Capitol facts & history

History of the Legislative Building:

Washington State's Legislative Building, completed in 1928 after six years of construction, serves as both a working governmental center and a symbol of Washington's free and democratic government. It is the centerpiece of the five historic capitol buildings designed by New York architects Walter Wilder and Harry White. Conceived in the architectural competition of 1911 and selected by the State Capitol Commission, Wilder and White's designs for the Legislative Building were completed and set into motion in 1922.

Arguably the most impressive structure in the state, the building is comprised of more than 173 million pounds of stone, brick, concrete, and steel. The fourth tallest masonry dome in the world, rising 287 feet high, tops this magnificent edifice. The Legislative Building was a remarkable achievement founded in the era of "American Renaissance," and still stands as a symbol of American ideals and architectural grandeur.

In the 78 years since its construction, the Legislative Building has housed governors, other statewide elected officials, and legislative representatives, served as the center for Washington government, and withstood the powerful impact of three major earthquakes, the most recent being the 2001 Nisqually earthquake. Through it all the building has shown remarkable resilience and strength, thanks in large part to excellent structural design, superior craftsmanship, and seismic upgrades following the earthquakes of 1949 and 1965. Yet as time has passed, numerous aspects of the building have inevitably aged and become overburdened. The structure, which originally served a state with a population scarcely over 800,000, now acts as the nucleus for a state that has over 6 million residents.

The Legislative Building received a major rehabilitation from June 2002 to November 2004. The rehabilitation project included earthquake upgrades, as well as upgrades to systems, fire protection, accessibility, and a general infrastructure overhaul.

Facts about Legislative Building:

WEIGHT	
Lantern (top cupola on building)	500,000 lbs
Dome (curved portion)	11,200,000 lbs
Colonnade/Drum (just below dome)	21,500,000 lbs
“The Dome” (sub-total of above figures)	33,200,000 lbs
Pedestal (central rotunda portion of the Leg building)	49,700,000 lbs
East Wing (all four levels)	31,100,000 lbs
West Wing (all four levels)	31,100,000 lbs
North Portico	10,100,000 lbs
South Portico	13,300,000 lbs
Foundations	20,000,000 lbs
TOTAL	**188,500,000 lbs**
	or 94,250 tons

*** For some comparisons:**

Empire State Building (4 times the Leg)	730,000,000 lbs
Nimitz-class aircraft carrier	194,000,000 lbs
Washington Monument (in D.C.)	181,708,000 lbs
Seattle Space Needle (1/10 of the Leg)	19,100,000 lbs

WEIGHT OF MATERIALS

Approximate tons of stone and granite 12,000 or 8850 Volkswagen Beetles
Approximate tons of brick 9,500 or 5538 Orca Whales
Approximate tons of concrete 28,800 or 3740 African Elephants

HEIGHT

From grade to top of lantern	287 feet
From base of dome to top of lantern	102 feet
From interior stair platform to ceiling of dome	165 feet

It is the fourth tallest masonry dome in the world!

It is only surpassed by:

St. Peter's Cathedral, Rome	446 feet
St. Paul's Cathedral, London	355.5 feet
St. Isaac's Cathedral, St. Petersburg	333 feet

*** For some comparisons:**

Eiffel Tower, Paris (3 1/2 times the Leg)	986 feet
US Capitol, Washington D.C.	302 feet
Adult male giraffe (1/14 of the Leg)	20 feet

*** For some comparisons:**	57,600 sq. ft.
Football Field (1/4 of the Leg)	4,734,400 sq. ft.
Vatican City (20 times the Leg)	

Cubical contents of building	4,600,000 cubic ft.

*** For some comparisons:**

It would take 136 Olympic-sized swimming pools to fill the Legislative Building completely with water.
It would take 28 average-sized water towers to fill the Legislative Building completely with water.

ORIGINAL BUILDING COSTS

Approximate Costs of Principal Finish Materials:

Marble	$840,000
Plastering	$187,000
Ornamental Iron	$45,000
Ornamental Bronze	$320,000
Stone Carving	$180,000
Interior Wood Trim	$84,000
Rubber Tile	$65,000
Painting	$122,000
Elevators	$96,000
Plumbing, Heating, and Ventilating	$383,000
Total Cost of Building in 1928	$6,791,595.88
Cost of Furnishings in 1928	$594,172.33
TOTAL	**$7,385,768.21**

*** For some comparisons:**
To reconstruct the Legislative Building with the same materials and workmanship today, it would cost over $1 billion. That is 135 times more!

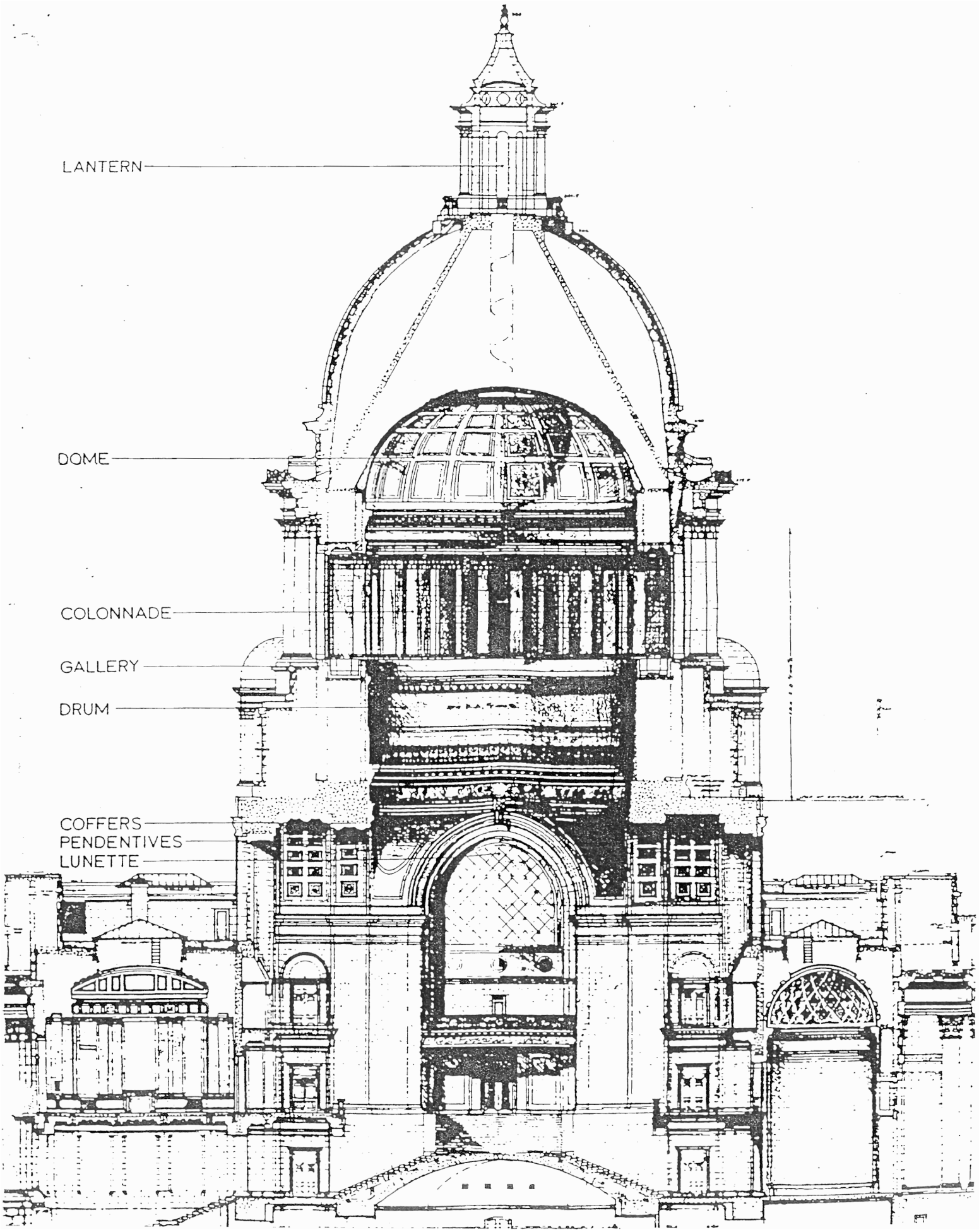
TYPE AND ORIGIN OF STONE

Exterior Sandstone: Wilkeson Quarries, Pierce County, Washington

Interior Marble:	**Type**	**Origin**
Senate Chamber	Formosa	Germany
House Chamber	Escalette	France
State Reception Room	Bresche	Violet Italy
Main Corridors	Gray	Alaska

LIGHTING

Outside Lighting:	
150-watt incandescent bulbs on top of the outside lower columns	85
250-watt metal halide bulbs at the bottom of the 8th floor columns	26
1000-watt metal halide and sodium bulbs on the 5th floor roof used to light the dome	16
50-watt sodium bulbs used to light the terrace	48
Inside Lighting:	
15-watt to 300-watt incandescent bulbs throughout the building	2550
Florescent light fixtures throughout the building	2616
TOTAL	**5341**


LANTERN
DOME
COLONNADE
GALLERY
DRUM
COFFERS
PENDENTIVES
LUNETTE