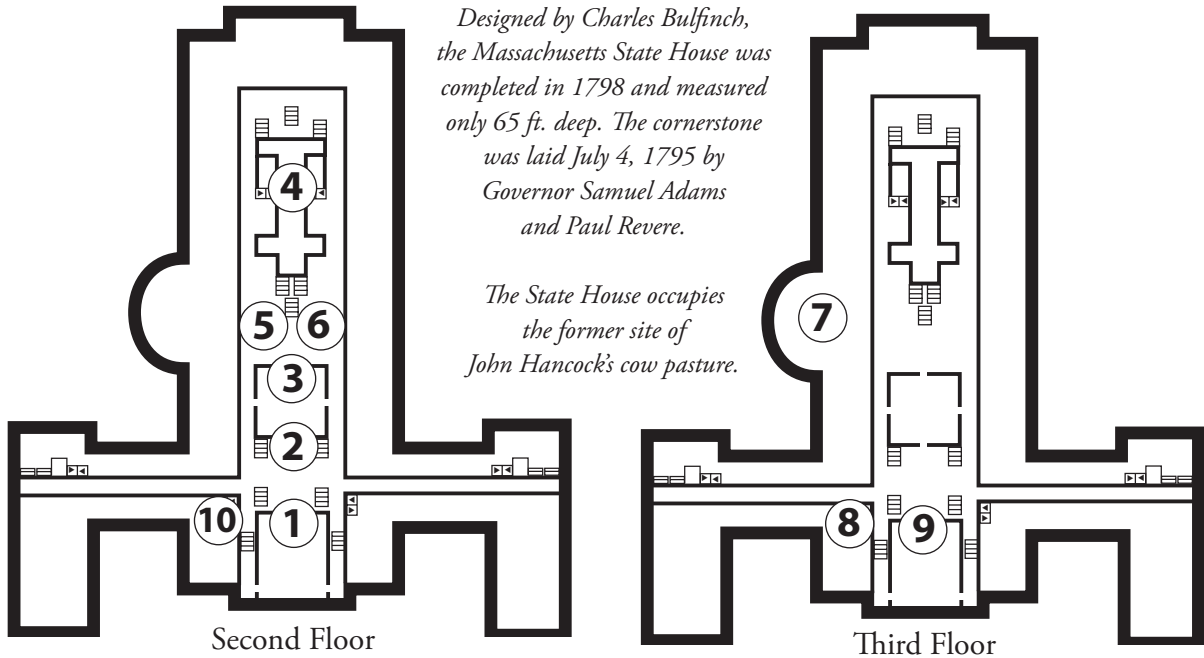


Welcome to the Massachusetts State House



You are here on the second floor

1. Doric Hall

The name of Doric Hall comes from the architectural style of the double row of columns with Doric capitals located in the center of the room. It serves as a reception hall for social gatherings and official ceremonies.

The big double doors at its front entrance are opened only on three occasions: when a governor leaves the State House for the last time at the end of their term of office, when a Massachusetts regimental flag is returned to the permanent collection, and for official visits from the President of the United States, or a foreign head of state. The last official presidential visit was made by William Howard Taft in 1912. A bronze bust of John Hancock, the first governor of the state, is on the west wall, opposite a full length portrait of Abraham Lincoln painted by Albion Bicknell. On the north wall is a statue of George Washington, the first piece of artwork placed in the room. In the left corner is John Andrew, the governor during the Civil War.

Go straight ahead through the center hallways

2. Nurses Hall

Upon walking up the five steps, you enter a new addition to the State House completed in 1895, designed by Charles Brigham. The statue at the right is of a Civil War nurse tending to a fallen soldier - a memorial to all nurses who took part in the Civil War. The statue was sculpted in 1914 by Bela Pratt. Above are three paintings by Robert Reid showing the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, James Otis arguing against the Writs of Assistance, and the Boston Tea Party.

Go straight ahead through the center hallways

3. Memorial Hall (The Hall of Flags)

This circular room is surrounded by tall columns of Siena marble. This is a very special place where all Massachusetts soldiers are honored and remembered. The display of flags is a small sampling of more than 400 original flags carried to battle by Massachusetts service members, dating from the Civil War through the Vietnam Conflict. These are transparencies of flags — the originals are in climate-controlled vaults. The murals above show (clockwise): The Pilgrims on the Mayflower, The Return of Colors at the end of the Civil War to the custody of the Commonwealth, John Eliot preaching to the Native Americans, and The Battle of Concord Bridge. The stained glass window above shows the seals of the original 13 states with the seal of Massachusetts in the center.

Just beyond staircase to the right through glass doors

4. Great Hall

The Great Hall is the newest addition to the State House, completed in 1990. This beautiful marble hall is used for official state functions and receptions. The clock was designed by New York artist R.M. Fischer as a functional piece of artwork. There are flags from each of the 351 cities and towns of Massachusetts on display here.

Proceed up the stairs to the third floor

5. Main Staircase

After the iron on the main staircase was cast, the molds were broken to ensure that the railings would be one of a kind.

6. Stained Glass Window

This beautiful window shows the evolution of our state seal. The current state seal was adopted in 1780. Our state motto, translated from the Latin means: *By the sword we seek peace, but peace only under liberty.*

Go up the stairs and to the left

7. House of Representatives

Completed in 1895, this is the larger of the two legislative chambers. There are 160 State Representatives in Massachusetts. Each Representative serves a 2-year term. The House meets year-round, with sessions held at least every 72 hours. When the House is in session, visitors are welcome to access the public viewing gallery on the fourth floor. At the rear of the chamber, above the public gallery, hangs a wooden cod fish known colloquially as the “Sacred Cod.” It was originally given to the House in 1784 by a former representative named John Rowe and is a symbol of good luck and the importance of the fishing industry in Massachusetts.

Take a right and go straight down the hallway

8. The Executive Chamber

This is the Governor’s and Lt. Governor’s suite of offices. Also inside is the Governor’s Council chamber. There are eight councillors elected every two years. This is a working office and not open to tour groups.

Take a left down the hallway which crosses the building to the senate, then proceed down the stairs turn left to go back to Doric Hall

9. Senate Chambers

These chambers are located in the original Bulfinch section of the building. To your left you will see the Senate Reception Room, formerly the Senate Chamber, and to the right is the current Senate Chamber, formerly the House Chamber. There are 40 State Senators in Massachusetts. Each Senator serves a 2-year term. Directly above the Senate Chamber is the golden dome, which is gilded with 23 karat gold leaf. The dome is also the point from which all distance to Boston is calculated. Another fish hangs above the chandelier, dubbed the “Holy Mackerel.” In 2019, the Senate Chamber was renovated and restored to its 1890s appearance. An inspirational quote from Frederick Douglass was added on the south wall – “Truth, Justice, Liberty, and Humanity will ultimately prevail.”

Just outside of Doric Hall on the West Hallway

10. Women's Memorial

The newest addition to the State House art collection is a work called “HEAR US,” created by two artists in 1999. This work honors all women who were active in public life by showing six women who made contributions to Massachusetts government. Their causes ranged from the treatment of the mentally ill to racial discrimination, from women’s suffrage to working conditions for women and children. Please refer to our interpretive brochure to learn more about Dorothea Dix, Lucy Stone, Sarah Parker Remond, Josephine Ruffin, Mary Kenny O’Sullivan and Florence Luscomb.

We hope you have enjoyed your visit to the Massachusetts State Capitol. Thank You!