



## GREEK REVIVAL IN MISSISSIPPI 3

The architect William Nichols based some of his designs on images of Greek buildings (as shown in the book on the table in the Greek Revival style exhibit).

He also used elements of his earlier buildings when he designed the Old Capitol. Look carefully at the images around the map by the “Master Builder” exhibit. How many similarities can you find? See back for answer.

Chancery Court (4)  
The columns in this room are based on the Roman Pantheon.



Senate Gallery (6)  
The laurel wreaths in the balcony

are similar to those surrounding the bull’s eye windows in the Rotunda, pictured above.

## DECORATING THE BUILDING

Not much is known about the original colors used in the Old Capitol. Most of the color choices are based on the restoration work completed in 1961 since so little original paint survives. In the apse on the first floor, a piece of plaster with original paint shows that the color choices for the walls are remarkably close to the original paint colors. Stone colors like these were typical in the period. Bold colors—reds, greens, golds, and blues—were also typical of Greek Revival architecture.



We have already seen how decorative painting techniques like marbling and graining made wood look like more expensive materials. The building would

have had other decoration in addition to paint. Rooms had carpet, curtains, and wallpaper. Some of the color and fabric choices are based on pieces of curtains that survived. These curtains were removed by Union troops in the 1860s as spoils of war and some were even made into clothing; they were returned to the museum much later.

The Senate Chamber (10) In 1917, Governor Theodore G. Bilbo purchased the columns from the Senate Chamber. The columns were returned in the 1950s, but they were damaged from neglect and unusable. Only six of the capitals on the top of the columns are original.

Look carefully at the quality of the carving on the capitals; can you tell which are original? See back for answer.



## ANSWERS TO THE KEEPER’S QUESTIONS



The capitals on the columns in the Senate Chamber are based on the same source as the capitals on the pilasters in the Rotunda, the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens.

Sources for parts of the Old Capitol building (from other buildings by Nichols):

- The arrangement of the building, the raised temple front, and the center dome of the Old Capitol are similar to the capitol buildings Nichols built in Alabama and in North Carolina. Nichols also used a circle of Corinthian columns in the senate chamber in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
- The two-story columns with a pediment on top are similar to the front of the “New Chapel” at the University of North Carolina and the later Lyceum at the University of Mississippi.

The capitals on the original columns in the Senate Chamber have more delicate carving than the others, which were reproduced from molds taken of the originals. The original capitals are the two by the entrance to the Senate Chamber and the two on both sides of the podium.

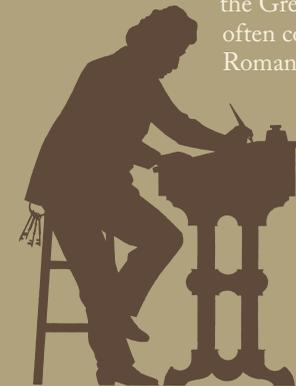
# Greek Revival



## Treasure Hunt

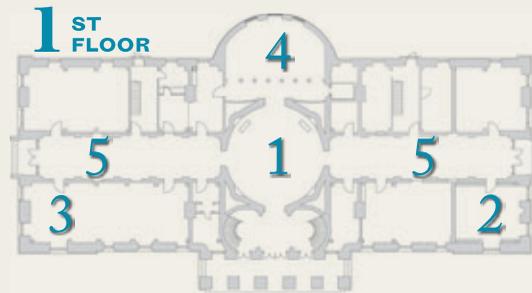
The Old Capitol was completed in 1839. It was designed by architect William Nichols in the Greek Revival style. The inspiration for the style came from images of ancient Greek buildings published for the first time in the 1750s. Many columns and other architectural elements in the Old Capitol were copied directly from those illustrations. Many other elements were not Greek.

This was typical of buildings in the Greek Revival style, which often combined a variety of Roman and Greek influences.

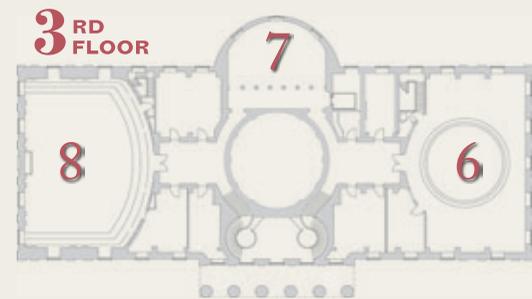


Explore the architecture of the Old Capitol, from the stunning to the surprising. Discover the unexpected and the unknown within the building.

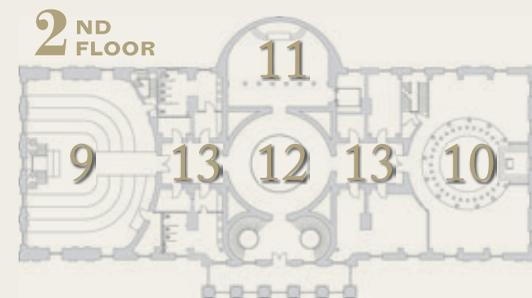
Use these keys to explore the Greek Revival style in the Old Capitol building.



- 1 Rotunda
- 2 Governor's Office
- 3 Building the Old Capitol & Historic Preservation
- 4 Chancery Court
- 5 Corridors (north and south)



- 6 Senate Gallery
- 7 State Library
- 8 House Gallery



- 9 House Chamber
- 10 Senate Chamber
- 11 Supreme Court
- 12 Rotunda
- 13 Corridors (north and south)

## COLUMNS

There are three orders, or types, of columns in Greek architecture. They range from the simplest Doric order, to the Ionic, to the Corinthian, which is the most elaborate. You can find all three orders of columns in the Old Capitol.



← Greek Doric columns have no base. The capital (the top or the crown of the column) is a circle with a square on top. These columns are found at the side entrances of the basement or ground level of the building (outside 5).

An Ionic column is easily recognized by the scroll-like spirals (volute) on its capital. The fluted shafts are not straight—they bulge very slightly at the center; this is called “entasis.” Entasis corrects an optical illusion that makes straight columns look curved.



Ionic columns are found on the portico at the front of the building; there are also ← Ionic columns behind the Speaker's podium in the House Chamber (9).

→ Corinthian columns are the most ornate of the three orders. The bases, like those of Ionic columns, look like a stack of rings. The capitals have leaves and flowers, often modeled on the acanthus plant. The tall shafts are fluted (decorated with grooves) and also use entasis to make them look straight. There are several different versions of Corinthian capitals in this building.



Compare the details of the capitals in the Senate Chamber (10), the Supreme Court (11), the State Library (7), and the Rotunda (1) on the entrance level. Do any of them look the same? See back for answer.



The ancient Greeks did not usually mix the orders in the same building; this was more typical of Roman architecture. Romans often used the Doric order on the basement level and then used the higher orders for more important areas. Nichols used the Doric columns on the basement level, Ionic columns in the House Chamber, and Corinthian in the Senate Chamber. The court rooms and the library also had Corinthian columns. There are no columns in the Governor's Office.



## IT'S NOT GREEK TO ME

The use of domes, arches, and vaults is not part of Greek architecture but

Roman. The blending of Greek and Roman elements was typical in Greek Revival architecture. Buildings with either Greek or Roman elements are often simply identified as “classical style.”

The Rotunda (1), with its large dome, is actually more Roman than Greek. The vaulted ceilings in the hallways of the long corridors on the first and second floors (5 and 13) are also Roman. Remember that the front of the portico did not originally have arches, but straight or horizontal beams across the openings. That style is more purely Greek. The arches were added when the building was renovated in the 1870s.

## THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE 2

Rosettes are circular floral decorations, like the ones on the top of the door surround of the Governor's Office. These same rosettes are found around the arch behind the Speaker's podium in the House Chamber. The rosettes in the Rotunda (12) are shaped differently.



The exterior architectural decoration of the Governor's Office is limited to the few rosettes and a central palmette, with scrolls on the door surround. This simplicity has been interpreted as an architectural expression of the political ideals of Jacksonian democracy, which promoted the strength of the common man over the executive branch of government.



↑ The mantel around the fireplace looks like it's made of Italian marble. It's actually wood, painted to look like marble. This technique, making one material look like it's a more expensive material, was very common in the nineteenth century. Another example is the stucco on the front of the building, which is scored to make it look like stone. The doors in the building were probably painted or grained to look like a more expensive wood. Look for an example of this in the exhibit on building the Old Capitol (room 3).

columns