

The U.S. Capitol stands as a monument to the American people. The most recognized symbol of democratic government in the world, the United States Capitol has housed Congress since 1800. With its magnificent dome, the Capitol has become a landmark of neoclassical architecture — a style inspired by the buildings of ancient Greece and Rome. The Capitol has been built, burnt, rebuilt, extended, and restored; today, it stands as a monument to its builders and the American people and their government.



Presidential inaugural ceremonies are perhaps the most widely known of the numerous ceremonies held at the U.S. Capitol.

The Capitol is where Congress meets to write our nation's laws and where presidents are inaugurated and deliver their annual *State of the Union* messages. The U.S. Capitol also houses a significant collection of American art, and it is an architectural achievement in its own right. History is made at the U.S. Capitol, and the Capitol Visitor Center is the host to an estimated 3-5 million people in a typical year.

As the focal point of the government's legislative branch, the U.S. Capitol is the Capitol Campus's centerpiece, which includes the principal Congressional office buildings and three Library of Congress buildings constructed on Capitol Hill in the 19th and 20th centuries. The center under the dome is the *Rotunda*. This circular ceremonial space also serves as a gallery of paintings and sculptures depicting significant people and events in the nation's history.

The *Statue of Freedom* is the crowning feature of the dome of the U.S. Capitol, standing 19 feet 6 inches tall and weighing approximately 15,000 pounds. Statue of Freedom is a classical female figure with long, flowing hair wearing a helmet with a crest composed of an eagle's head and feathers. She wears a classical dress secured with a brooch inscribed "U.S." Over it is draped a heavy, flowing, toga-like robe fringed with fur and decorative balls. Her right hand rests upon the hilt of a sheathed sword wrapped in a scarf; in her left hand, she holds a laurel wreath of victory and the United States' shield with 13 stripes.

Damage to the Capitol on January 6th

The violence from January 6th left a scar on the building and our democracy. The building's damage was limited mainly to broken glass, busted doors, and graffiti. Some of the statues, murals, and historic benches displayed the residue of various pepper sprays, tear gas, and fire extinguishers deployed by both rioters and law enforcement personnel. No major artworks were reported damaged, despite the violent demonstrations. Outside the building, there was damage to antique light fixtures, landscaping, and graffiti on the building's west side.

State Statues

The *National Statuary Hall Collection* in the United States Capitol is comprised of statues donated by individual states to honor persons notable in their history. The entire collection now consists of 100 figures contributed by 50 states. All 50 states have contributed two statues each. Thirty-five statues are displayed in National Statuary Hall. Others have been placed in other parts of the Capitol, including the Crypt, the Hall of Columns, and the Capitol Visitor Center.

As with the other states, Illinois contributed the following two statues representing two extraordinary individuals from our homeland.



James Shields (1806-1879) served in the Illinois House of Representatives in 1836, became the state auditor in 1839, and was a Supreme Court of Illinois from 1843 to 1845. While serving in the Illinois House, Shields met Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas. Lincoln was a Whig, and Shields was a Democrat; the two clashed rhetorically and once even scheduled a duel. He served briefly as governor of the Oregon Territory before being elected to the U.S. Senate, representing Illinois for one term. During the Civil War, Shields served as a brigadier general with the Union Army. He moved around later in his political life, becoming the only senator to have represented three states.

Francis E. Willard (1839-1898) was an educator and social reformer dedicated to the causes of temperance and women's suffrage. Willard graduated as valedictorian of North Western Female College in Evanston, Illinois, in 1859. The following year, she joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. After serving as president of the Evanston College for Ladies and Dean of Women at Northwestern University in the early 1870s, Willard became president of the Chicago branch of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). From 1879 onward, she served as president of the national WCTU, and in 1883 she founded the World Woman's Christian Temperance Union.



QUESTIONS

TRUE OR FALSE? Write a **T** or **F** in the space provided.

- ___ 1. Today the Capitol Building is just for visitors, not a working building.
- ___ 2. Presidential Inaugurations take place at the White House.
- ___ 3. The *Statue of Freedom* is located at the top of the Capitol Building.
- ___ 4. Francis Willard was a leader in the women's right to vote movement.
- ___ 5. The judicial branch is the centerpiece of the Capitol.
- ___ 6. James Shields was the only person to serve as a senator in three states.