

# AROUND THE CAPITOL





# Around The Capitol

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## Kentucky State Capitol

A long, bitter quarrel among Louisville, Lexington, and Frankfort over which city should be Kentucky's capital ended in 1904, when the legislature voted to spend \$1 million for a new Capitol building to be located in Frankfort on the public square.

Frank Mills Andrews was selected to design the new Capitol. His plan proved far too immense to fit on the old square, so the current site in south Frankfort was chosen instead. Ground was broken in 1905, and the building was dedicated in 1910. The total cost of the building and furnishings was \$1,820,000—a modest price, even in 1910.

Andrews designed the Capitol in the Beaux-Arts style, incorporating the proportions and decorative elements of classical architecture. Combining the majestic form of Greek architecture with the highly ornate elegance of French styling, he produced one of the finest public buildings of our time.

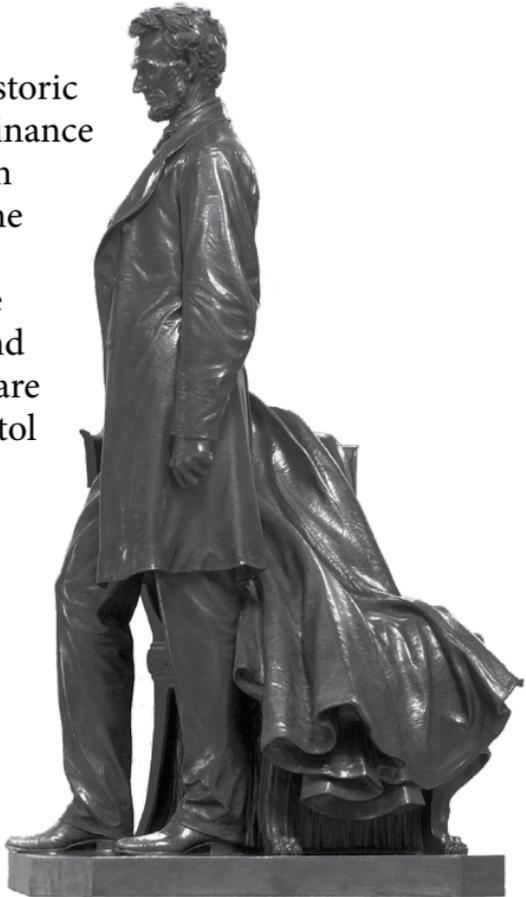


Andrews studied classical French architecture and incorporated features of the style in the ornate interior of the Capitol. Richly sculptured archways and cornices, hand-painted murals, stained-glass skylights, and Honduras mahogany are among the interior embellishments. The Rotunda features statues of prominent Kentuckians and a dome patterned after the dome of Napoleon's tomb in Paris. The elegance of the interior is enhanced by generous expanses of marble. Thirty-six monolithic columns of Vermont granite along the east and west corridors support massive cornice work and lunette windows.

The exterior displays an elaborate terrace on a Vermont granite base and a facade faced with Bedford limestone. A richly sculptured pediment highlights the north entrance to the Capitol. Created by Charles Henry Niehaus, the design was executed by Peter Rossack and shows a heroic Lady Kentucky with Progress, History, Plenty, Law, Art, and Labor as her attendants.

The first floor houses the office of the governor and other constitutional officers. Located on the second floor is the resplendent State Reception Room, designed in the style of the Louis XIV period. At the east end is the Supreme Court Room, which serves as the seat of the judicial branch of state government. Kentucky's legislative bodies meet in chambers at opposite ends of the corridor on the third floor.

The Division of Historic Properties of the Finance and Administration Cabinet oversees the preservation and maintenance of the Capitol building and its grounds. Tours are available. The Capitol is open seasonally on Saturdays for self-guided tours. For more information or to make a tour reservation, call 502-564-3449.





## Old State Capitol

Kentucky's Old State Capitol was approved by the legislature for construction in 1827. Frankfort citizens raised money to help build their third Capitol after the first two had been destroyed by fire. Gideon Shryock, a 25-year-old architect from Lexington, was chosen to oversee the project. He selected a Greek Revival style for the new building. Kentucky's new Capitol would be the first large building west of the Appalachian Mountains to use this style of architecture.

The front of the building resembles a Greek temple. Greek temples do not have windows, so Shryock did not include any windows on the front facade. The dome above the center of the building, which brings in abundant sunlight, is not patterned after the Greek style seen in the rest of the building.

One of the most dramatic and famous features of the Old State Capitol is the circular stone staircase. Each step of this staircase fits into the one above it, and all are held in place by a keystone landing on

the second floor. There is no visible support for the free-standing staircase.

Most of the building is made of Kentucky River Marble, a local form of limestone. Inmates from the state penitentiary provided some of the labor for the project. They invented a steam-powered machine that was used for cutting the stone, which helped with the speedy construction of the building. Government officials began using the building in 1829, but construction was not completed until 1830. The construction cost was about \$85,000.

The Old State Capitol was the center of Kentucky political life for nearly 80 years. Here Kentucky's leaders led their state through the turmoil of the 19th century. It was the only pro-Union state Capitol that was occupied by the Confederate army during the Civil War.

In 1900, the Old State Capitol grounds became the site of a murder. After a bitterly contested election for governor in 1899, the state legislature met to



decide the winner. As William Goebel, the Democratic contender, approached the building, he was gunned down by an assassin hiding in the office of the Secretary of State. He was proclaimed Governor and served for 3 days before dying. In the aftermath of the assassination, armed citizens and soldiers from both political parties threatened to fight their own miniature civil war. A peaceful solution was finally reached in court.

The Old State Capitol was replaced by the current Capitol in the early 20th century. The Old State Capitol was the home of the Kentucky Historical Society from 1920 to 1999. After a restoration in the 1970s, the Old State Capitol looks much as it did in the 1850s. Tours are available and begin at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History, 100 W. Broadway, in Frankfort. For more information, call 502-564-1792.





## Governor's Mansion

The Governor's Mansion is situated on the east lawn of the Capitol grounds on a bluff high above the Kentucky River. It was designed by Kentuckians C.C. and E.A. Weber of Fort Thomas. A beautiful example of the Beaux-Arts style, the Mansion draws its inspiration from French neoclassical architecture. The exterior was modeled after the Petit Trianon, Queen Marie Antoinette's villa near the Palace of Versailles in France.

Constructed from 1912-1914, the Mansion was a product of its time, the post-Civil War Gilded Age of conspicuous consumption. The building reflects the grand spirit of a people who had not yet experienced a severe economic depression or a world war. Great care was spent on the design and interrelationship of every aspect of the Mansion, with attention to exquisite decorative details executed in high-quality craftsmanship. Historians have speculated that the advent of World War I interrupted the original



construction before the interior and gardens could be completed.

The Mansion is elegantly proportioned with a front portico supported by four pairs of Ionic columns. A stone balustrade and terrace make an impressive entrance to this historic building. The interior of the Mansion reflects the eclectic interest in French neoclassicism typical of the Beaux-Arts period. Most fixtures and decorative features, such as the ornamental plaster and mantels, are original to the building.

Since 1914, Kentucky's governors and their families have lived in the Mansion. Between 1980 and 1984, the home was renovated to its original Beaux-Arts style, which included the simple formal garden based on the original 1913 drawings of the Mansion and grounds.

The Governor's Mansion was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. The Historic Properties Advisory Commission, a citizens group, along with the Division of Historic Properties of the

Finance and Administration Cabinet, oversees the maintenance and preservation of this architectural treasure. Please call 502-564-3449 to make a tour reservation.

## Old Governor's Mansion

Situated near Frankfort's historic downtown district, the Old Governor's Mansion is a comfortably elegant home built during the Federal period with refined Georgian features. When Kentucky was admitted to the Union in 1792, there was no official residence for the first Governor, Isaac Shelby. In 1796, the General Assembly appropriated funds to build a home for Kentucky's chief executive. Two future Governors, Robert P. Letcher and Thomas Metcalfe, are said to have aided in its construction as a bricklayer and a stonemason. The residence was completed in 1798 during the administration of Kentucky's second Governor, James Garrard. Isaac Shelby would not enjoy the amenities of the official residence until his second term in office, 1812-1816.



Often referred to as “The Palace” in the 19th century, the Mansion has always been distinguished by the hospitality of its occupants. In addition to the thousands of Kentuckians entertained within the spacious rooms, many illustrious individuals have visited, including James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, Henry Clay, William Jennings Bryan, Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and the Marquis de Lafayette.

In 1914, the Mansion was abandoned following the move to the new Governor’s Mansion. At this point, the building suffered from neglect. Much of what you see today is a reflection of several renovations and remodelings over the years. In 1956, the home was designated as the official residence of Kentucky’s lieutenant governors. It is among the oldest official residences in the United States. Since 2009, it has served as a guest house and entertainment venue for the governor.

The Old Governor’s Mansion was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. Its maintenance and preservation are the responsibility of the Historic Properties Advisory Commission and the Division of Historic Properties of the Finance and Administration Cabinet. The Old Governor’s Mansion is not open for tours.

## **Kentucky’s Floral Clock**

Time never stands still around the State Capitol. Kentucky’s floral clock measures off the minutes a foot and a half at a time, with giant hands weighing about a quarter of a ton apiece.

There are other flower clocks in the world—one in Canada at Niagara Falls, some in Europe, and



smaller ones in the United States. Kentucky's is unique because it keeps time in the air over a pool of water instead of resting on a bank of earth. The face of the giant clock is 34 feet across. The planter that holds it weighs 100 tons. Dedicated in 1961, the floral clock was a project of the state and the Garden Club of Kentucky.

It takes more than 10,000 plants to fill the clock, all grown in the commonwealth's own greenhouses near the Capitol. Coins from the pool are used to benefit young people in Kentucky.

What makes the clock tick? Nothing, actually, for the clock neither ticks nor hums in the usual steady fashion of little timepieces. Once every 60 seconds, the 20-foot minute hand makes a sudden, broad sweep, and the 15-foot hour hand shifts distinctly to keep pace with it. The works consist of six gears and an electric motor plus an infinitely accurate control mechanism that makes corrections every hour and even resets the clock if the power fails. The works

are enclosed in the stone pedestal on which the planter rests. The clock is located on the right side of the Capitol Annex, facing the south side of the Capitol.



## Kentucky's First Ladies In Miniature

The collection of miniature replicas of Kentucky's first ladies was created by the Kentucky Federation of Women's Clubs and was presented to the commonwealth by the group in 1971. Each first lady is represented in this collection.

Individual women's clubs around the state sponsored one of the dolls, located information, paintings, or photos of the material and dress, and a member of the Federation then made the tiny costume. The original miniatures presented in 1971 were all French fashion dolls. Additions have been made to the collection for each administration since that

time. The faces were cast by a Kentucky ceramist from an identical mold with the only variations being hair and eye color. There have been two changes in the style of doll used, one in the 1980s and again in 1992. The newest mold depicts a more modern face and features and is taller.

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## **Legislative Research Commission**

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