

④ THE CIVIL WAR

The war interrupted the business of the state government and forced the legislature to meet in other cities. Yet the Old Capitol was central to many political events during the Civil War. What special conventions met in the House Chamber before and after the war?

When the secession convention met in the House Chamber in 1861, the delegates voted 83 to 15 to secede.



Just seven years later, in 1868, 100 delegates (including sixteen African Americans) would meet to write a new constitution. Think of how different a spectator would find the two conventions!

EX2-4.4/
G10

⑥⑧ The House and Senate Galleries

Take a moment to walk through both galleries. Think about what it would have been like

in the early nineteenth century to rely only on newspapers and public speeches for your political news. Can you imagine occasions when the galleries would have been crowded with visitors? What about today?

⑦ The State Library

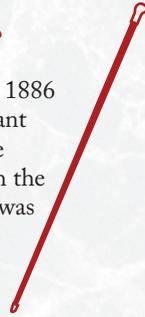
There are many law books and documents on display in this room.



The early state library included books that covered a wide range of topics, not just law. How many different subjects are represented by the books on display today?

⑨ Why is this cane in the Senate Chamber?

The cane was presented to Garvin Shands in 1886 by the pages of the Senate because as lieutenant governor Shands acted as the president of the Senate. The 1832 Constitution did away with the role of the lieutenant governor. The position was brought back by the 1868 Constitution.



⑨ The Senate and the House



The constitution gives different powers to the House and Senate. For example, the House has the power to choose the governor if no statewide candidate receives a majority of the electoral and popular votes in the general election. This happened in 1999, when Ronnie Musgrove received more popular votes than Mike Parker but not a majority. The House elected Musgrove governor.

While the House has the power to impeach the governor and other civil officers of the state, it is the Senate that tries the case. In 1876, the House impeached Lieutenant Governor Alexander K. Davis; the Senate convicted him, and he was removed from office.



⑩ The Government and the Constitutions

In 1868 and again in 1890 delegates were elected to write a new state constitution. Who could vote and who couldn't? Find the two places to scan your ticket and see what changed.

What happened? The 1868 election opened the vote to all men, black and white (although former Confederate officials who would not take a loyalty oath could not vote). By 1890, conservative white Democrats had regained power and used violence and the fear of violence or job loss to keep blacks and other Republicans from voting.



The 1890 Constitution prevented most black men and many poor white men from voting.

The rooms along the second floor corridors ⑪ would have been filled with legislative committee meetings, robing rooms for Supreme Court justices, Supreme Court clerks, clerks for the House and Senate, and other government officials. As the number of committees grew, the building became more and more crowded.



“We, the People



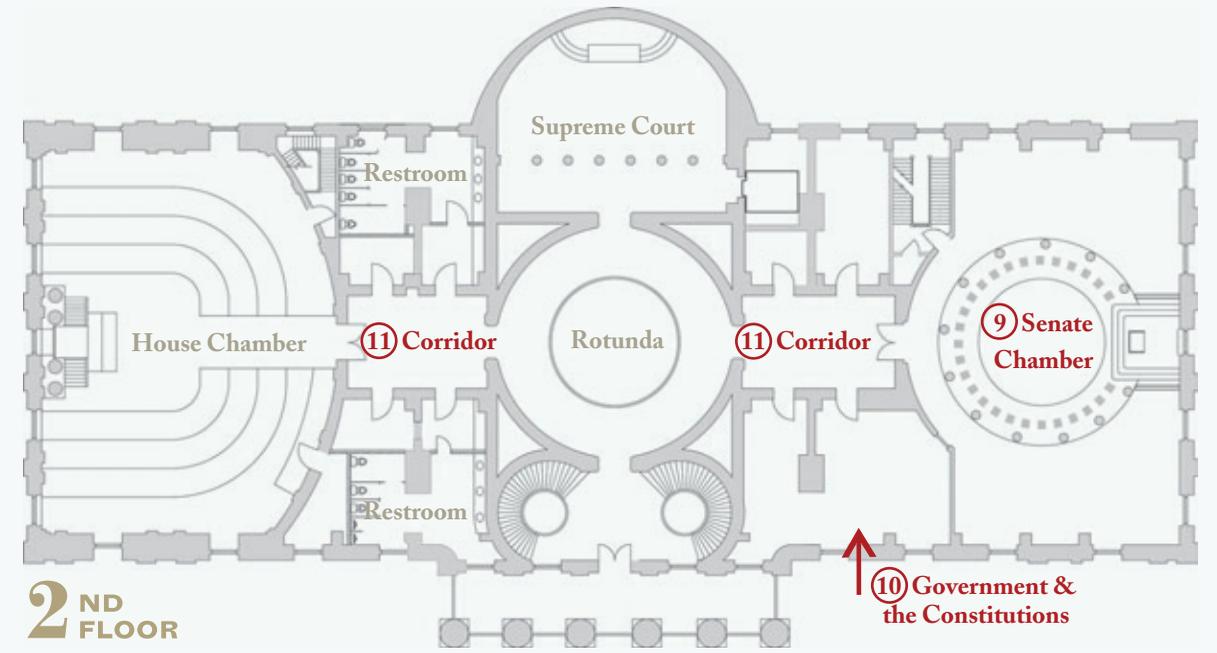
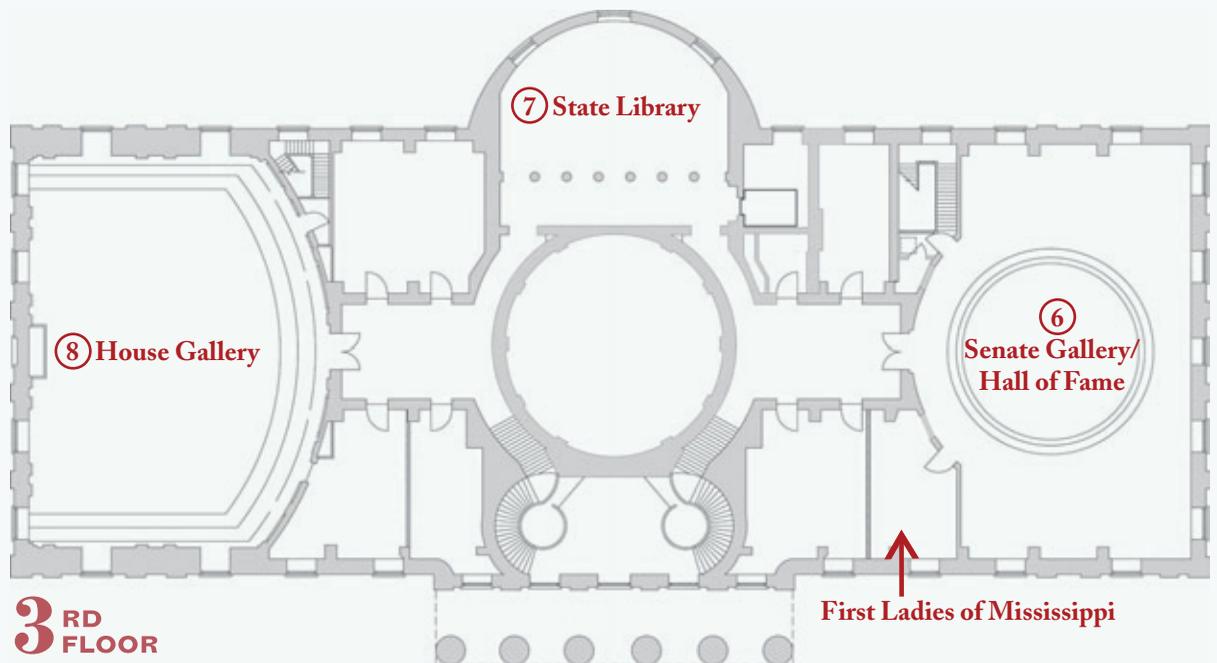
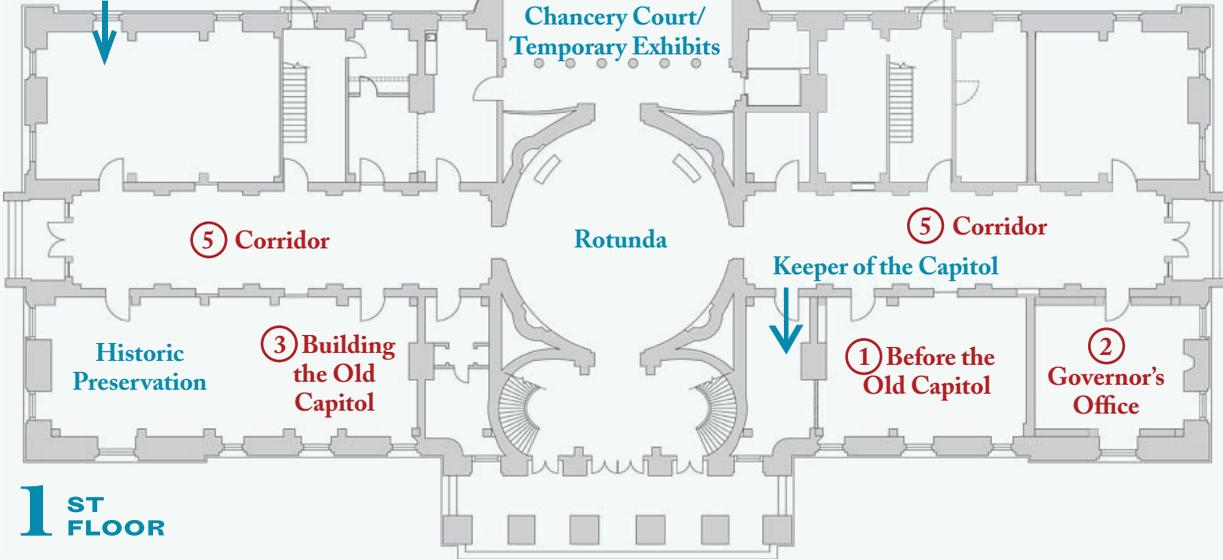
of Mississippi”

The Old Capitol was completed in 1839. It was designed by architect William Nichols in the Greek Revival style to house the state government. The legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the government met here until 1903, when the New Capitol was built. Because the political events that took place in this building are so critical to the history of Mississippi—and the nation—the Old Capitol was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1990.



Explore how architecture and government were linked in the Old Capitol. Discover the politics of the past, understand history's influence on the present, and be inspired to act for the future!

- ④ History Happened Here
- Early Days of Jackson
- Famous Visitors
- Local Events
- Civil War
- Statehouse Becomes Old Capitol



THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The governor is the head of the executive branch of the state government. The state constitution also provides for the election of a lieutenant governor, state treasurer, auditor of public accounts, and secretary of state. All these officials had offices on the first floor of the Old Capitol ⑤.

① Before the Old Capitol

Did you find the volume of territorial laws? What did you think of the punishments? A group of men who thought these laws were too harsh, and who objected to the amount of power held by the territorial governor, petitioned the U.S. Congress and won the right to an elected legislature. How does losing the ability to appoint officials affect the power of the governor?



Mississippi's Constitutions

Mississippi has had four constitutions since it became a state. Two were written before the Civil War and

two after. The 1868 Constitution is considered very democratic because it extended the right to vote to all men. The 1890 Constitution (still in use today, although much changed) restricted the right to vote. Explore the exhibits looking at all four constitutions ①⑩. How are they different? Which would you use as a model to write a constitution?

② The Governor's Office

The governor is a relatively weak position in Mississippi, in part because the other executive officers are elected separately, not appointed.

Compare the simple architecture in this office to the elaborate door surround of the House Chamber, the apse behind the Speaker of the House, or the columns in the Senate Chamber. Look at the model of the capitol ③ to compare the size of the rooms. What do you think it means?

