



the

COOK-WITTER REPORT

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Capital Men Write a Capitol Book

Once upon a time, the public could look upon Springfield vistas from the Illinois Statehouse's dome. True or false?

True, according to Jim Donelan and Steve Dyer's new book, "The Illinois Statehouse" (Arcadia Publishing, 2009). Visitors used to be able to climb up to the dome before it was closed to public access in the 1930s. This is one of many interesting facts Donelan and Dyer included in their new book about one of our state's grandest and oldest buildings; it's like a photo album of the Statehouse's history.

The two Springfield men met while working at the Statehouse and share a fascination for the building's architecture and history. "It's an often overlooked building as far as the history circuit here in Springfield, quite frankly, because it's an active Capitol building. But it's been around over 100 years," says Donelan, who is currently Executive Assistant to Springfield Mayor Tim Davlin.

His love for the building began at the age of ten when he became an honorary Senate page.

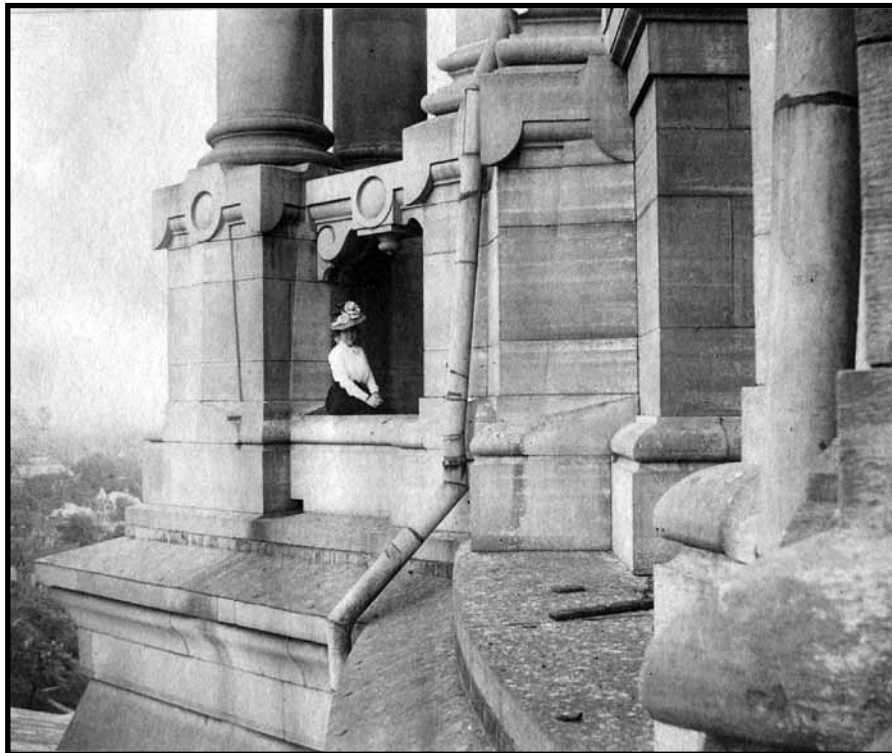
"(The Statehouse) is a part of my childhood," says Donelan, a fifth-generation Springfieldian. "I spent a significant number of years roaming the halls."

Dyer has worked for the Illinois Senate, next to the Capitol's "lost room" -- Committee Room 400, for 24 years. "I found the stories my first supervisor told me about the re-discovery of the

area from which Room 400 was created, and the snack bar that used to exist in front of its entrance, very interesting," he says.

Room 400 originally was part of an art gallery before it became Memorial Hall, a museum for Illinois' old war flags. The walls featured murals of famous Civil War Illinoisans, including Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S.

Grant. But they were covered when a low, fake ceiling was installed in the 1930s. When it was removed in 1971 the artwork was rediscovered. It's been restored since then. Today the space is a beautiful committee hearing room. You can see current photos of it on Dyer's and Donelan's web site: www.ilstatehouse.com.

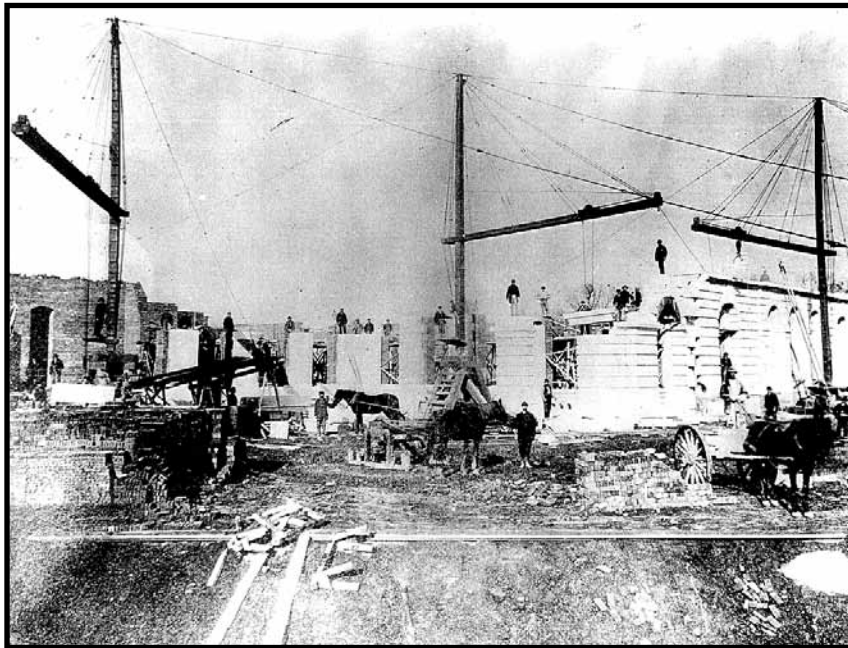


A woman enjoys the panoramic view of Springfield from the Statehouse's upper dome. The public could tour this lofty area of the Capitol until the 1930s. Photo courtesy of the Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Library.

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It's a local legend that workers constructed large earthen ramps to help them construct the Statehouse. Instead, they relied on horse-powered wooden derricks and steam-powered cranes. Photo courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

The web site was their trial run for a book. “We discussed writing a book back in 2001,” Dyer explains. “However, we decided to create a web site and put the book on the back burner.”

“Over the years we’ve accumulated a great number of images and research, and we decided late last summer that it was time to put together a book,” adds Donelan.

Their eight years of research has taken them to the nooks and crannies of historical libraries and archives. In the process they’ve debunked some common myths about the grand old building. For instance, “a lot of people think the basement was used as stables for Statehouse workers’ horses,” Dyer says. The ceiling’s arches look perfect for horse stalls, but the ceiling probably wasn’t tall enough for that purpose.

Another common misperception is that workers used earthen ramps stretching several city blocks to haul stones and metal to the top of the Capitol during its construction. But Dyer and Donelan have scoured photos and records about the Statehouse’s construction and found no evidence of a ramp. Instead, workers used

steam-powered and horse-powered cranes.

It took 20 years to build the Statehouse, which most people find “surprising,” Donelan says. The work began in 1868. “I really have enjoyed trying to piece together what the building looked like in its original form,” he adds. The book has photos of the Statehouse in various stages of its long construction and even an 1865 picture of the Thomas Mather home and grove, which stood on the site before the Statehouse was built.

Tim Mapes, Chief of Staff for Illinois House Speaker Michael Madigan, was a driving force in the recent renovation of the Capitol chambers. He was always striving to make them look as close to their original splendor as possible and says Dyer and Donelan

helped that process. “These gentleman have consistently been very helpful in researching every available resource for old photos and documents to be used in the Capitol building restoration projects.”



Room 309 of the Capitol now houses Illinois Senate offices, but for periods during the 1920s, 1950s, and 1960s it served as a reception area or lounge for legislators, as this 1961 photo shows. Photo courtesy of the Secretary of State, Illinois State Archives.

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Particularly helpful, he adds, was an old photo they found of the House chambers' ornate ceiling that showed the colored glass design for the laylights, which originally allowed skylight to illuminate the room. (The photo is in their book.)

Scott Kaiser, Assistant Secretary of the Illinois Senate, was also involved with the renovation and says, "Steve and Jim both have a great love and respect for the Capitol building and have taken upon themselves in the last several years to do research on the building on their own time. Steve has sort of become our unofficial historian. We have asked, on several occasions, for him to see what he can find in terms of pictures and news stories with regard to the Capitol building and he has come up with photos that have been helpful particularly to the architects who have been designing the renovations. Those pictures are invaluable when you're going back to see what (things) looked like...Those guys have a knack for being able to pull (photos) out of the archives."

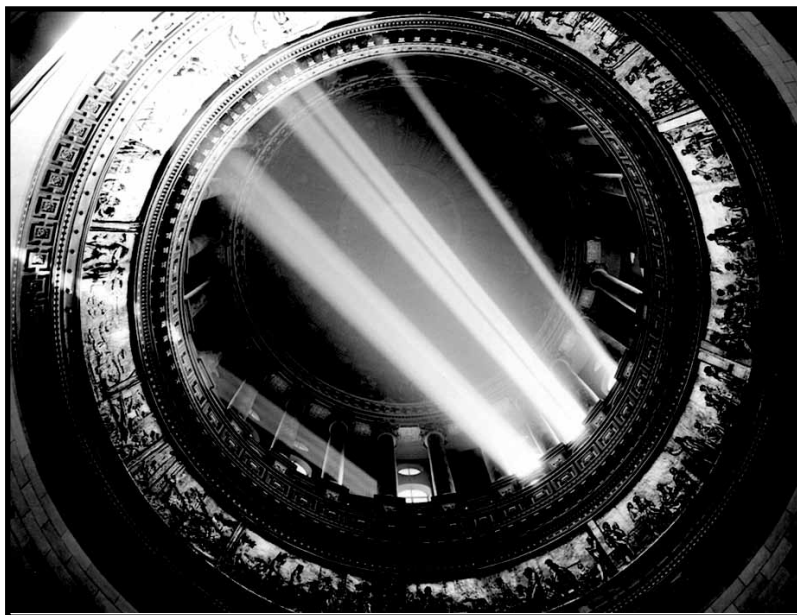
Through their detective work, Donelan and Dyer learned from a newspaper article that 12 portraits of presidents used to adorn the Statehouse's first floor. They'd been covered with paint but were found in 2002 and recreated on canvas. They now hang in their original positions. Lincoln's portrait is pictured in their book.

"We have happened across many interesting folks and events while searching for information about the Statehouse," Dyer says. Henry D. Dement is surely one of those. (His photo is in their book.) Dement was Secretary of State and unofficial Statehouse bird exterminator from 1881 to 1885. He climbed to the Capitol's top and shot his gun to scare pigeons off the dome.

Thanks to the Secretary of State's Physical Services division, Donelan and Dyer found old photos from the 1930s restoration of the Capitol dome. Some show how risky that work was. As winter winds surely whipped by them, workers didn't

appear to have any safety provisions, like tethers or safety nets, as they hauled into place new, external, concrete ribs to replace the dome's worn-out wooden ones in January, 1933. One worker even nonchalantly smoked a cigarette while holding the long rib with both hands.

Dyer and Donelan continue to research the Capitol and add new material to their web site. A second book is a possibility. "I don't know if it would be on the Capitol or something else," Donelan says. In the meantime, he says they hope their current book "piques people's interest in what we have here in Springfield." In addition, "maybe some old images or old information (about the Statehouse) that's lost in someone's attic or trunk could be brought forward. Our goal is to have an opportunity to look at some of those things, then get them in the right location, meaning one of the museums or libraries in Springfield so they can be preserved for everyone."



This 1947 interior photo of the Statehouse dome was taken by the renowned Official State Photographer Eddie Winfred "Doc" Helm. Before he held this position, Helm had several other jobs with Illinois government. According to his biography on the Illinois State Museum's web site, his first state job involved furling and unfurling the flag at the dome's top. He had to climb 360 steps to do it. If he fell there was nothing to catch him. Photo courtesy of the Secretary of State, Illinois State Archives.

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Lincoln Statues Guidebook

Over the past few years, Springfield author Carl Volkmann logged a lot of miles photographing and researching 40 statues and busts of Abraham Lincoln located all over our Prairie State. He wrote about them in a series of articles for the Illinois State Historical Society's "Illinois Heritage" magazine and the Society recently published the articles in a new reference guide, "Lincoln in Sculpture."

The comprehensive book lists not only each work's sculptor, location, and history, but even Global Positioning System coordinates so the directionally-challenged can find it.

Every town likes to claim a link to Lincoln, and when possible, they memorialize it in sculpture. Hence, near the Old Fort Dixon Blockhouse in Dixon, Illinois, where the Black Hawk War was fought, you'll see a statue of Lincoln as a Captain of that war. At the New Salem State Historic Site, the pioneer village northwest of Springfield where Lincoln first lived alone as a single, young man and held many jobs, including Assistant County Surveyor, you'll see a statue of Lincoln surveying the land. In Alton, where Lincoln debated Stephen Douglas during the 1858 campaign for U.S. Senate, you'll see a statue of Lincoln pondering his response while Douglas speaks.

Volkmann gives background on the sculptors and their approach to their Lincoln works. Those approaches range from the abstract to the realistic. On the latter end of the spectrum is artist Larry Anderson whose statue of Lincoln, his wife Mary, and their son Robert stands south of the Old State Capitol in Springfield. He even depicts the three on

a particular date -- October 4, 1854, when Lincoln gave a speech at the Old State Capitol. According to the book, Anderson researched the family for 14 months and added many historically accurate items to the piece. "For example, the speech that Lincoln planned to deliver that day can be seen tucked into his hatband. The handwriting on the speech is as close to Lincoln's as possible," writes Volkmann.

Chicago has two Lincoln statues created by a man who was considered the country's top sculptor around the turn of the last century. Augustus Saint-Gaudens was an Irish native who studied here at the National Academy of Design and later in Paris. Chicago's statues are considered "two of the greatest of Abraham Lincoln" that he created, according to the book. One is in Grant Park and the other is in Lincoln Park. Curiously, the Chicago philanthropist who commissioned the statue in Grant Park demanded in his will that it "face south."

"Lincoln in Sculpture" costs \$10 and is available in Springfield at Prairie Archives book store, Grace Lutheran Church, New Salem State Historic Site, and the gift shop in front of Oak Ridge Cemetery. It's also available at the Convention and Visitors Bureau in Decatur, the McLean County Museum of History in Bloomington, and Books on the Square in Virden. You can also order a copy through the mail from the Illinois State Historical Society; the price is \$10 plus \$5 for shipping. Send a check for \$15 made out to the Illinois State Historical Society to: P.O. Box 1800, Springfield, IL 62705-1800.



Statehouse Trivia

How many spittoons were used in the Statehouse in 1877?

Three-hundred forty-six (346), according to Jim Donelan and Steve Dyer's "The Illinois Statehouse" (Arcadia Publishing, 2009).

2009 Veto Session Dates

October 5 – House and Senate
Perfunctory Session

Week 1 – October 14, 15 & 16

Week 2 – October 28, 29 & 30



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