



the

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The Art of Illinois' Statehouse and Its Stories

Most people see our Statehouse as a repository of politics and government. Look closer. Even those who walk down its hallways daily may not see its other side.

"The Illinois Statehouse is a living museum because of the art inside of it," says Mark Sorensen, the retired assistant director of the Illinois State Archives. While he was at the Archives, Sorensen researched the Statehouse's history and learned interesting stories behind some of its art.

No Nudes Here

In the 1870s, Frenchman and Statehouse Architect Alfred Piquenard designed two elegant statues of semi-nude women to adorn the grand staircase on the second floor. The pieces were made in his homeland, according to Wayne Temple's article about Piquenard in the 1988 Capitol Centennial Papers (produced by the Illinois Secretary of State's Archives).

"Because they represented naked women, the Illinois (Statehouse) commissioners had rejected them out of hand and refused to let the 'ladies' be installed," he wrote. But the statues found another grand, and very similar, home.

Iowa had also contracted with Piquenard to build its new statehouse; he merely reused our capitol's design. On April 18, 1874 Iowa Governor

Cyrus Clay Carpenter brought his statehouse officials to Springfield to check on our progress and get ideas. He left with "the ladies," according to Temple, and they now adorn Iowa's grand staircase.

Adorning Illinois' staircase on the second floor are utilitarian metal columns with lights on top.



These semi-nude statues were created for Illinois' Statehouse in the late 1800s, but its building commissioners deemed them inappropriate, and somehow they ended up in Iowa's Statehouse. Photo courtesy of Mark Sorensen.

Check, Please

Chicago sculptor Leonard Volk often used Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas, his wife's cousin, as models for his work. Douglas was a natural since he had sponsored Volk's professional development. Once Lincoln became a popular politician, he was a natural for commercial reasons; his likeness was in demand. "As soon as Lincoln was nominated (for president), I think Volk was selling mini Lincoln statues all over," Sorensen says. "I've got newspaper ads of him hawking his statues."

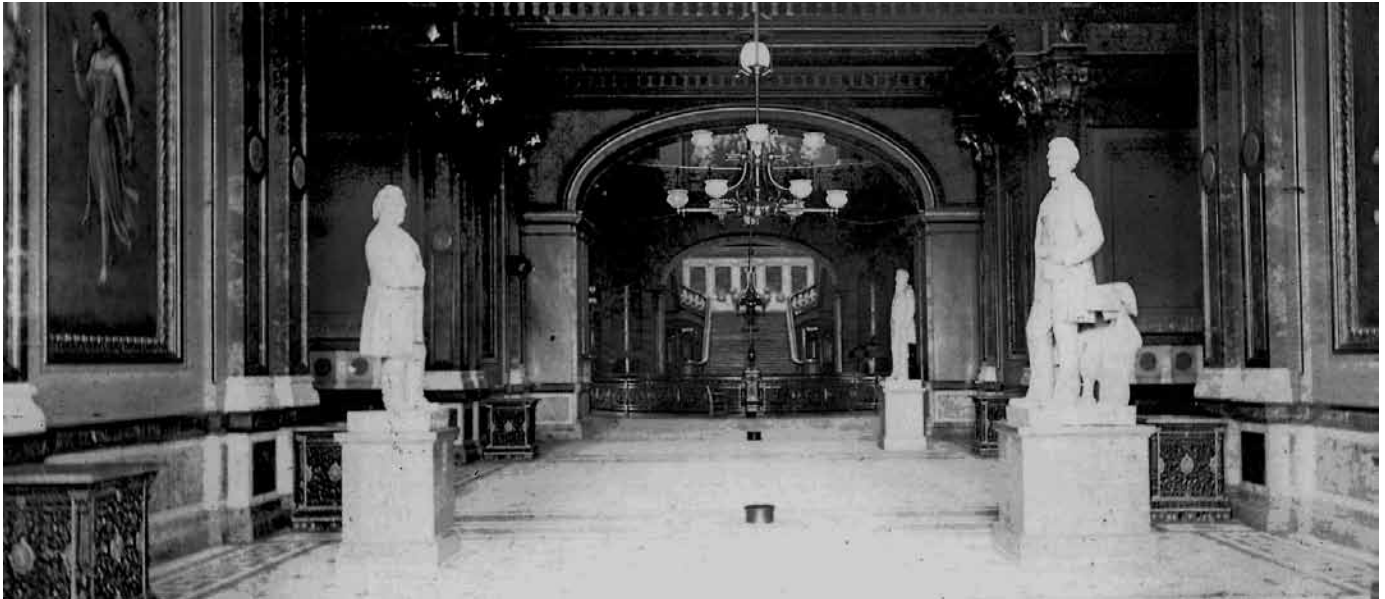
Volk created Douglas' burial monument in Chicago and a full-life statue of him that now resides at Springfield's Old State Capitol. He also made life masks and a bust of Lincoln. But he didn't stop there.

He created two life-size, white plaster statues of these Illinois political opponents and sent them to the Statehouse, where they stood just inside the entrance to the capitol in 1877. At that time the entrance was on the second

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This 1886 photo shows the two Leonard Volk statues in their original location -- inside the entrance to the Statehouse. At that time the entrance was on the building's east side on the second floor, where the Governor's Office is now. Lincoln was on the north side of the hallway and Douglas was on the south, perhaps they were placed there symbolically. The statues were later painted bronze and moved to niches that surround the rotunda on the second floor. Photo courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum

floor, where the Governor's Office is today.

In 1877, there was a bill (House Bill 254) introduced in the legislature that suggested the state purchase metal or stone statues of Lincoln and Douglas "made from the models executed by Volk," but the legislation was tabled. Were the "models" it refers to the white plaster statues Volk had sent the capitol? Was there an agreement with Volk that if the state liked those, it would pay for stone or marble versions? A letter from Volk's son after Volk's death allegedly tells the sculptor's side of the story.

On May 6, 1898, Stephen A. Douglas Volk wrote Governor John Tanner, asking that the state pay for the plaster sculptures. "They were made from live studies by my father," he wrote. "These statues were placed in the Statehouse some years ago by Mr. Volk with the idea that they might sometime be purchased or ordered to be put into bronze for the state capitol. My father's estate is now being settled and as one of the executors, I... write to ask if you can suggest any way by which final disposition may be made..."

Tanner's private secretary replied five days later. "Until the receipt of your letter the governor



Leonard Volk's statue of Lincoln as it appears today on the second floor. Photo courtesy of Steve Dyer.

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was not aware that these studies were the property of the private individual,” he wrote. The secretary told Volk’s son that the governor couldn’t authorize payment for them, only the legislature could do so.

So far, no one’s found evidence that the state paid for them, according to Sorensen. The statues have since been painted bronze and placed on the second floor in niches surrounding the rotunda.

The Portraits Within the Portrait

Every Illinois governor (with the exception of Rod Blagojevich) has had his portrait painted and hung in the Hall of Governors on the second floor’s south wing. Most are straight-forward depictions of the man with little in the background. But former governor Jim Edgar’s is much more.

The painting, by William T. Chambers, depicts Edgar standing in front of the fireplace in the Executive Mansion’s study. On the fireplace mantel is a photo of Edgar’s wife, Brenda. Sorensen says Edgar was the first governor to include his wife, or any woman, in his portrait.

Above the mantel in his portrait, is a copy of a painting of the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debate in Charleston, where Edgar spent his childhood. His great grandfather James Edgar attended that debate. The ten foot painting was created by Illinoisan Robert Root and sold to the state in 1919. “It hung in the



When former Governor Jim Edgar had his gubernatorial portrait painted, he made sure it included family members, including his first two grandchildren (who appear in the lower right of the painting, among the crowd) and his wife, Brenda (who appears in a photo on the mantel). Edgar was the first governor to include his spouse in his portrait. Photo courtesy of Mark Sorensen; painting by William T. Chambers.



This empty frame located on the west wall of the second floor, just outside the Comptroller’s Office, used to contain a painting and a map at different times. Photo courtesy of Mark Sorensen.

north hall of the second floor of the State House until 1981 when Edgar had it moved to his then Secretary of State executive office,” Sorensen says.

When he had his portrait painted, Edgar borrowed a trick that Root used in the debate painting. Root painted depictions of his nieces and nephews looking at the viewer from the crowd. Edgar had Chambers paint his first two grandchildren in the crowd.

To the unknowing eye, Edgar’s portrait is just another depiction of a former governor, but in reality, it’s also a look at some of his family and their history.

The Empty Frame

On the second floor, just outside the Comptrol-

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ler's Office in the north wing of the Statehouse, is an ornate, but empty frame on the wall. From 1919 to 1981, the painting that's reproduced in Edgar's gubernatorial portrait -- of the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debate, hung there. But he had that moved to the Secretary of State's office in 1981 and then the Governor's Office in 1991, where it still resides today.

Originally the frame adorned what was called

"the Centennial map." A local newspaper reported on April 24, 1877 that the map had been "neatly framed" and hung there. "I assume the Centennial map is a map of the continental U.S. in 1876, when Colorado was admitted to the Union," Sorensen says. "We have no photo of it, so we didn't know it ever existed until we saw the newspaper articles about it."

Does the map still exist? If so, where is it? Those are just two more Capitol mysteries.



Transitions

On August 10, **Governor Pat Quinn** appointed **Alexi Giannoulis**, former Illinois treasurer, as chairman of the Illinois Community College Board.

Erica Borggren was appointed by the governor on August 5 as head of the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs. Borggren is an Army veteran who previously served as a senior staff member for **Army Gen. David H. Petraeus** during the Iraq War. Her predecessor, **Dan Grant**, left for graduate school.

Charles Johnson retired as director of the Illinois Department on Aging this summer and on August 2, Governor Quinn named **Michael Gelder** as the department's acting director. Formerly, Gelder was Quinn's senior health policy advisor.

Paul Evans, a Republican and attorney in O'Fallon, was sworn into the Illinois House of Representatives on August 26. He took the seat of **Ron Stephens**, who resigned after serving there for 27 years. Evans represents the 102nd District.

Former Chicago police sergeant **Dena Carli**, a Democrat, has assumed the House seat previously occupied by **Susan Mendoza**, who resigned to become Chicago city clerk. Carli represents the southwest side of Chicago.

On July 25, Democrat **Jerry F. Costello II** replaced **Dan Reitz** in the House due to Reitz's retirement. He represents southwestern Illinois. Prior to his House appointment, Costello was a Belleville financial advisor.

Kimberly du Buclet was appointed to the Illinois House in May. This Democrat took the seat of **Will Burns**, who became alderman for Chicago's 4th Ward. She represents the 26th District.

Also in May, Democrat **Kelly Cassidy** replaced former state representative **Harry Osterman** in the House, to represent the 14th District on Chicago's far north side. Osterman left to become alderman for Chicago's 48th Ward.

