



IOWA JUDICIAL BRANCH BUILDING VISITORS GUIDE

Welcome to the home of the Iowa Supreme Court, the Iowa Court of Appeals, and State Court Administration. This guide is designed to direct you through the public areas of the building and to provide information about the building's special features.

DESIGN FEATURES



The five-story, 124,000 square foot building is a model of efficiency, and durability with a stately look that evokes a sense of permanence. The floor plan is organized around two main components: a formal wing and an office wing. The formal wing contains the ceremonial and public spaces of the building such as the rotunda and courtrooms. The office wing wraps around a glass-covered atrium designed to filter natural light into its core

The building incorporates classical design elements such as a dome-capped rotunda, a curved pediment, vaulted ceilings, and columns, applied in a modern, simplified style, yet in harmony with the Capitol and the Ola Babcock Miller Building. Traditional building materials including limestone, granite, bronze, copper, and marble, provide durability and add to the building's timeless image.



The ornamental details of the building are simple but elegant. Walls of buff colored marble serve as a graceful backdrop to the rotunda floor, a colorful marble spiral. Some of the decorative details inside the building mimic designs in the Capitol such as the embossed patterns around the rotunda openings and the medallions in the courtroom rails. Stencil patterns in the Capitol influenced the carved stone pediment above the balcony.

The bronze panels on the outside of the building above the front entry and balcony doors include an oak branch and a prairie rose. The branch of the oak tree, the state tree, symbolizes the stability of the courts, while the prairie rose, the state flower, symbolizes the compassionate side of justice.

The abstract scales of justice in the panel above the balcony doors reflects the balance of stability and compassion.



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HISTORIC ALLEGORICAL MURALS

Murals that once decorated the ceiling of the Supreme Court courtroom in the Capitol, now hang in important public rooms in the Judicial Branch Building. The murals were removed from the old courtroom in 1904 during a fire in the Capitol. In 1999, the Iowa Supreme Court retained an art conservator to remove the murals from the walls of the Ola Babcock Miller Building, where they had been for 100 years, and prepare them for installation in the Judicial Branch Building, which was in the design stage.



Columbia (Main floor south of rotunda) The largest mural is entitled "Columbia." Columbia, the feminine embodiment of the United States, sits on a throne, with Justice to the right and Iowa to the left. The patrons of the states with their children, the territories, pay homage to Columbia and Justice.



Writing-Arm Windsor Arm-chair (Main Floor) The chair is believed to have been used by Iowa's first Chief Justice Charles Mason, who served on the Iowa Supreme Court from 1838 to 1847.



Justice (Main floor west of rotunda) In this mural, Justice sits holding a scale and a sword. Columbia stands to the right of Justice, ready to defend her. The woman standing on the left side of Justice is relieved because Justice has handed down a decision in the woman's favor. The woman in the left corner is explaining the laws to her child, while the woman in the right corner is unhappy that Justice ruled against her. At both ends of this mural one can see faint, ghost like images, which reveal how the artist changed the painting before it was finished. Over time, the top layer of paint has become translucent enabling the earlier paint images to show through. This phenomenon is called "pentimenti."



Six Genii (3rd and 4th floor courtrooms)

Each of these murals contains a cherubic looking child called a "genius" – a guardian spirit in Roman mythology. Four of the genii are engaged in agricultural tasks: one is harvesting potatoes, another is shearing sheep, a third is binding grain, and the fourth is near a plow. Another is working metal and a sixth is weaving a basket. These paintings encircled the "Ceres" mural when it was in the Capitol.

Justice and Peace (4th floor courtroom) Located in the supreme court courtroom, this mural depicts Justice and Peace seated together on a throne atop of clouds. Justice holds a scale in one hand and a sword in her other hand, poised ready to strike. Peace, holding a palm frond looks on serenely. They bring prosperity, culture, and happiness to the land, as symbolized by the fruits and vegetables spilling from the horn of plenty and the musical instruments. In the upper left corner, a Zeus-like figure is ready to cast down lightning bolts. His face resembles President Ulysses S. Grant. Design Features H



JUDICIAL BRANCH BUILDING GROUNDS



Shattering Silence Monument

The sculpture, designed by James Ellwanger of Des Moines, is 30 feet tall and depicts shards of glass. It was dedicated in October 2009. The \$500,000 sculpture was paid for with private funds. This sculpture celebrates the tradition in Iowa's courts of ensuring the rights and liberties of all the people of the State. The story of Ralph, a Missouri slave hoping to buy his freedom in Iowa, is engraved around the base of the sculpture. In 1838, Iowa's Territorial Supreme Court ruled in Ralph's favor, allowing him to stay in the free Iowa Territory.

Bell of Peace and Friendship

The bell is a gift from the citizens of Japan's Yamanashi Prefecture to the people of Iowa. Yamanashi Prefecture is Iowa's sister state by act of the Iowa State assembly in 1961. The bell is a token of appreciation for the livestock and corn sent by Iowans to the Yamanashi Prefecture following a 1959 typhoon that killed 57 people, injured almost a thousand people, destroyed sixteen hundred homes, and flooded another 14 thousand homes. Comparable damage was inflicted to the farmlands and livestock in which Yamanashi depends upon for livelihood—for Yamanashi, like Iowa, is an agricultural state



Scott's Grave

Willson Alexander Scott (1818-1859) arrived in Iowa in 1843. He was one of the first pioneers to view the site of Des Moines, and became a prominent businessman. Mr. Scott once told friends: "When I die, I want to be buried here, where I stand..." Years later, Mr. Scott's wish was fulfilled, on a bluff overlooking Des Moines. Mr. Scott's gravesite is the only burial plot on the State Capitol grounds. When the capital city moved from Iowa City to Des Moines in 1857, Mr. Scott donated 10 acres on the current site. Mr. Scott and other Des Moines businessmen had the brick Capitol built and donated it to the State. Mr. Scott was buried at the current location in 1859. In 1925, the present marker was installed.

