

Goodhue Blvd Marker 3/20/2015

Lincoln's role as the home of the Nebraska Capitol is central to the city's history and no one had a bigger impact on the Capitol building than its architect, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869–1924). Goodhue was a celebrated American architect known for his adaptations of historic styles, including Gothic, Byzantine, and Spanish Colonial Revival. Among his prominent projects were the Cadet Chapel and campus plan for the U. S. Military Academy at West Point, the Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago, and St. Bartholomew's and Thomas Churches in New York City, Balboa Park in San Diego and the Los Angeles Central Library. Goodhue was also a very accomplished book and type designer and patented three typefaces including Merrymount and particularly Cheltenham, which became *The New York Times*' headline type and was used by the *Omaha World Herald* throughout the twentieth century. Goodhue died two years after construction began on the Nebraska Capitol which is widely regarded as his finest work.

Born in Pomfret, Connecticut, Goodhue was educated at home by his mother until the age of 11. Due to his family's financial situation he did not attend college. Goodhue's architectural career began in 1884 when he apprenticed at the New York City firm of Renwick, Aspinwall and Russell where he refined his talents in drafting, design and composition. In 1891, Goodhue moved on to the firm of Cram and Wentworth where he developed his use of the Gothic style. By 1914 Goodhue had established his own firm, exploring more varied historical styles and blending historical architectural forms into a more contemporary American architectural style on projects such as the Los Angeles Library and Nebraska Capitol.

Goodhue first put his new ideas to the test during the competition for the design of the third Nebraska Capitol, one of his greatest architectural achievements. The Nebraska legislature established a Capitol Commission which included the governor, the state engineer, and three appointed commissioners to oversee the construction of a new building. Omaha architect Thomas R. Kimball, who was national president of the American Institute of Architects at the time, wrote the architectural competition program for the Capitol, skillfully avoiding the stumbles that befell many capitol competitions. Kimball's guidelines did not define plan, style, or material for the building. The competition program did specify, however, that the chosen architect would assemble an artistic team including a sculptor, a painter, and a landscapist to create a unified appearance for the new capitol.

Goodhue's bold tower design was selected from among the ten competitors, most of whom employed the traditional capitol features of classical columns and pediments beneath a dominant central dome. Goodhue instead offered a low, broad base from which springs a 400-foot tower, topped with a gold-tiled dome, and purposeful art and ornament well-integrated throughout. This was the first state capitol in the United States with functional tower space, incorporating the skyscraper form into a dignified capitol building. The design presented the state with a tall landmark on the plains of Nebraska: a horizontal building 437 feet square, dominated by a tower

400 feet tall. The flat, broad surfaces of the horizontal base anchor the design and balance the soaring lines of the tower, terminating in a resplendent tiled dome and the statue of “The Sower.”

Goodhue designed numerous churches, and the floor plan of the Nebraska Capitol resembles the cross-axis of a traditional cathedral, enclosed within the outer square of offices, and embracing a courtyard in each quadrant. The plan functionally and symbolically separated the three branches of government with the Governor’s offices on the north, legislative chambers flanking the central rotunda, and Supreme Court on the south. Because the Capitol was built before Nebraska adopted the unicameral form of legislature in 1937, there are two legislative chambers. Since 1937, the Legislature has met in the larger, west chamber designed for the House.

Cross axes extended out from the Capitol to form the entry approaches. The Capitol’s plan of squares within a square links the building to the city’s square grid of streets. The building’s four entrances center on extra-wide streets, further unifying the Capitol building and the capital city. Viewing the Capitol from the south end of the boulevard, the broader design Goodhue envisioned linking the building and the neighborhood can be seen. Goodhue intended that the environs around the Capitol also serve as an extension of the design itself, with landscaped boulevards and medians extending outward from the building at each axis.

In 2007, the City of Lincoln renamed the portion of South 15th street south of the Capitol building to A Street as Goodhue Boulevard to recognize his contributions to the City and State. The majority of Goodhue Boulevard sits within in the Near South Neighborhood, home to one of the first neighborhood organizations in the city. This monument stands as a gift to the City of Lincoln from the Near South Neighborhood Association in honor of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue.