

State Capitol Complex

Illinois State Capitol

The Illinois State Capitol anchors the Capitol Complex on Second and Capitol streets in Springfield. It is the state's sixth Capitol Building — the second one in Springfield — since Illinois entered the Union as the 21st state on Dec. 3, 1818.

The first Capitol Building was located in Kaskaskia — Illinois' first capital city. The next three were located in the state's second capital city of Vandalia. Following a bitter battle over moving the state capital out of Vandalia to a more central part of the state, Springfield was named the third capital city in 1839, and work began on a new building. The state's fifth Capitol Building — now the Old State Capitol State Historic Site in downtown Springfield — was completed in 1853 and is where Abraham Lincoln served as a state legislator.

The General Assembly authorized construction of the current State Capitol in 1867, which was completed in 1888. It was designed by architects John C. Cochrane, Alfred H. Piquenard and W.W. Boyington and cost \$4.3 million.

In addition to housing Illinois' executive officers and legislators, the State Capitol originally provided quarters for the Supreme Court, government agencies, regulatory boards and military leaders. It also housed three museums, several libraries and the State Archives. Most of those entities are now located in separate buildings on the Capitol Complex.

The State Capitol presently houses the offices of several Illinois constitutional officers and state legislators and serves as the location of all legislative sessions of the General Assembly. The building underwent major external restoration in 1983 and 1984, and the Capitol dome was restored in 1986. Restoration of the decorative ceilings in the House and Senate chambers took place in 2000, and a major restoration of the building's West Wing was completed in 2013.





Michael J. Howlett Building

The Michael J. Howlett Building is south of the State Capitol. Formerly called the Centennial Building, it was built to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Illinois' admission to the Union as the 21st state. It was renamed in 1992 in honor of former Secretary of State Michael J. Howlett. The cornerstone was laid in 1918, and the building was completed in 1923 at a cost of \$3 million. Additions in 1928 and 1966 converted the rectangular structure into a square building, while retaining the original classic architectural design. Several departments of the Secretary of State's office are housed in the building.



Illinois State Library, Gwendolyn Brooks Building

The Gwendolyn Brooks Building, on the corner of Second and Capitol streets facing the State Capitol, was opened to the public in 1990. In June 2003, the building was renamed in honor of the late Illinois Poet Laureate Gwendolyn Brooks. The \$36 million, 164,000-square-foot structure is the first building specifically designed and constructed to house the collections of the State Library, formerly housed in the Howlett Building. Engraved on the exterior frieze are the names of 35 Illinois authors. On the southwest corner of the building is a statue of Martin Luther King Jr.

Illinois State Archives, Margaret Cross Norton Building

The Margaret Cross Norton Building, south of the State Capitol, houses the State Archives, a department of the Secretary of State's office. The building was designed to protect the state's valuable historic records from the hazards of fire, theft and exposure. Construction began in 1936 with aid from the New Deal's Public Works Administration, and the building was completed in 1938 at a cost of \$820,000. It is architecturally unique, featuring no windows on the fourth through seventh floors. The building was renamed in 1995 in honor of former State Archives Superintendent Margaret Cross Norton.



William G. Stratton Building

Just west of the State Capitol is the William G. Stratton Building. Named after a former Governor of Illinois, ground was broken for the H-shaped, 448,000-square-foot structure on Feb. 15, 1954. It was completed less than two years later at a cost of \$11.5 million. The building houses the offices of members of the House of Representatives as well as some state agencies and departments.



Illinois State Museum, Alan J. Dixon Building

The Illinois State Museum is on the corner of Spring and Edwards streets on the south side of the Capitol Complex. In 2015, the building was named the Alan J. Dixon Building to honor the late U.S. Senator. The building was specifically designed for the State Museum to display the many natural and cultural treasures of Illinois. Founded in 1877, the State Museum was originally housed in the State Capitol, and for 40 years, it was located in what is now the Howlett Building. The official ground-breaking ceremony for the new building took place Jan. 5, 1961, and the \$2.2 million building was dedicated on Feb. 4, 1963.



State Capitol Visitors' Center

The State Capitol Visitors' Center, west of the Stratton Building across College Street, was opened on June 8, 1988. Covering two city blocks, the \$3.7 million structure provides visitor parking, tourism information, picnic facilities, vending machines, restrooms and a spacious, air-conditioned place to relax.





Illinois Supreme Court Building

Just east of the State Capitol facing the State Library is the Illinois Supreme Court Building. At a cost of \$450,500, the building was dedicated on Feb. 4, 1908. The Supreme Court was formerly housed in a church, then resided in the Old State Capitol and ultimately the current State Capitol. The building on East Capitol Street houses the Ceremonial Courtroom, State Law Library, Supreme Court Marshal, Clerk of the Supreme Court and Supreme Court Research Department.



Attorney General's Building

The Attorney General's Building, east of the Howlett Building across Second Street, houses the offices of more than 140 attorneys and support staff. Construction of the three-story, \$2.8 million building began in 1968, and the formal dedication was held Jan. 27, 1972. The interior features a center courtyard.

State Capitol Complex Sculptures

The statues and monuments on the grounds of the State Capitol Complex add beauty and dignity to the area while providing a glimpse of Illinois' rich history. Many of the statues immortalize famous Illinoisans, such as Abraham Lincoln, and Civil War Gov. Richard Yates. Other memorials pay tribute to MLK and those who have fallen in the line of duty.

Abraham Lincoln

In 1913, the Illinois State Art Commission was authorized to secure a new statue of Abraham Lincoln for Illinois' centennial. The 10-foot, 6-inch bronze statue with its large granite base and backdrop stands prominently on the far east Capitol grounds along Second Street. The statue is engraved with Lincoln's "Farewell to Springfield" speech and cost approximately \$50,000. It was dedicated on Oct. 5, 1918, on the centennial of the first meeting of the Illinois General Assembly.

Sculptor: Andrew O'Connor, 1918



Martin Luther King Jr.

This 300-pound statue cost \$25,000 and was first unveiled in the Capitol rotunda on Jan. 14, 1988. Martin Luther King Jr. is the first non-Illinois resident to be honored with a statue. Then-Secretary of State Jim Edgar said King "merits this special recognition for his contributions to Illinoisans of all colors and creeds." In May 1993, the sculpture was moved to "Freedom Corner," at Second and Capitol streets facing the Lincoln statue, and was rededicated on Sept. 18, 1993.

Sculptor: Geraldine McCullough, 1988



Illinois Workers Memorial

Paid for by donations from union members, this 3,000-pound memorial "is dedicated to the memory of the thousands of Illinois workers killed and injured on the job." The bronze sculpture of three workers on top of a polished granite base stands on the north Capitol grounds. The dedication ceremony on April 28, 1992, was organized and moderated by state and national AFL-CIO and labor officials.

Sculptor: Peter Fagan, 1992





Everett McKinley Dirksen

This 11-foot bronze statue on the southeast Capitol lawn was commissioned by the Dirksen Memorial Commission and financed by the State of Illinois. Dirksen served Illinois for nearly 35 years as a Republican Congressman and U.S. Senator. An elephant, a donkey and an oil can flank his figure, symbolizing his skills in persuading Republicans and Democrats to cooperate and enact vital legislation. The monument was dedicated on Sept. 16, 1976, seven years after Dirksen's death.

Sculptor: Carl Tolpo, 1975

Richard Yates

"The wounded soldier's friend" is inscribed on the granite base of the statue of former Illinois Governor and U.S. Senator Richard Yates. The 8-foot bronze statue, located on the southeast Capitol lawn, was paid for by the state. During a joint dedication ceremony for the Yates and John M. Palmer statues on Oct. 16, 1923, Yates' son, Richard, a former Governor himself, spoke about his father's service during the four tumultuous years of the Civil War.

Sculptor: Albin Polasek, 1921



John M. Palmer

John M. Palmer began his political career as a Democrat but became an outspoken critic against slavery and helped create the Republican Party in 1856. After serving as a general in the Civil War and as Military Governor of Kentucky, he was elected Governor of Illinois in 1868 as a Republican. On March 11, 1891, on the 154th ballot, the General Assembly elected Palmer a Democratic U.S. Senator. The Palmer statue was dedicated during a joint ceremony with the Yates statue on Oct. 16, 1923.

Sculptor: Leonard Crunelle, 1923



The Coal Miner

At the urging of Vachel Davis, a Southern Illinois coal miner, poet and artist, then-state Rep. Paul Powell introduced a bill to appropriate \$15,000 for the creation of a monument honoring Illinois coal miners. Davis worked with Tinley Park sculptor John Szaton to transform Davis' famous painting into a 7-foot bronze statue. Located at the northeast corner of the Capitol lawn, the statue was dedicated on Oct. 16, 1964. A plaque identifying the sculptor and dedication date was added on Dec. 7, 1981.

Sculptor: John Szaton, 1964



Illinois Police Officers Memorial

This memorial, with its life-size bronze figures of a male and a female police officer, was dedicated on Oct. 29, 1990, in memory of Illinois police officers killed in the line of duty. The 13-foot monument has a pedestal and base of red granite and was paid for with \$85,000 in public donations. Each May, a ceremony is held at the memorial on the southwest Capitol lawn to honor officers killed in the line of duty throughout the year. Their names are added to the original 643 officers engraved on the surrounding polished black granite slates.

Sculptor: Keith Knoblock, 1990



Illinois Firefighters Memorial

On May 13, 1999, a monument was established in memory of "the firefighters of Illinois who have given their lives in the line of duty and to those who heroically serve with courage, pride and honor." Four bronze firefighters and a rescued child on a 14-foot stone cairn are surrounded by red paver bricks and enclosed by a 2-foot wall. The monument was built through public contributions and the sale of Firefighters Memorial license plates. A ceremony is held at the memorial near the Stratton Building each May honoring Illinois' fallen firefighters.

Sculptor: Neil Brodin, 1999





9/11 Memorial

Through fundraising efforts by the Blue Knights Law Enforcement Club of Illinois, a memorial to the victims of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks was created in 2005. The memorial, located along a walkway west of the Norton Building, depicts the three sites of the plane crashes, and the front features an etching of a New York firefighter raising the flag at Ground Zero. A memorial service takes place annually at the site on the second Sunday in September.

Designer: DOH Services of Blue Island, 2005

For a brochure on the *Illinois State Capitol Sculptures: A Walking Tour*, including a map of the Capitol Complex, visit the Secretary of State's website at www.cyberdriveillinois.com.