicts were used in making the great hole for the basement. Over 21,000 cubic yards of earth were removed by hand. The penitentiary yard also furnished the brick used in construction while Douglas County quarries supplied the sandstone and limestone that dressed the structure.



Cornerstone of the State Capitol Building.

In 1873 cornerstone laying ceremonies were attended with all the dignity and pomp of the times, with the Right Worthy Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in charge and over 400 Masons from various parts of the state participating.

In the cornerstone of the capitol building were placed numerous articles, 83 in all. The first of these was a parchment bearing facts relative to the ceremonies, names of the building commissioners, architects, and Superintendent Joseph Holman. Next, Secretary of State S. F. Chadwick dropped in the Constitution and Laws of the State of Oregon. A list of officers of the state organization from February 14, 1859, to September 1874, was the third deposit, made by H. H. Gilfry.

Among the other articles placed in the cornerstone was a chrome of George Washington as a Mason, a silver half crown and United States silver half dollar, Confederate cotton bond, the 1872-73 catalogue of Willamette University, Salem City Directory for 1871, and the proceedings of the grand lodge of A. F. & A. M. of the State of Oregon for 1873.²⁹

In 1874 the capitol commission was changed with H. Stapleton, C. F. Colby and J. M. Scott serving as members. Possession of the building was taken in August 1876 by state officers, and at the time the cost to the treasury was \$190,927.



State Capitol, 1876.

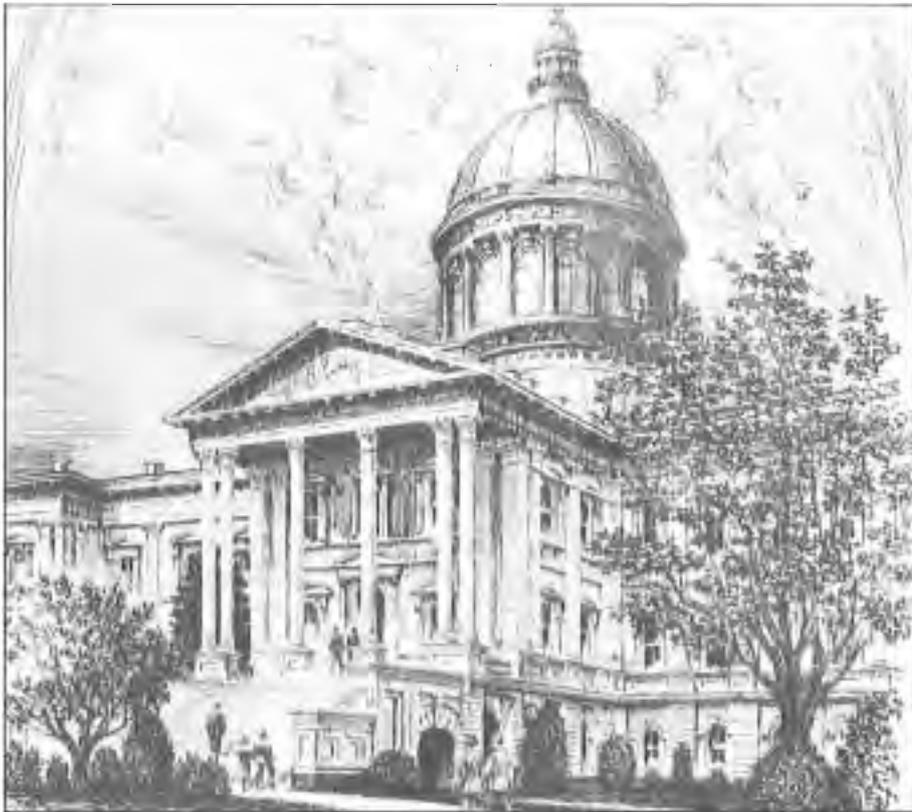
Porticoes were put on the building in 1888, with two-story Corinthian columns, at a cost of \$100,000. The huge dome, which overlooked the country for miles around, was not put on the structure until 1893 and, until the elements had done their work, was a glistening object of copper facing. The dome was 187 feet in height set on a structure 75 feet high.

²⁹*Oregon Statesman*, April 26, 1935, "Contents of the Cornerstone."



State Capitol with addition of porticoes, 1888.

This historic building, while subjected to numerous remodelings and changes, failed to keep pace with the growth of the state. Until 1914 the capitol building housed all the branches of state government. After that year, a number of new buildings were added to the capitol group.



Artist's rendition of State Capitol with dome, 1893.