

The Capitol That Might Have Been

George Mann's Architectural Drawings

Hanging prominently throughout the first floor rotunda are reproduced architectural drawings by George Mann, the Capitol's first architect. These works of art, originally hand drawn on waxed linen, reveal the vision of Mann as he started the ambitious Capitol project. Ultimately the Capitol was completed by a second architect, Cass Gilbert, with significant changes to Mann's original concepts. However, Mann's drawings remain, illustrating the building that might have been. The images compliment two other related exhibits in the Capitol: "Building Forever," the third-floor display interpreting the Capitol's own history, and construction images on view in the Lower Level foyer. Taken together, the three displays help visitors gain a sense of the real struggle involved in the Capitol's creation.

About the images

(Clockwise, from behind the tour desk)

1. Proposed Arkansas Capitol

*Watercolor and ink wash
on paper*

The three banners reproduce a perspective view of Mann's proposed Arkansas Capitol.

The original is believed to be the painting Mann displayed at the State House in January 1899 in an effort to win favor from legislators for his design.



2. Exterior Dome, half-elevation/ half-section

Pencil and India ink on waxed linen

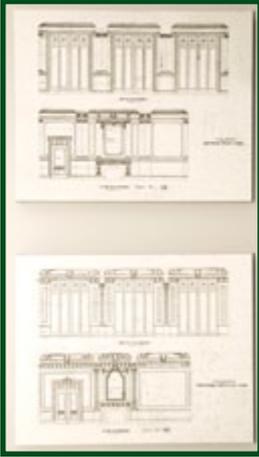
Mann envisioned a dome that echoed baroque European models in its ribbed metal covering, ornate gables, porthole windows and detailed carvings at the base of the drum.



3. Exterior Light Fixture

Pencil and India ink on waxed linen

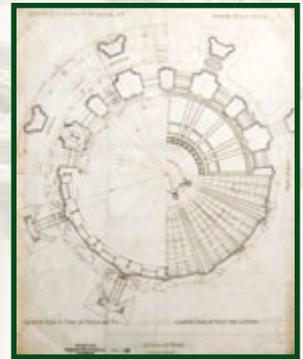
Mann's elaborate design for the Capitol's east approach included custom-designed lighting. His shop produced this full-scale image of a proposed fixture to flank the stairs leading to the main entrance.



4. Supreme Court Chamber and Governor's Reception Room

India ink on waxed linen

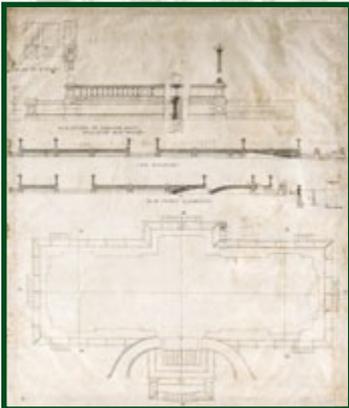
Mann's beaux-arts decorative treatment for the Court Chamber and Governor's Reception Room involved generous use of ornamental plaster, vaulted ceilings and small fireplaces.



5. Capitol Dome, from above in quarter-plan

India ink on waxed linen

This complex drawing depicts both the interior and exterior of Mann's envisioned dome, including the three-dimensional eagles that visually support the dome's weight.



6. Foundation plan and Exterior Terrace details

India ink on waxed linen

Mann designed an elegant formal terrace and while lighting and stair details have changed over the decades, the Capitol's perimeter balustrade remains much as Mann intended.