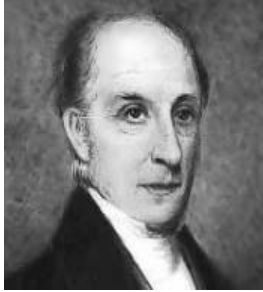


The Architects



Charles Bulfinch
Original Designer and Builder
1828-1832

John C. Spofford
Designed and Built West Wing
1890-1891

G. Henri Desmond
Designed current State House and Dome
1909-1910

Timeline

- 1820** Maine becomes 23rd state. Portland State House built.
- 1827** Governor Enoch Lincoln signs bill establishing Augusta as new State Capital.
- 1829** Charles Bulfinch designs State House for Augusta. Corner Stone laid for new state house on July 4th.
- 1832** First Legislature meets in the new State House in Augusta.
- 1852** First remodel done on State House.
- 1860** Second remodel performed on State House.
- 1891** West wing addition added to the original Bulfinch design. The addition is designed by John C. Spofford.
- 1910** Expansion and new dome is completed. Designed by G. Henri Desmond.
- 1971** The Cultural Building built next to State House and the State Library and Museum move into space in the new building.
- 2001** Upgrades and refurbishments are completed to the State House and grounds.
- 2014** Replacement of the original copper dome and gold leaf on the Lady of Wisdom.

Distributed by:
Darek M. Grant, Secretary of the Senate
Marcia J. Homstead, Asst. Secretary

The Maine State House

The Maine State House, located at the corner of State and Capitol Streets in Augusta, Maine, was completed in 1832, one year after Augusta became the Capital of Maine. Built using Maine granite, the State House was based on the design of the Capitol building for Massachusetts.

When Maine separated from Massachusetts and became a state on March 15, 1820, a number of cities and towns sought the honor of becoming the state Capital and site of the new State House. Principal aspirants for the Capital were Portland, Brunswick, Hallowell, Waterville, Belfast, Wiscasset and Augusta.

Portland was originally named the Capital, with the general understanding that the site was not permanent.

The Portland State House, built in 1820,

stood at Congress and Myrtle Streets, where Portland City Hall is located today. The modest two-story federal style building (pictured here on the left) was used by state government until 1832. The Portland State House was destroyed in the *Great Fire of 1866*.

On February 24, 1827, Governor Enoch Lincoln signed a bill establishing Augusta as the official Capital. The land for the State House and State grounds, containing thirty-four acres extending from the old Hallowell road to the Kennebec River, was chosen by the Governor and a Commission after careful consideration of various sites on both sides of the river. A group of Augusta owners deeded the land to the State for the sum of ten dollars.

The building was designed by the renowned architect, Charles Bulfinch of Boston, who also designed the Capitol Building in Washington DC. It took three years to complete. At about one hundred and fifty feet in length, including the central portion with columns, cupola and two wings extending north and south, the building's cornerstone was laid on the 4th of July, 1829, amid impressive Masonic ceremonies.

Construction was of granite mined from Hallowell quarries and the stone was hauled by oxen to Augusta. The cost of the building was originally estimated to be \$80,000, but when completed, expenditures of the building, furnishings and grounds amounted to about \$139,000 of which \$11,500 was contributed by the City of Augusta.

The Maine Legislature held its first session in the new State Capitol on January 4, 1832, under Governor Samuel E. Smith.

The interior of the Capitol was remodeled in 1852 and again in 1860 to provide additional room for state departments. Today, only a fragment of the original structure remains. Construction in the 1950's of the State Office Building, and completion in 1971 of the Cultural Building, resulted in the removal of many of the agency offices from the State House.

In 1890-1891, a large three-story wing was added to the rear, or west side, of the building to accommodate the State Library and to provide more office space for departments.

Major remodeling and enlargement of the Capitol during 1909-1910 established the present day appearance of the building based on designs by G. Henri Desmond. The original front of the building was preserved, as the length of the building was doubled to three hundred feet by extending the north and south wings. A dome, rising to a height of one hundred and eighty-five feet, was built to replace the original cupola.

The Dome is surmounted by a statue, the "Lady of Wisdom" often misreferred to as "Minerva". Standing at 15 feet, the draped female figure holds a pine bough in the form of a torch in her right hand and a pinecone in her left. Designed around 1909, by W. Clark Noble of Gardiner, the statue is made of copper and overlaid with gold.

In 1991, a rectangular metal object was detected embedded in the cornerstone found beside the fifth step of the original seven-step stairway to the main entrance. There remains no way of knowing what is actually in the cornerstone, but a history of Augusta says that a copy of the state Constitution, some currency of the day, publications and a special plate were placed there at the time of dedication.

In 1989, in a ceremony commemorating the building's 160th anniversary, a stainless steel time capsule was buried near the front wall of the State House. It is to be opened in 2029.