

Welcome to
Boston and
thank you for choosing
to visit the State House.
The State House is a
precious landmark full
of historical significance



to both our state and country. It is important to
note that the State House is more than just an
office building or a museum. It is a symbol of the
values our founding fathers envisioned. It is the
location of democracy in action. Public hearings,
rallies, protests, award presentations, traveling
exhibits ranging from artwork by local school
children to antique maps of Boston, all have
found a place here in the Massachusetts State
House. I invite you to enjoy your tour through
this magnificent building and hope that your
visit will be interesting and memorable.

William Francis Galvin

William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

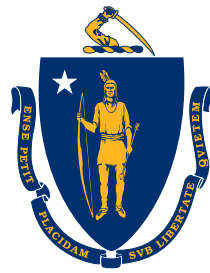
 The State House was built on land
that was once John Hancock's cow
pasture!

The Coat of Arms of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Constitution of Massachusetts was ratified
in 1780. Soon after the first meeting of the state
legislature under the constitution, the council
accepted Nathan Cushing's design for a new seal for
the Commonwealth. This action of the council was
the only authority for the seal until 1885, when the
legislature by act prescribed its present form.

The Coat of Arms was designed by
state law and derived from colonial-
era norms. Certain terms in this
description have been adapted for
modern standards.

The arms consist of a shield, having
a blue field or surface, with an
Indigenous Person dressed in a
shirt and moccasins. He holds a
golden bow in his right hand and a golden arrow in
his left hand, both pointed downward. In the upper
corner of the field, above his right arm, rests a silver star
with five points. The crest is a wreath of blue and gold,
showing a right arm bent at the elbow, clothed and
ruffled, with its hand grasping a broadsword. The state
motto, displayed in Latin, says "Ense petit placidam sub
libertate quietem," which translates to "By the sword we
seek peace, but peace only under liberty."



The Great Seal of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The Great Seal is a
circular form, displaying
the arms of the
Commonwealth encircled
with the inscription,
"Sigillum Reipublicae
Massachusettsensis," or
"Seal of the Republic
of Massachusetts."

The Secretary of the
Commonwealth
maintains the Great Seal, and is constitutionally
required to affix an impression of it to all commissions
issued in the name of the Commonwealth. In addition
to commissions, all records certified by the Secretary
must bear the Great Seal.



Information on State House Tours

Tours of the Massachusetts State House are offered
by volunteer guides Monday through Friday between
10:00am and 3:30pm.

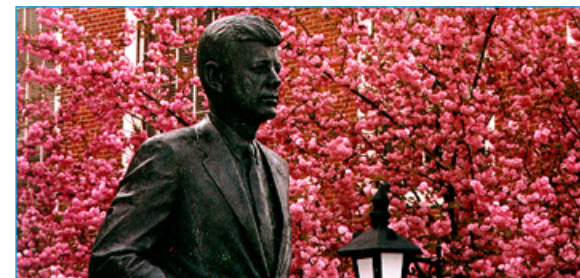
Tours last approximately 30-45 minutes and include
an overview of the history and architecture of the
State Capitol. Visitors can see the House and Senate
Chambers, learn about the Ladybug (our state insect)
and of the "Sacred Cod."

Self-guided materials are available if visitors do not
wish to join a conducted tour. We also have printed
material in 15 foreign languages.

Advance reservations are requested for weekday
conducted tours. Please call 617.727.3676 to arrange
a tour for groups from one to fifty people. Free
brochures and information sheets are available.

Directions

The State House is at the corner of Beacon and Park
Streets, and you can reach it by MBTA via the Red or
Green lines at the Park Street Station. Enter the State
House via the General Hooker Entrance on Beacon
Street, at the top of Park Street. Walk past the statue of
General Hooker up the stairs and pass through security.
Note that the accessible entrance to the State House is
located on the side of the building on Bowdoin Street
and there is a ramp leading to the door. Ashburton
Park and the Ashburton Park Entrance are closed
for renovations through Fall 2023. The Tours and
Information Desk is in Doric Hall on the second floor.



JOHN F. KENNEDY STATUE

Fun Facts:

Even though John F. Kennedy never served in the
Massachusetts legislature, he is honored here as a favorite
native son who became 35th President of the United
States with a statue located on the west lawn of the State
House.

Revised 4/28/23

WELCOME TO THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE HOUSE

 Hi I'm Lady,
the State Bug!



Completed in 1798, the Massachusetts State
House is one of the oldest State Capitols in
continuous use in the country.



State House
Virtual
Guided Tour



State House
Tours
Website



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Completed in 1798, The Massachusetts State House, designed by Charles Bulfinch, is the oldest building on Beacon Hill. **The House of Representatives** is the larger of the two legislative bodies in Massachusetts.



Photograph by Dave Cedrone

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

There are currently 160 elected members. Their chamber, made from hand carved Honduran Mahogany, is capped with a circular frieze of names honoring Massachusetts natives from all walks of life. The House Chamber is also the home to the Sacred Cod, a five-foot wooden codfish and a symbol of the importance of the fishing industry.

The second floor of the State House is home to five ceremonial halls and function areas. The two legislative chambers and the executive suite are located on the third floor. The remainder of the building houses offices of the legislators and legislative committees. The State House is the home to many important and beautiful pieces of art. Throughout the building you can find statuary sculpted by Daniel Chester French, Cyrus Dallin, and Thomas Ball, as well as intricate mosaic floors and stained glass work by skilled artisans.



Photograph by Dave Cedrone

THE ARMY NURSES MEMORIAL

The pine cone on top of the State House dome symbolizes the importance of the lumber industry to early residents of Massachusetts!



The **Senate Reception Room** and the **Senate Chamber** are located in the historic Bulfinch section of the building. The golden dome rises directly above the Senate Chamber. Forty elected members meet in this room. Along the walls are busts of such notables as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and the Marquis de LaFayette.



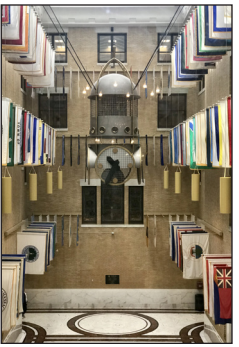
THE SENATE CHAMBER



Photograph by Dave Cedrone

THE SENATE RECEPTION ROOM

Great Hall is the newest space added to the State House in 1990. Previously an open-air, unused space, this area was enclosed with an eighty-four foot glass ceiling to create a special ceremonial space. The room is decorated with the flags of 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. In the center of the room hangs a functional piece of artwork. The clock, designed by R.M. Fischer, is a modern representation of some of the most famous icons in Massachusetts, such as the dome of the State House, Paul Revere's lantern, and even a lighthouse. Four legislative hearing rooms were built underneath, covered with the marble of the floor.



GREAT HALL

Fun Facts:

In addition to the Massachusetts State House, Charles Bulfinch also designed the original State House in Hartford, Connecticut and the State Capitol in Augusta, Maine.

STATE HOUSE TIMELINE

- 1629 A charter, signed by King Charles, founds the **Company of the Massachusetts Bay**, the beginning of Massachusetts State Government.
- 1630 **The Massachusetts Great and General Court** is founded.
- 1776 **The Declaration of Independence** is read from the balcony of the Old State House.
- 1713–1797 **Old State House** (Town House) serves as the colonial seat of government and the early state capitol.
- 1780 **John Hancock** is the first governor elected under the Massachusetts constitution.
- 1784 The “**Sacred Cod**,” a wooden carved fish, was presented to the Massachusetts House of Representatives by Jonathan Rowe in honor of the importance of the cod fishing industry.
- 1790 **Charles Bulfinch** designs the Beacon Hill Monument commemorating the events that led to the American Revolution.

- 1795 July 4th, the **cornerstone is laid** for the new Massachusetts State House on land which once served as **John Hancock's cow pasture**.
- 1798 January 11th, the **new Massachusetts State House is completed** and ready for occupancy by the legislature and Governor Increase Sumner.
- 1802 **Paul Revere & Sons** provide copper sheeting to **cover the dome** of the Massachusetts State House in order to prevent water leakage.
- 1820 Maine and Massachusetts become two separate states under the **Missouri Compromise**.
- 1825 The **Marquis de LaFayette** visits the State House before attending the ceremony to lay the cornerstone for the **Bunker Hill Monument**.
- 1838 **Angelina Grimke is the first woman to address a United States legislative body**; she delivers a speech against slavery in the Massachusetts Senate Chamber.
- 1863 **Governor John Andrew dispatched Massachusetts volunteer soldiers** to respond to President Lincoln's “call to arms” to defend the Union two years after the Civil War began, which started in 1861.

- 1865 December 22nd, **The Return of the Colors** – Governor John Andrew receives flags of the Massachusetts soldiers returning from the battles of the Civil War.
- 1874 **The State House dome is gilded for the first time in 23 karat gold leaf** at a cost of \$2,862.50.
- 1895 **The Brigham Addition of the State House is completed**. The House of Representatives meets for the first time in the new chamber.
- 1900 **Memorial Hall is completed** – the most costly of its time.
- 1912 **President William Howard Taft** visits the State House using the ceremonial front doors.
- 1917 The **east and west wings are added to the State House**, designed by Chapman, Andrews, and Sturgis.
- 1933 As a prank, the “**Sacred Cod**” is “**codnapped**” from the House Chamber.
- 1961 January 9th, President-elect **John F. Kennedy** speaks before the joint session of the Massachusetts Legislature and delivers his “City on a Hill” speech.

- 1965 **Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.** addresses the Massachusetts Legislature and one day later leads a Civil Rights march of 22,000 people to Boston Common.
- 1974 **A group of second grade students use the “Right of Free Petition”** resulting in the passage of a bill designating the ladybug as the official state insect.
- 1990 **The Great Hall**, a new ceremonial space, is completed on the second floor of the State House, to house special affairs of state.
- 1997 The **dome of the State House is regilded with 23 karat gold leaf** at the cost of \$300,000.00.
- 1999 A work called “**Hear Us**” is unveiled as the newest addition to the State House art collection. It honors **women who were active in public life** and made contributions to the Massachusetts government.
- 2000 The most extensive **exterior restoration** of the State House began in July. The project cost **\$42.5 million**.
- 2015 **Governor's Office** restored to 1798 appearance.
- 2019 **Senate** restoration completed.