



Historic Property Report

Resource Name: Temple of Justice

Property ID: 675421

Location



Address: 415 12th Ave SW, Olympia, WA 98501

Tax No/Parcel No: 09850005000

Plat/Block/Lot: SYLVESTERS DC

Geographic Areas: Thurston County, OLYMPIA Quadrangle, T18R02W47

Information

Number of stories: 2

Construction Dates:

Construction Type	Year	Circa
Built Date	1922	<input type="checkbox"/>

Historic Use:

Category	Subcategory
Government	Government - Courthouse
Government	Government - Courthouse

Historic Context:

Category
Politics/Government/Law
Architecture



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Architect/Engineer:

Category	Name or Company
Builder	Hans Pederson Construction Company
Architect	Wilder and White

Districts

District Name	Contributing
Washington State Capitol Historic District	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Thematics:

Local Registers and Districts

Name	Date Listed	Notes
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Project History

Project Number, Organization, Project Name	Resource Inventory	SHPO Determination	SHPO Determined By, Determined Date
2015-10-00257, , Capitol Campus	4/14/2014	Not Determined	

Photos



Southwest corner



Northwest corner



Main entrance hall interior



Second floor corridor



South facade



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Inventory Details - 4/14/2014

Common name: Temple of Justice, Washington Supreme Court
Date recorded: 4/14/2014
Field Recorder: Susan Johnson, Artifacts Consulting, Inc.
Field Site number:
SHPO Determination

Detail Information

Characteristics:

Category	Item
Roof Type	Gable
Structural System	Masonry - Brick
Plan	H-Shape
Roof Type	Flat with Parapet
Cladding	Stone - Ashlar/Cut
Foundation	Concrete - Poured

Styles:

Period	Style Details
Mid-Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals	Neoclassical

Surveyor Opinion

Property appears to meet criteria for the National Register of Historic Places: Yes

Property is located in a potential historic district (National and/or local): Yes

Property potentially contributes to a historic district (National and/or local): Yes

Significance narrative: Begun in 1912 and completed in 1922, the Temple of Justice was the first building on the Capitol campus initiated under the Wilder and White master plan. Because of the delays in finishing the interior, however, the Powerhouse and the Insurance buildings were completed before the Temple of Justice. Built to house the Washington State Library and Supreme Court, the Temple of Justice set the style and proportion example for the entire campus. The building's spaces have also been host to events and decisions that shaped Washington state history. The three phases of building construction follow below.

- 1912–1913 Original construction, including foundation, brick walls, roof, and partial interior finishes
- 1918–1919 Exterior stone cladding installed
- 1920–1922 Completion of interior work

Architects Wilder and White designed the building in the Neoclassical Revival style. The exterior cladding is Wilkeson sandstone, quarried in Pierce County, Washington. The historic associations central to the Temple of Justice's significance are the initiation of Wilder and White's master plan and the provision of and con-tinued use as state judicial space on the West Capitol Campus.

From about 1848, a federally appointed justice served the court “circuit” across one large district (present day Oregon, Washington and Idaho). With the 1853 formation of Washington Territory from the larger Oregon Territory, Washington split into three judicial districts. Each of the new districts had a federal justice. Once each year, the three justices for the Washington Territory met in Olympia and formed a Supreme Court, listening to appeals from the circuit courts. In 1884, the territory added a fourth judicial district. With statehood in 1889, Washington adopted a state constitution and expanded its judicial system. Voters elected five judges for six-year terms. The number of judges grew to seven in 1905 and to nine in 1909.

During territorial and early statehood days, the Supreme Court met in several different buildings in Olympia. One of those was the former Thurston County Courthouse, which the state occupied and used as the Washington State Capitol in 1905. That building, today known as the Old Capitol Building, became severely overcrowded by at least 1909. It was hoped that, by constructing the Temple of Justice first and moving the Supreme Court and the Washington State Library into the new building, some of the crowding at Old Cap would be alleviated.

Preparations for construction of the Temple of Justice began in 1912. In February, the commission invited construction bids. Hans Pederson submitted the lowest bid and won the contract. On March 16, 1912, Justice R.O. Dunbar presided over the groundbreaking. In the following months, the commission approved H.L. Copeland as supervising architect for the building and numerous contractors. Some of the principal contractors and material suppliers involved in the construction of the Temple of Justice were:

- Hans Pederson, general construction
- West Coast Heating Company, heating
- Evans-Dickson Company, electrical
- U.S. Steel Products Company, steel work
- Hecla Iron Works, metal windows
- American Wire and Iron Works, ornamental iron
- Puget Sound Bridge and Dredge, installed exterior stone cladding
- H.E. Gleason Company (Seattle) and Edward W. Caldwell (New York), Class A light fixtures

In January, 1913, the Supreme Court and part of the Attorney General’s office moved from the Old Cap to the Temple of Justice. The new building also hosted the Inaugural Ball for Governor Ernest Lister that month. A few months later, the commission reported that the building could not be finished under the existing construction budget. Governor Lister denied the commission’s request for additional funding and Wilder and White were directed to wrap up their aspects of the project, at least for the time being. Limited work continued, such as the completion of the roof in 1914. Designs were simplified to cut costs, especially exterior sandstone carving and detailing.

In 1915, the Legislature created the “Capitol building interest fund” to pay off existing debts on the building and to complete the remaining phases. However, in the face of ongoing resistance by Governor Lister, construction did not resume until 1918, when the contract was signed with Puget Sound Bridge and Dredge to clad the exterior of the building. The exterior cladding was completed in the summer of 1919, featuring primarily Wilkeson sandstone except for granite facing at the base (foundation).

The third phase, finishing the remainder of the interior, began soon after the end of World War I, in circa 1920 (contract signed in 1919 but progress of work is not clear). Interior finishes included Alaskan marble and white oak, principally. The Jos. Mayer Manufacturing Company of Seattle provided and Talcott Brothers of Olympia installed the ornate clocks. The H.E. Gleason Company of Seattle and Edward W. Caldwell of New York designed and built the prominent light fixtures. In 1921–22, the final furnishings were added (initial furnishings added in 1913).

At every stage, the construction of the Temple of Justice ran over budget. The long timeframe and delays in the project resulted in increased cost of materials and labor from start to finish, especially during the second phase (concurrent with World War I shortages). During the war years, labor and material costs rose dramatically, making the completion of the interior many times more expensive than originally estimated. Since 1913, the building has housed the Supreme Court, justices' chambers, court associated offices (e.g., Commission of the Court, Court Clerk, Administrative Office of the Courts), and the Law Library. Initially, the Temple of Justice also contained the Washington State Library, which moved to the new Pritchard Building in 1959. The Attorney General occupied office space in the Temple of Justice from 1913 to 1988, relocating when the building was to be renovated. For a few years in the 1920s, the Highways Department used the boiler room in the Temple of Justice as their materials testing facility. From 1955 to 1987, the State Board for Volunteer Firefighters and Reserve Officers occupied space in the east wing.

Physical description:

Physical: The Temple of Justice is situated at the north end of the Capitol group. Water Street Southwest borders the north side of the building and an oval roundabout stretches along the primary south elevation. Lawns flank the building on the east and west.

Character-defining spaces and features include:

- Massing
- Flat and gable roof forms
- Wilkeson sandstone elements
- Granite elements
- Doric order columns and pilasters
- Marble elements
- Bronze window frames, light fixtures
- Oak finishes
- Clocks
- Overall fenestration
- Supreme Courtroom, Law Library Reading Room
- First floor south (main) entrance hall
- Second floor exhibit hall
- Basement corridor

The Temple of Justice features a rectangular footprint, oriented east-west with bays projecting slightly at the east and west ends. The two-story building features a daylight basement and stands on a level site with grade dropping sharply at the rear north edge to fully expose the basement level and rear entrance.

The building stands on a reinforced concrete foundation clad with granite. Exterior walls consist of load-bearing brick clad with Wilkeson sandstone. A free-standing, two-story Doric order colonnade lines the south facade. The north facade features two-story engaged columns at the end bays with pilasters at the central portion. Prominent pediments project from the north and south end bay facades. The east and west end facades feature two-story pilasters. A prominent belt course wraps around the building at the transition between the basement and first story. A restrained entablature, consisting of an architrave, frieze, and projecting cornice, extends around the building above the second story. Above the Doric columns the cornice features a lower dentiled band. Along the main portion of the rear facade, a low balustrade extends above the belt course in front of the first story windows.

A Wilkeson stone parapet wraps around the roof edge and steps up over the south (main) entrance. A principally flat roof caps the structure, except for a side gable over the south half of the main portion.

Bronze sash-and-frame windows provide daylighting to the interior. First floor window openings are the tallest, surmounted by slightly shorter second floor openings. Modest

basement windows perforate the stone base. The typical window arrangement is a four-light grouping—a pair of casements topped by two smaller fixed panes. Along the main body of the south (front) facade, multi-light window groups extend vertically through most of the first and second floors. The groups are divided by engaged columns.

Basement windows only have casement pairs.

Entry to the building is accomplished through two public and three staff entrances. The public enters from the north and south sides at the basement and first story levels. Staff entrances are located on the north side and at the east and west ends of the building, providing access to the basement corridor and associated office spaces.

On the front (south) facade, a monumental granite stairway leads upwards. Starting from a broad base at grade level, the stairway narrows as it rises, leading to three sets of centrally placed double bronze doors flanked by bronze wall sconces. The words “Temple of Justice” are carved into the frieze above. The doors are decorated on both sides with coffered rosettes and each set features a transom and ornate bronze grille work. The north entry enters at the basement level and features three pairs of bronze grille doors. Three decorative carved sandstone panels set above the doorways highlight the entrance and display cartouches and swags. Exterior bronze sconces with globe lenses flank the doorways.

Secondary public entrances are located at the east and west ends. A single set of double doors are centered in those facades, below a short flight of granite steps leading down from grade to the basement level. At the east entry, there is also an added ADA ramp leading down from grade. Bronze sconces flank the doorways. A private single door is also located in the north facade, intact with a bronze grille exterior door.

Interior

The basic floor plan of the Temple of Justice is simple, formal, and symmetrical. The Classical design themes from the exterior are echoed on the interior, as is the monumental scale. There is a large, two-story tall entrance hall inside the south (main) entrance. This hall accesses the Supreme Courtroom to the west, the Law Library Reading Room to the east, and an east–west corridor off the north side. On the second floor, a public exhibit hall overlooks the main (south) entrance hall, with the rest of the floor taken up by offices and justices’ chambers. The Law Library occupies approximately half of the basement; the remaining basement space is divided between restrooms, offices, and secondary mechanical and utility spaces.

Finishes reflect the level of public access. The main (south) entrance hall and the second-floor exhibit hall, have always been the central public spaces in the building, functioning as circulation areas, as well as event, and meeting. These types of public spaces received the highest quality finishes, such as marble, helping to impress upon visitors and staff alike the important governmental role of the building. The semi-public spaces, such as the Law Library Reading Room and the Supreme Courtroom, feature fine wood and plaster finishes, heavy wood furniture, and massive bronze chandeliers. In contrast, less public spaces, such as the offices, feature modest finishes and materials, such as painted plaster. Nearly all the marble in the building is Alaskan Tokeen—white and gray, heavily figured. Typically, the top trim of the wainscots, bases and borders around the floors are darker pieces of the same marble to accentuate the edges. Some of the floor is laid in patterns of compasses or diamond patterns of lighter and darker marble.

The main (south) entrance hall, just inside the primary entrance, is capped with a series of rectangular skylights. A smaller version illuminates the second floor exhibit hall. The entrance hall skylights are recessed into the coffered ceiling. Chains suspend large lanterns from the ceiling for additional light, along with original bronze wall sconces around the room. The walls are clad almost entirely with the typical marble, except for a painted, classically themed frieze with riglyphs separated by metopes. The frieze blends into the painted, coffered ceiling. Greek key patterns and egg and dart motifs further

adorn the upper walls and ceiling in this space. A glass and bronze vestibule surrounds the center set of bronze doors, the only operable pair in the south entry. A set of metal framed glass doors then leads into the entrance hall proper.

To the west, fluted marble columns bracket the approach to the Supreme Courtroom. Inside a pair of massive wood doors, the courtroom itself is finished with classical motifs executed in wood and plaster rather than marble. Plaster pilasters adorn the walls, each topped with a decorative cornice that wraps the room. A ceiling cove connects the walls to the coffered ceiling, featuring faux plaster beams. All the plaster elements are painted to match the wood elements. Decorative wood grilles, featuring an x-cross pattern, hide the radiators.

A curving justices' bench, also decorated with the typical wood grille pattern, faces the room from the west wall. Heavy draperies shield the tall windows in the south wall. A doorway in the west wall connects the justices' bench with private spaces beyond the courtroom, and a north doorway connects to the court clerk's office. Illumination derives from the windows, wall scones, two original chandeliers suspended from the coffered ceiling, and from cove lighting around the tops of the walls. There are also added contemporary light fixtures recessed into the ceiling. Grates along the tops of the walls provide ventilation. Carpeting and fabric wall acoustic panels are relatively recent additions.

Across the main hall to the east, the Law Library Reading Room balances the floor plan. The Reading Room is similarly finished with wood and plaster, for example at the cornice and the coffered ceiling. In the cove, ribs suggest the start of ceiling vaults. The same chandeliers hang from the ceiling as in the Courtroom. The Reading Room has an illuminated ceiling cove as well as wall scones. Tables for reading occupy the center of the room, surrounded by elaborate oak bookcases. The Librarian's Desk faces the room from the west end. Decorative wood screens, of the typical x-cross pattern, cover large openings in the east and north walls. Radiators are similarly shielded with the typical wood grilles. The library stacks on the first floor are located through openings in the north wall.

At the second floor, the grand staircase delivers visitors and staff to the exhibit hall. This space, like the main entrance hall, displays the typical marble finishes on the walls, with a combination of marble and terrazzo on the floor. Massive piers separate the openings which overlook the hall below. Solid half-walls anchor those openings. A painted coffered ceiling, with a nearly central skylight, surmounts this space. Short corridors off the east and west ends lead south to private spaces. Offices also open directly onto the exhibit hall in the east, north, and west walls. Original light fixtures illuminate this space in addition to the skylight. Contemporary recessed lights shine down on the open stairs. Inside the north entrance, the north vestibule presents visitors with marble wainscot on the walls and terrazzo floors bordered with marble. A contemporary glass wall with a single glass ADA, remote operable door forms the south wall of the vestibule. Proceeding into the building, a marble grand staircase ascends to the east and west. The stairs essentially divide the north hall from the main east-west corridor in the basement. The secondary entrances at the west and east ends of the building access the main east-west corridor, which continues the entire length of the floor plan. Restrooms, offices, and other spaces open onto the corridor from the north. The Law Library is housed in the south half of the basement. The basement corridor features the typical marble wainscot and terrazzo floors with marble borders.

Alterations

The most significant alterations to the Temple of Justice happened in the 1988–1989 rehabilitation and renovation project. Goals of that project focused on reinforcing the building for future seismic events but also addressed user comfort standards, life safety aspects, security systems, and continued utility of the building.

The following list contains the known major projects undertaken since completion of the building. Projects are arranged chronologically.

- 1941 Previously unfinished basement spaces converted to offices; reconfiguring offices at first and second floors.
- 1942 Added passenger elevator.
- 1949 Structural repair projects followed the major earthquake in 1949. Repairs addressed issues at the stone parapets, exterior stone cladding, and roof structure.
- 1988–1989 Major interior renovation and seismic reinforcements. Inserted concrete shear walls at the perimeter and a reinforced concrete foundation. When original finishes were disturbed for the seismic work, they were reinstalled wherever possible. New finishes included fresh paint, carpeting, drapes, acoustic wall treatments in the Supreme Courtroom, and pink Taiwanese marble in several restrooms and secondary corridors. Two new staircases (east and west facades) and an elevator added. Rearranged some of the library stacks and office assignments, particularly impacting the secondary office spaces; these spatial alterations allowed for enlarging some offices as well as creating new offices and a lunch room. Whenever possible, original doors, trim, and light fixtures refurbished and reused. Some reproduction doors and light fixtures added. Universal (ADA) access was improved with a new ramp on the east side. Upgrades in building systems included plumbing, ventilation, and heating, among others. Most skylights removed.
- 1994, 1998 Lighting modifications throughout building, including relocation of some original fixtures and installation of new.
- 2002–2003 Repairs to interior and exterior following major 2001 earthquake, including repointing of mortar joints, plaster and marble repair, and north exterior balustrade stone repair and/or replacements in-kind.

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The Washington State Archives provided the majority of information pertaining to the design, construction, and subsequent occupancy of the Capitol campus buildings. The Archives maintains a notable collection of original drawings.

The Washington State Department of Enterprises Services, Facilities Division, also maintains an impressive record of drawings, including specifications, in their Records Center.

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