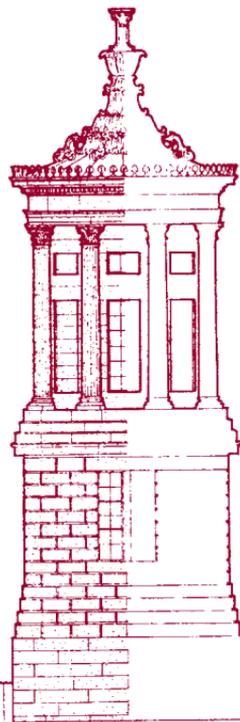


# Tennessee State Capitol

**A SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR**



SIXTH AVENUE ELEVATION  
EAST

## Welcome to the Capitol of the State of Tennessee

This historic building is one of the oldest original capitols still in active use in the United States today. A William Strickland-designed masterpiece, the Capitol proudly stands as a reflection of the Volunteer State's rich and diverse heritage, while showcasing our modern-day legislative process at work in an open public setting. Please enjoy your visit today surrounded by the echoes of the ancestors who labored to make Tennessee an outstanding place to live



Phil Bredesen, Governor

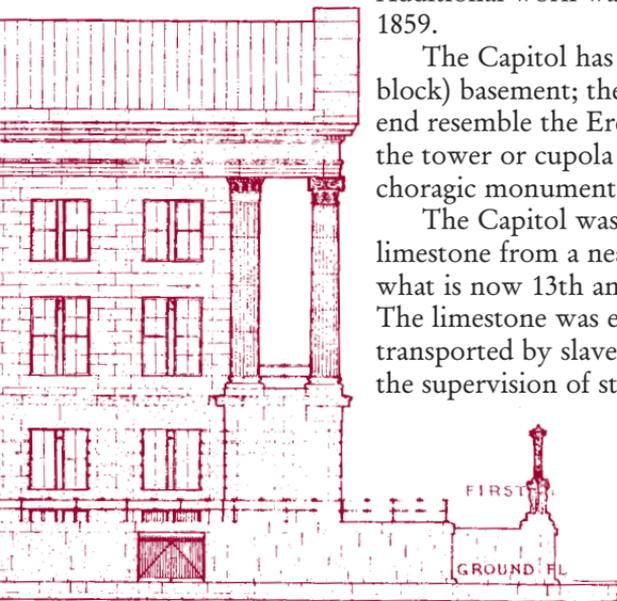
The Tennessee State Capitol stands today, as it did when it was completed in 1859, a magnificent tribute to the people of the great State of Tennessee.

This graceful structure was designed by William Strickland, a notable architect of his time. He considered the Tennessee State Capitol to be his crowning achievement. When Strickland died in 1854, he was buried in the northeast corner, in a tomb of his own design.

The cornerstone was laid July 4, 1845, and the final stone was laid July 21, 1855. Additional work was not completed until 1859.

The Capitol has a rusticated (large stone block) basement; the Ionic porticoes at each end resemble the Erechtheum in Athens; and the tower or cupola is patterned after the choragic monument of Lysicrates in Athens.

The Capitol was constructed of biggy limestone from a nearby quarry located near what is now 13th and Charlotte Avenues. The limestone was excavated, shaped, and transported by slaves and convict labor under the supervision of stone masons.



The interior used marble from around Rogersville and Knoxville; the cast iron work and gas light fixtures were ordered from Philadelphia. The original ceiling has frescoes painted by two German immigrant artists, Theo Knoch and John Schleicher.

Strickland's plans for the structure included three levels: the crypt (now the ground floor), the basement (the executive floor), and the first floor (the legislative floor). The crypt was originally designed as an armory and for fuel storage.

The basement originally contained the chambers of the Supreme Court and the offices of the governor and other governmental officials. The first floor housed the chambers of the House of Representatives, with attached committee rooms; the Senate chambers; and the State Library.

In the 1860s, landscaping plans for the Capitol grounds were disrupted by the Civil War. When the Tennessee State Capitol became the first in the South to fall to the Union Army, Military Governor Andrew Johnson used the fortified building as the government seat for Union occupation.

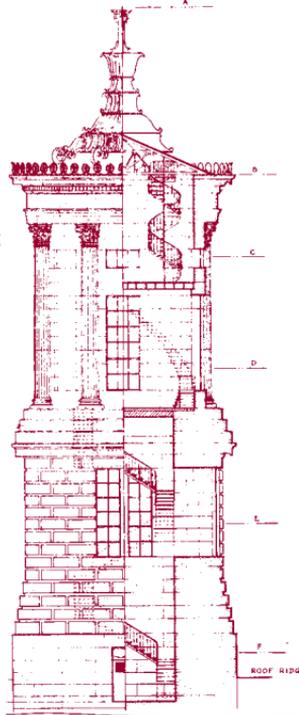
Federal occupation ended in July of 1865. During the 1870s and 1880s, the landscaping plan, previously conceived, was implemented. The dedication of Clark Mills' equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson was held on May 20, 1880 on the east lawn.

By the 1950s, the exterior limestone was so badly deteriorated that large pieces began to fall, endangering the public. In 1953, the General Assembly appropriated the funds necessary to begin the repair and restoration of the exterior of the Capitol. Limestone from Indiana was used in the replacement. The exterior stone which is brown-colored is the Indiana limestone; the gray-colored stone is the original. In 1957, interior renovations were undertaken, including the installation of the Motlow tunnel and elevators. The crypt was excavated to create much-needed offices.

In the late 1980s, several areas within the Capitol were restored to their original 19th century look. This included the library, the first floor hallway, and the Supreme Court chamber. Paint was removed from the first floor ceiling, and the frescos repainted and returned to their 1858 appearance. The first floor offices have carpeting and draperies based on the style of the period as well as some antique furniture and accent pieces.

The seat of state government, the Capitol remains today as functional as it was when it was first constructed. This structure of beauty and practicality continues as a tribute to William Strickland and to those Tennesseans with the foresight to build and preserve it.

*(Since the State Capitol is still in use, occasionally rooms described in the walking tour may be temporarily closed to the public.)*





**B**egin your tour at the Information Desk on the first floor with the portraits in this area.

1. Portrait of William Strickland, architect for the Capitol.
2. Portrait of Samuel Morgan, a Nashville businessman who served as chairman of the Capitol Building Commission. When legislators, worried about the rising cost of the construction, tried to cut back on expenses, such as substituting wood for the marble in the hallways, it was Morgan who led the fight to keep the grand and enduring materials.
3. Portrait of Andrew Jackson, 7th President of the United States, 1829-37.
4. Portrait of James K. Polk, 11th President of the United States, 1845-49.
5. Portrait of Andrew Johnson, 17th President of the United States, 1865-69.

The Ceiling frescoes were originally painted circa 1858 by John Schleicher and Theo Knoch.

6. Ceiling fresco. "Westward Expansion" represented the move into Tennessee. It is surrounded by the Muses of Literature, Sculpture, Music and Painting.

Move to the intersection of the halls in the center of the building.

7. Ceiling fresco. American eagle, surrounded by 31 stars representing the states in the union at the time.

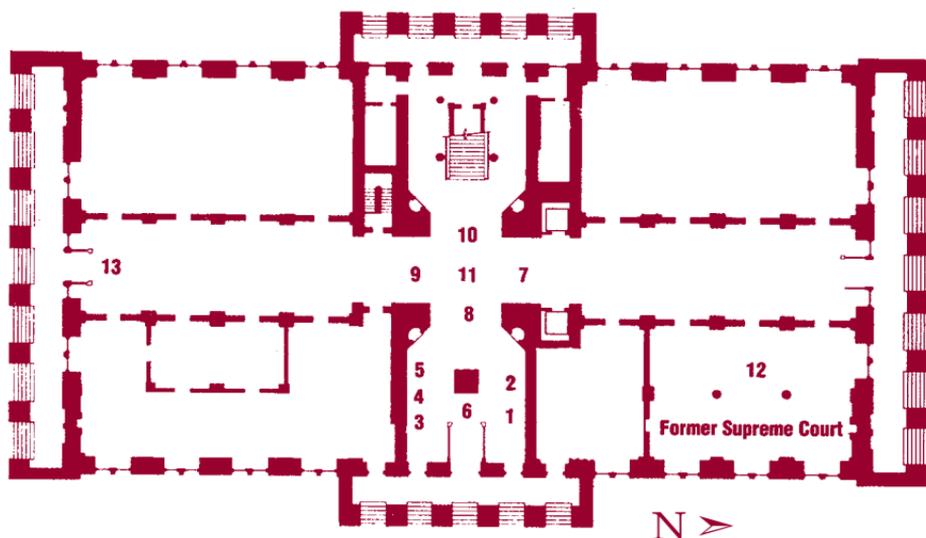
8. Ceiling fresco. "Justice." Since the state court occupied this floor, the fresco was a fitting symbol for this hallway.
9. Ceiling fresco. State Seal, depicting state motto "Agriculture and Commerce." Tennessee was the 16th state admitted to the union in 1796. The order is upside down in this version.
10. Ceiling fresco. "Liberty." Represents legislative branch.
11. As you stand in the center you can see portraits of the last eight governors of Tennessee. When the present governor leaves office, his portrait will be placed here and the portrait of Governor Gordon Browning moved elsewhere. Up and down the halls on this level are portraits of other Tennessee governors. The three gasoliers on this level are re-creations of the originals.

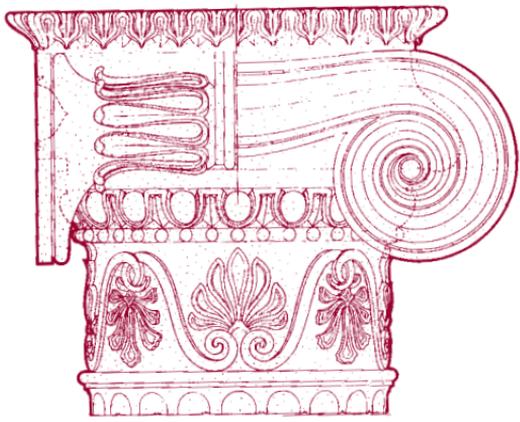
Move to the north end of the building, and enter the open doors on your right.

12. Supreme Court Chamber. In the remodeling of 1937-38, this area was divided into offices with masonry walls which stayed for fifty years. In 1988, the additions were torn down and the room restored to the way it looked in the 1850s.

Walk back down the hallway almost to the exit and look up at the ceiling on the right.

13. When the hallway was restored in 1988, the hallway ceilings were stripped of dirt and overpainting. Historical records indicated that the original paint was underneath. This corner shows what the ceiling looked like after later applications of paint were removed and before the design was restored to its original colors and style.





If the door is open, enter the suite of offices across the hall.

- 14.** Governor's Reception Room. The murals were designed and painted by Jirayr H. Zorthian when the room was remodeled in 1938. The scenes represent important aspects of Tennessee history as viewed in the 1930s.
- The first Tennesseans. Here the Cherokees symbolize all tribal groups who lived or hunted in what is now Tennessee.
  - Hernando De Soto, first European to visit what is now Tennessee. In 1540 he explored the Chickasaw Bluffs area, present site of Memphis.
  - Fort Prudhomme on the Chickasaw Bluffs, 1682. First European building.
  - Fort Loudoun near present day Knoxville, 1756. First British outpost.
  - Watauga Association, northeastern Tennessee, 1772. First government in what is now Tennessee.
  - Founding of Nashville, 1779-1780. Settlers traveled in two groups led on land by James Robertson and on water by John Donelson.
  - Nashville during construction of the Capitol, circa 1855.
  - "Battle of the Bluffs," Fort Nashborough, 1781. During a battle with Indians, Charlotte Robertson released the settlers' dogs, helping the men to escape the attack and enter the fort.
  - The State of Franklin, 1784. When North Carolina first ceded the Tennessee territory back to the United States, settlers attempted admission as a new state. The effort failed.
  - Two panels symbolizing the unofficial state motto: "Agriculture and Commerce." Agriculture is represented by the Hermitage, home of Andrew Jackson. Commerce is represented by the steamboat. Both panels depict African Americans, who worked in a variety of occupations and who comprised about one-fourth of the state's population by 1860.

Exit the Governor's Reception Room, and go to the right to the center of the hallway. Turn left and go to the stairs.

**15.** Halfway up the first flight of stairs, on your right, is a chip in the handrail. This is a scar from a bullet fired from the stairs above during a particularly bitter fight in the legislature over the ratification of the 14th Amendment in 1866. The amendment, which granted citizenship to African Americans, was opposed by many in the General Assembly. They didn't have enough votes to block passage of an amendment, so they attempted to flee armed guards so there would not be a quorum. The guards' willingness to shoot changed that strategy and the amendment passed, allowing Tennessee to be the first Confederate state re-admitted to the Union.

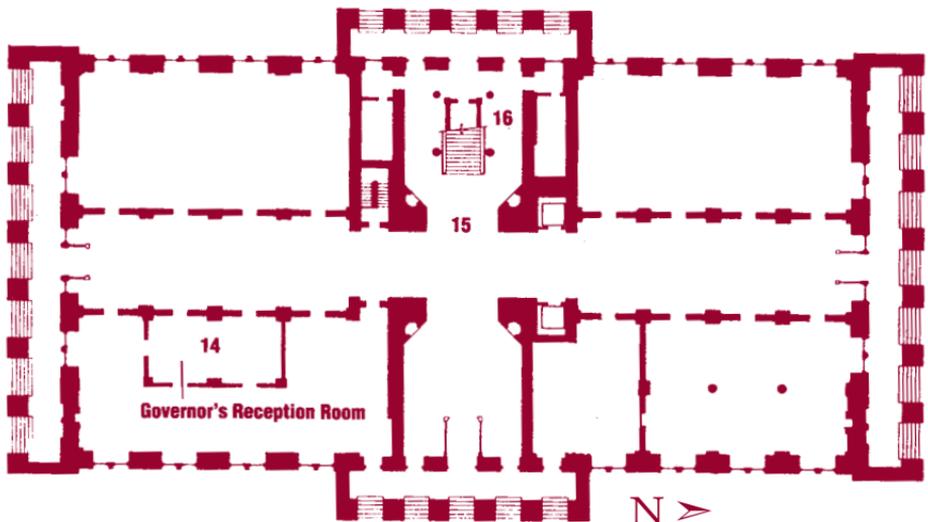
Continue up the stairs to the landing.

**16.** Inscription by the architect William Strickland.

Continue up the stairs to the center of the hallway.

**17.** Look up at the light. It is one of two original gasoliers in this hall, made by Cornelius and Baker in Philadelphia. They were converted from gas to electricity around 1895.

Go right toward the House of Representatives. If they are not in session, you may enter the room.

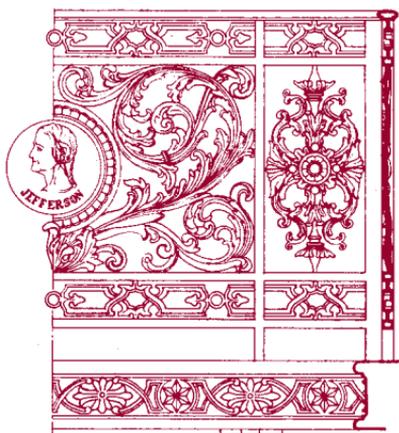




**23.** The Senate has 33 members. The gasolier in the center of the room is original, done in 1855 by a special commission to Cornelius and Baker. There are 30 globes decorated with Indian corn, elk heads, cotton blossoms and tobacco leaves.

**24.** The colonnade supporting the visitor's gallery is original and made from Tennessee marble.

**25.** The ironwork in the gallery is original, done by Wood and Perot. The iron railing and lamp post leading to the gallery was also done by Wood and Perot.



Exit the Senate chambers and go across the hall to the State Library. Occasionally there may be meetings in the library and it will be temporarily closed.

**26.** The library has been restored to its mid-19th century appearance. The room contains the original spiral staircase. The carpet pattern here and in the Supreme Court Chamber you saw on the lower floor is typical of the period. The portrait medallions on the balcony rail are stock cast iron figures ordered out of a catalogue. The figures are writers and famous political figures of the time done by Wood and Perot. The seven starred (\*) portraits were Tennesseans. They are: (from the northeast corner across the room to your right)

William Shakespeare  
Joseph Addison  
Dante  
\*Ephraim Foster,  
U.S. Senator  
Sir Walter Scott  
Lord Byron  
George Washington  
Benjamin Franklin  
Thomas Jefferson  
Patrick Henry  
\*Andrew Jackson  
Daniel Webster  
Henry Clay

John Milton  
\*James K. Polk  
Washington Irving  
William Hickling Prescott  
\*Felix Grundy, U.S. Senator  
\*William Carroll,  
Governor of Tennessee  
\*Hugh Lawson White,  
U.S. Senator  
Joseph Story  
\*John Bell, Speaker, U.S. House of  
Representatives, U.S. Senator  
and  
U.S. Secretary of War  
John C. Calhoun

- 27.** The ceiling portraits were done in 1859 by Theo Knoch and John Schleicher.

They are: (clockwise from northeast corner)

Dr. Gerard Troost, first geologist of Tennessee

Dr. Phillip Lindsley, president of the University of Nashville

James Kent, father of American jurisprudence

Dr. James Priestly, geologist and president of  
Cumberland University

Rev. Charles Coffin, president of the University of Tennessee

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, poet

Matthew Fontaine Maury, father of oceanography

William Hickling Prescott, historian

- 28.** The light is the original gasolier done in 1855 by Cornelius and Baker of Philadelphia.

Exit library

- 29.** Women's Restroom

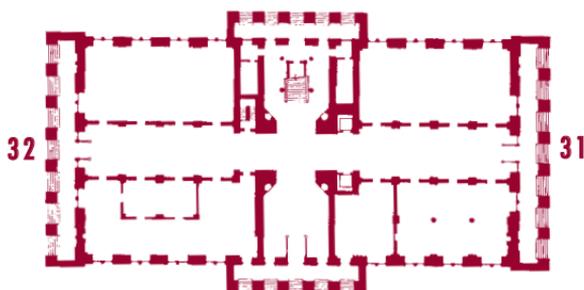
- 30.** Men's Restroom

Building Exterior, North end.

- 31.** Tomb of William Strickland. The architect of the Capitol died before the building was finished. It was his desire to be buried here in a tomb he designed. The inscription on the tomb is incorrect. He was actually sixty-six when he died.

Building Exterior, South end.

- 32.** Tomb of Samuel Morgan, chairman of the Capitol Building Commission.



## Capitol Grounds

Visitors are encouraged to explore the grounds around the Capitol. Memorials and statues on the Capitol grounds are varied and cover many different topics. Placement of these items has to be approved by the Capitol Commission or through legislative mandate

### East Garden

*(Side of Capitol looking toward the Cumberland River.)*

An equestrian statue of Andrew Jackson, designed by sculptor Clark Mills, serves as the centerpiece for the East Gardens. Erected in 1880 during the Nashville Centennial celebration, the statue was the first equestrian statue created in America. It is the artist's proof and the first of three casts, the most famous being in Jackson Square in New Orleans.

To the north of the statue is the tomb of President James K. Polk and his wife Sarah. It was designed by William Strickland and was originally erected on the grounds of their home, near the corner of what is today Seventh Avenue and Union Street. After the house was sold, (and later demolished), the tomb was moved to its current location in the 1890s.

To the south end of the East Garden is a statue of Andrew Johnson, the 17th president of the United States, sculpted by artist Jim Gray and dedicated in 1995. Nearby, down the stairs, is a statue of Sergeant Alvin C. York, "the greatest enlisted soldier of World War I," sculpted by Felix de Weldon and dedicated in 1968.

Other objects of interest in the East Garden include:

- 1.** American War Mothers Tablet (1939): Placed by the American Legion, Nashville Post No. 5 to commemorate American war mothers during World War I
- 2.** Liberty Bell (1950): Replica of the Liberty Bell sent to each state to promote Korean War bond drive
- 3.** Coast & Geodesic Survey Marker (1933): Benchmark to determine sea level, placed by the U.S. Corps of Engineers
- 4.** Holocaust Memorial (1986): Six cedar trees dedicated as a memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust, 1939-1945
- 5.** Holy Rosary Cathedral Marker: Location of the first Catholic Church in Tennessee, built on the Capitol Hill location in 1820, and later demolished for the Capitol building
- 6.** Masonic Marker (1927): Contains time capsule of Nashville articles to be opened in 2027. Placed by the Nashville Council No. 1, Royal and Select Masons
- 7.** United Daughters of the Confederacy Plaque (1969): Commemorates the 75th anniversary of the founding of the group in 1894 in Nashville

*(continued on back)*

## South Grounds

*(Side of Capitol facing Charlotte Avenue.)*

On the south side of the Capitol grounds are statues of Sam Davis, “the boy hero of the Confederacy,” sculpted by George J. Zolnay and unveiled in 1909; and Edward Ward Carmack, a newspaper owner shot and killed in on a street in downtown Nashville in 1908 over a dispute about prohibition, sculpted by artist Nancy Cox McCormack and erected in 1925.

Other spots of interest include:

- 8.** Middle Passage Tree Marker (1999): Marker dedicated to “strength of people of African descent” who were brought to America in bondage to be sold as slaves. (Tree mentioned on marker no longer exists.)
- 9.** Motlow Tunnel (1959): Dedicated to the memory of Lem Motlow and his son, Rep. Reagor Motlow
- 10.** National Register of Historic Landmarks (1972): Recognizes the State Capitol being placed on the Historic Register
- 11.** National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark plaque (2003). Recognizes that the building was the first to use structural iron roof trusses

## North Grounds

*(Side of Capitol facing Bicentennial Mall)*

As part of the Bicentennial Mall carillon project, the final bell, or answer bell, was installed on the north grounds in 2003. This bell “answers” the 95 bells on the mall each hour.

Other items include:

- 12.** Burks Tree (1999): Tree planted in memory of Sen. Tommy Burks by Tennessee Nursery and Landscape Association
- 13.** Charles Warterfield Reliquary (1995): Remnants of the original Capitol columns positioned to honor Warterfield, the chief architect on the 1980s grounds renovation. The original columns along with some of the outside wall were replaced in the 1950s due to deterioration

**Wheelchair access available through tunnel entrance on Charlotte Avenue.**

Elevations and architectural details taken from the Historical American Building Survey.

