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Review of A Hannony of the Arts: The Nebraska State Capitol.

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Joan Woodside and Betsy Gabb, Norman Geske and Jon Nelson, and Robert C. Ripley, richly documents the story of one of the more unusual American capitol buildings: Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol. It, too, is a paean to democracy, but it is a delightful and surprising architectural maverick.

As anyone who has visited Lincoln knows, the State Capitol building dominates the city and the surrounding prairie. It is a remarkable building, according to Luebke, "totally unlike its predecessors, a dignified, graceful, carefully constructed monument that expresses the values, hopes, and aspirations of its builders, as it does of the generations who have followed." Nebraskans decided to build their third state capitol building in 1919. The legislature established a commission to oversee the work and levied a property tax to pay for it. The commission chose Thomas R. Kimball, a distinguished Nebraska architect, as its professional adviser, whom Sawyers credits with much of the building's boldness. Fearful that a design competition would limit architectural and artistic creativity, he refused to specify a style, calling instead for a structure that would be "an inspiring monument worthy of the State for which it stands; a thing of beauty, so conceived and fashioned as to properly record and exploit our civilization, aspirations, and patriotism, past, present, and future."

The winning design, submitted by Bertram Goodhue of New York, was a striking and dramatic break with the Beaux-Arts past. Goodhue's building is dominated by the now-famous tower and capped by a dome that shelters a memorial hall. The fact that it was completed in 1932, as architectural taste was moving from the Beaux-Arts, decorative style to the disciplined modernism of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, might have prevented Goodhue's peers from a fuller appreciation of his design. Now that we are well into the postmodern era, however, we can look anew at the accomplishments of the architect and his collaborators.

Kimball's plan for the integration of the arts is one of the most appealing aspects of the struc-

A Harmony of the Arts: The Nebraska State Capitol. Edited by Frederick C. Luebke. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990. Illustrations, photographs, appendix, bibliographical notes, index. x + 122 pp. \$40.00.

Public buildings have been seen as reflections of society's culture and politics for centuries, and it has been a long-accepted corollary that Americans view their state capitols as palaces of democratic government. This handsome volume, with essays by Frederick C. Luebke, H. Keith Sawyers, David Murphy, Dale L. Gibbs,

ture. University of Nebraska philosophy professor Hartley Burr Alexander assisted Goodhue with choice and wording of the symbols and inscriptions throughout the building, a collaboration so successful that Goodhue asked him to assist with the Los Angeles Public Library as well. Goodhue died in 1924, but Alexander went on to work on other public buildings throughout the country. Sculptor Lee Lawrie provided the bas-reliefs and sculptures, topped (literally) by the Sower, who scatters his seeds from the dome, more than 400 feet above the ground. The interior of the capitol is enhanced by Hildreth Meiere's mosaics and by the mural paintings by eight different artists completed over a period of four decades. A final chapter deals with the landscape architecture of Ernst Herminghaus.

The second architectural corollary holds that buildings, in turn, influence society's attitudes and values. Luebke concludes that Nebraskans are happy with their State Capitol; they will also be pleased this well-written and designed volume.

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