Capitol Complex Pierre, South Dakota

Capitol Complex

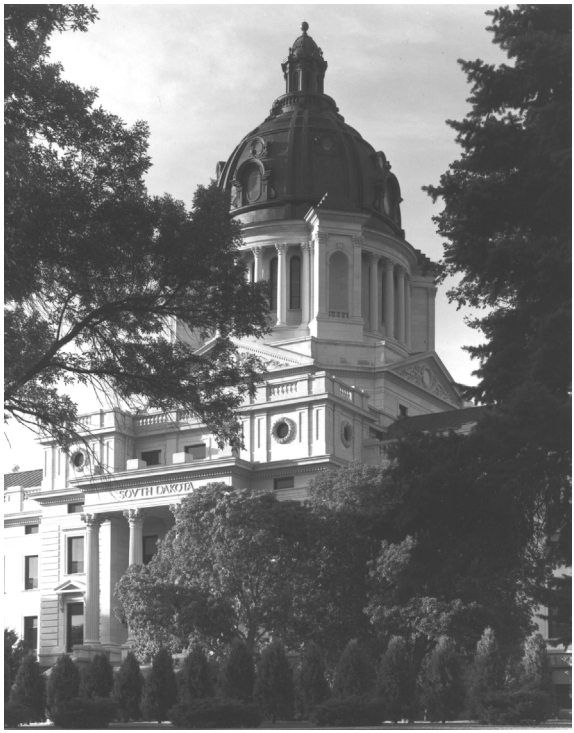
The Capitol Complex, located on the Missouri River bluffs overlooking Pierre is comprised of approximately 220 acres of state property. The property includes 21 state office buildings, over 12 acres of parking and more than 11 miles of sidewalk. Other features include the Fighting Stallions Memorial, the Flaming Fountain Memorial, Hilger's Gulch Park, Governor's Grove, a five-acre lake, two-acre tree bank, 14 flower gardens containing more than 22,000 flowers and about 6,700 trees and shrubs. The lake is warmed by the flaming fountain and is a popular spot for flocks of geese.

State Capitol Building

Construction on the elaborately designed and decorated State Capitol Building began in 1905. The completed building was accepted on June 30, 1910.

Total cost of the 175,000-square-foot Capitol Building was approximately $1,247,000 or $7.10 per square foot.

During the late 1930s serious structural problems began to develop because of the extended drought. WPA crews were enlisted to underpin the foundation, repair floor and wall cracks, and repaint the entire building, covering over the elaborate wall decorations.



In 1985, Governor Bill Janklow and the South Dakota Legislature approved a large-scale program to restore and renovate the Capitol to its original condition in 1910.

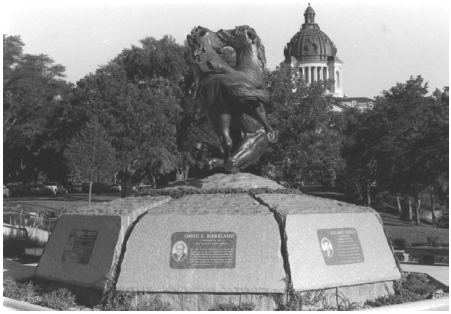
The State Capitol houses the Legislature, Supreme Court, Constitutional Officers, Public Utilities Commission, Digital Dakota Network and several Bureaus of Executive Management. A collection of dolls dressed in gowns fashioned after the gowns worn by the First Ladies at their husband's inaugurals are on the first floor. All guided tours must be scheduled in advance. Self-guided tour booklets are available. The Capitol Building is open 365 days a year from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Governor's Residence

The Governor's Residence was built in 1936 and has been the home of every governor and his family since that time.

In 2003 the Residence was deemed uninhabitable do to its poor condition. The decision was made to build a new residence utilizing private donations. The 1936 building was moved from its location on Capitol Lake to make way for the beginning of construction in 2004 on the new Governor's Residence. Construction is scheduled for completion in 2005.

Fighting Stallions Memorial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The Fighting Stallions Memorial was built as a tribute to eight South Dakotans who died in a state plane crash April 19, 1993 near Dubuque, Iowa. The men were on an economic development mission. *Fighting Stallions* is enlarged in bronze from the 1935 mahogany carving by sculptor Korczak Ziolkowski. The memorial is located, near Capitol Lake. The base of the memorial contains dedications to the men who died: South Dakota's 28th Governor George Mickelson; Office of Energy Policy Director Ron Reed; Governor's Office of Economic Development Commissioner Roland Dolly; First Bank of South Dakota President/CEO David Birkeland; Sioux Falls Development Foundation President Roger Hainje; Northern States Power Chief Executive Angus Anson and state pilots Ron Becker and David H. Hansen.

Capitol Christmas Trees

Every year the Capitol building is transformed into a winter wonderland with over 100 Christmas trees decorated with homemade items donated by South Dakotans from every corner of the state. Model railroad displays and entertainment from around the state are scheduled throughout the display. Thousands of people then travel to Pierre to view the beautifully decorated trees and enjoy the entertainment. Former Gov. William Janklow took a personal interest in the project and has added his private antique sleigh to the decorations.

Soldiers' and Sailors' Building

This building, originally a memorial to South Dakotans serving in World War I, was built in 1931. The building housed the state museum for many years. In 1990, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs moved into the building. The building houses tributes to South Dakota Medal of Honor recipients, former prisoners of war, other distinguished veterans and all South Dakota veterans. It is located on Capitol Avenue, across from the Capitol Building.

Sigurd Anderson Building

This state office building was constructed in 1951 and houses various state agencies. It is located across from the Capitol Building at 445 East Capitol Avenue.

Joe Foss Building

Completed in 1955, the building's first occupant was the Department of Highways. It is located across from the Capitol Building at 523 East Capitol Avenue.

Richard Kneip Building

Completed in November, 1975, this office building is occupied by various state agencies. It is located at 700 Governors Drive.

State Library Building (Mercedes MacKay Building)

The library building was completed in 1976 and houses a complete range of library services, including materials for the visually handicapped. Located at 800 Governors Drive, it is dedicated to Mercedes MacKay who was state librarian from 1939-1973.

Becker-Hansen (Transportation) Building

Built in 1964, the Becker-Hansen Building is the central headquarters for the Department of Transportation including aeronautics, highways and railroads. The name was changed to the Becker-Hansen Building in tribute to Ron Becker and David Hansen, who were killed when the state plane crashed on April 19, 1993. It is located at 700 East Broadway Avenue.

Public Safety Building

The Public Safety Building, formerly the old Federal Building and once the Commerce Building, houses various state agencies. It is located at 118 West Capitol Avenue.

State Health Laboratory

Completed in 1997, the state health laboratory has facilities for bacteriological, serological, virological and chemical testing. It is located at 615 East Fourth Street.

Civil War Monument Memorial Park

This monument was erected in 1918 by the State of South Dakota in honor of the defenders of our nation.

Capitol Lake

Capitol Lake is a man-made, warm-water lake. It is fed from the natural flow of the flaming fountain. Both the Governor's Residence and the State Capitol Building are located on its shores.

Cultural Heritage Center

As part of South Dakota's 1989 centennial project, the state legislature committed $6.5 million to build this dramatic earth-covered Cultural Heritage Center. Located above Hilger's Gulch, north of the state capitol, the 63,000-square-foot underground building preserves South Dakota's past and present cultural resources in a structure that recalls the ancient Arikara earth lodges that once dotted the Missouri River Valley. With its earth and grass covering, the Cultural Heritage Center is one of the most energy-efficient buildings in the region.

Headquartered at the Center is the South Dakota State Historical Society/Office of History. The society preserves and interprets the history and culture of South Dakota and its peoples through its archives, museum, research and publishing, archaeology, and historic preservation programs.

The South Dakota Legislature authorized the construction of the building, but directed that private funds be raised to complete the permanent exhibits. Installed in three phases, the 15,000 sq. ft. of permanent exhibits present South Dakota's history. *Oyate Tawicoh'an* The Ways of the People and *Proving Up* have been completed. The opening of *Changing Times*, the final phase, has not been scheduled, pending the outcome of the Society's current fund-raising campaign.

Hilger's Gulch

The gulch behind the Capitol Building was once owned by Anson Hilger. In 1986 Gov. William Janklow proposed turning it into a parkway with a bridge and sidewalks. In 1989, Governor's Grove, which includes a tree planted for each state governor, was moved from the Transportation Building to the Gulch. Veterans groups provide 100 U.S. flags that are flown on holidays and special events. The gulch includes a lighted walking trail and flower gardens.

Visitor Center

The Visitor Center was built in 1971 and housed the maintenance shop for many years. In 1998, the shop area was converted into a Visitor Center, complete with a conference room that can be reserved for use by the general public. Restrooms and a kitchen are located near the conference room. A gallery runs along the front of the Visitor Center. The rooftop viewing area provides a panoramic view of Capitol Lake. The Center is open year round from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Memorial

The memorial honors emergency medical services personnel who have fallen while in the line of duty.

Law Enforcement Officers Memorial

This memorial is in tribute to law enforcement officers who serve and who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty in South Dakota.

Fallen Firefighter Memorial

The memorial, officially dedicated October 12, 1997, honors the living memory of all firefighters who have given up so much of themselves in service to their fellow South Dakotans. It also honors firefighters who have made the ultimate sacrifice. The firefighters inscribed on the memorial gave their lives to protect neighbors, friends and those they never knew. They are the firefighters who answered their "last alarm." - Taken from the words of Richard Hainje, Assistant Fire Chief.

Korean / Vietnam Veterans Memorial

The Korean/Vietnam Veterans Memorial is located near the Flaming Fountain on Capitol Lake. The monument, made of South Dakota granite, was dedicated on May 30, 1986, to honor 349 South Dakotans who died or who are missing in action in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts.

Flaming Fountain

This well, drilled in the winter of 1909-1910, has a depth of 1,350 feet and flows at 1,620 gallons per minute with a water temperature of 92 degrees. It originally provided natural gas to the city of Pierre and was also used to heat the Capitol. In the late 1950s the mains rusted out and the well was abandoned. However, the natural flow stabilized the warm water lake. In the mid 1960s the idea of a flaming fountain was conceived. The flame as you see it was ignited in August of 1967 and has burned perpetually since that time.

World War II Memorial

The construction of a World War II Memorial on the Capitol grounds was announced in March 2000 by Governor William J. Janklow to pay tribute to all the past and present South Dakotans who contributed to the World War II effort.

South Dakota rallied to country's defense and provided vital support to the war effort on the front and the home front. South Dakota participated in many ways in the war effort including:

•68,000+ South Dakota men & women enrolled in the armed services.
•2,200+ servicemen gave the ultimate sacrifice and never returned home.
•South Dakota was home to 7 military establishments during World War II.
•South Dakota was vital to the Red Cross and USO efforts to support our troops over seas.

South Dakota continued its agricultural production to feed the country and our troops during World War II and for the world relief effort following the war.

South Dakota supported the financing of the war by purchasing War Bonds.

South Dakota schools and teachers were vital to preparing students for entry into military service during the war years.

These men and women are our relatives and neighbors. They came from the farms and small towns across South Dakota to do what they could for our flag—for our country—for all of us!

The memorial is an everlasting monument to thank them and immortalize their bravery.

Korean War Memorial

Forgotten War. Remembered Heroes

The South Dakota Korean War Memorial portrays a brave American GI devastating enemy forces and artic weather during the Chosin Battle. The soldier is still fighting as he glances over at his fallen brethren, their names now upon a wall. He is low on ammunition, frostbitten, tired and unshaven, but with a look of determination, he gives the soldiers a Centurion salute and completes his mission.

The Chosin Battle

Near the North Korean and Chinese borders, United States troops faced a surprise invasion by the Chinese Communists. More than 125,000 troops swept down on the U.S. force of 25,000. During that battle alone, U.S. troops sustained more than 6,000 casualties. The horrific winter conditions caused more than 6,000 cases of frostbite. U.S. forces stopped the huge enemy force then retreated back to the south before resuming a war that lasted three years.

The Korean War was an extremely bloody conflict. The United States lost 54,000 troops in just three years, nearly as many as those lost in the decade-long Vietnam War. There were an estimated 1,313,000 casualties and one million refuges during this 'Forgotten War'.

Dedication of the Korean War Memorial was announced on September 18, 2004 by Governor M. Michael Rounds.

Unlike their comrades from WWII, the Korean veterans returned to life in the states without fanfare or acclaim. Even though Korean War veterans' heroic efforts were not derided like those of the Vietnam Veterans, Korean War Vets were often ignored by the American public. This was partly due to the political peace that never set a victorious outcome to the war.