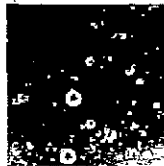


1 - The Maclurite



2 - Prasopora



3 - Crinoid Stalk pieces



4 - Crinoid Stalk

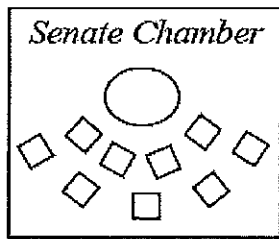


5 - Stromatacereum



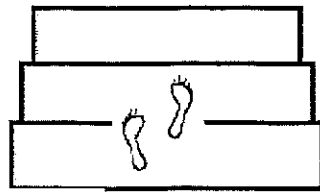
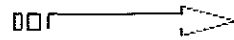
6 - Eridotrypa

# A Map to the Maine State House Fossil Hunt



Start Here!

## The Governor's Staircase



Fireplace

#4

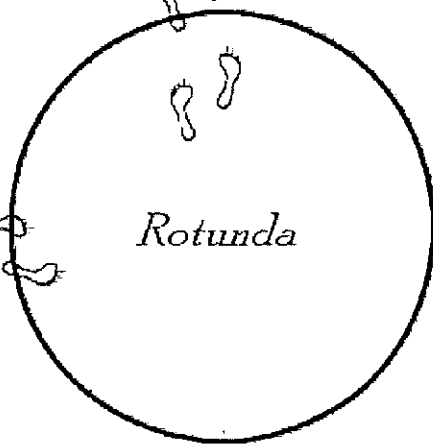
#3

#2

#1

#5

3rd Floor



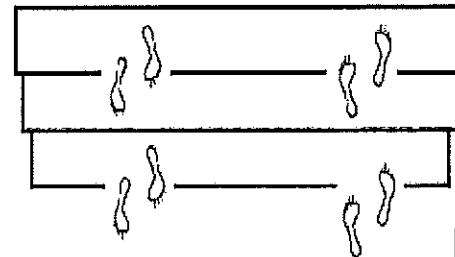
Rotunda

Can you spot any more  
Maclurites on this floor?

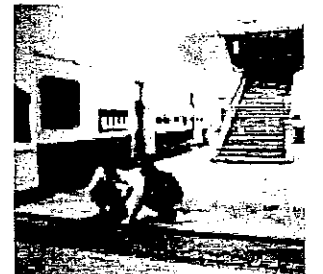


Back up to  
the 3rd Floor

2nd Floor



#6



The Hall of Flags

## Fossils of the Maine State Capitol

Did you ever think of taking a trip to look for prehistoric fossils? Fossils that are 475 million years old?

You might think that to find these kinds of fossils you would need to go to a museum, a cave or even to faraway places like Europe or Asia. But how about right here in Maine? Where would you find them? At the seashore? In the woods? On the top of a tall mountain?

The fact is you can find fossils at any of these locations but you don't have to travel very far to find fossils today. There are fossils to be found in the dark stones of the very floor you're standing on! You can begin your fossil tour just outside of the Senate Chamber on the third floor of the State House.

The stone floors at the Maine State Capitol are home to at least four kinds of marine invertebrate fossils. An invertebrate is a creature with no backbone or spinal column. Can you think of any creatures you may have seen that do not have spinal column? You probably have! How about an earthworm? A jellyfish or snail? These are all invertebrates.

So, let's get started on the fossil hunt! Take a close look at the black marble-like sections in the floor. These sections are actually limestone. We're not exactly sure where this limestone came from but a good guess would be from quarries in La Motte, Vermont. These stones were added to the floors during renovations of the State House that took place from 1889 to 1890 and again from 1909 to 1911.

We're going to begin today's hunt by looking for a snail-like creature scientists have named Maclurite Magnus (Mac-lur-ite Mag-nuhs). You can use the map on the other side of this page to help you in your search.

Beginning at the door of the Senate Chamber, take about 40 regular sized steps to the middle of the third floor. This is where you can look up through the ceiling for a great view of the inside of the dome. This place is called the Rotunda (Ro-ton-da).

From the center of the rotunda, turn to face left and take about 13 steps. Look around you in the black sections of the floor for a spiral shaped fossils like this:



Congratulation! You have just spotted your first fossil at the Maine State House, the Maclurite (Mac-lur-ite) (Map #1). You'll probably see many more of these on your hunt, their distinctive shape makes them easy to see.

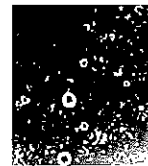
Today, the shore periwinkle is probably the nearest relative to the Maclurite and it looks a lot like this drawing:



Can you find anymore fossils nearby? Several steps to the left of the Maclurite you'll spot a creature from the Phylum Bryozoa, or "moss animals", called a Prasopora (Pra-so-por-a) (Map #2). Have you found it yet? It looks like this:



Look around you, the next critter is a little harder to locate and requires a little imagination on your part. It is called a Crinoid (Cri-noid) (Map #3 & #4). These plants have flower like crown and stalk -like branches. Crinoids were extremely delicate and when they died they usually fell apart. However, many pieces of the Crinoid were preserved in stone and now look like small donuts or bubbles in the floor.



These are small pieces of the Crinoid's stalk, broken up as fossils.

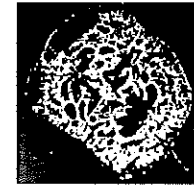


Here is a piece of Crinoid stalk all in one piece. Can you find it?

From the Prasopora fossil, take about seven steps toward the fireplace and look at the limestone around the health. Don't be fooled into thinking you're seeing scratches in the floor, these are the real Crinoids and in today's world would be most similar to the sea lily. The bubble shapes are actually cross sections of the stalk as seen here.



Take approximately eight steps to the wall opposite the fireplace and look about 5 steps to the right near the doorway. Here you will find a magnificent view of a cabbage-like creature known as Stromatocerium (Strom-a-to-cerium) (Map #5). These animals have left fossils that are sometimes over three feet thick. We are only seeing a small section (about the size of your hand) here in the floor.



Today we would think of Stromatocerium as similar to a sea sponge as shown here in this illustration.

Now, from the third floor go down the big stairway (called the Governor's Staircase) to the second floor. At the foot of the stairs, take about four diagonal steps to the right and see a very rare specimen of Eridotrypa (Er-id-o-try-pa) (Map #6), another "moss animal" that looks like this picture.

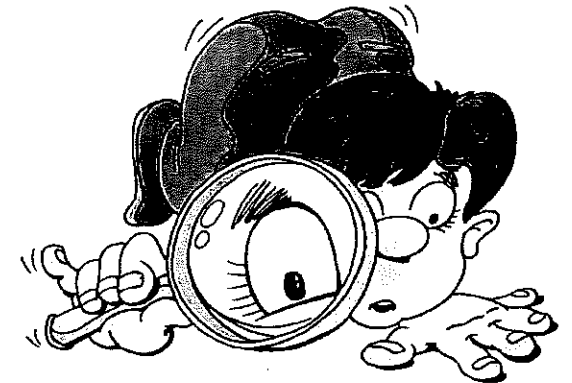


All the creatures you have seen today lived millions and millions of years ago in the ancient Iapetus Ocean. The Iapetus existed long before the Atlantic Ocean was formed. There are many other fossils from these times, but they have not yet been discovered in the floors of the Maine State Capitol. Perhaps you will be the first to identify a fossil that has yet to be noticed; a fossil older than you or I can imagine.

Happy hunting!

# Maine State House

## FOSSIL HUNT



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