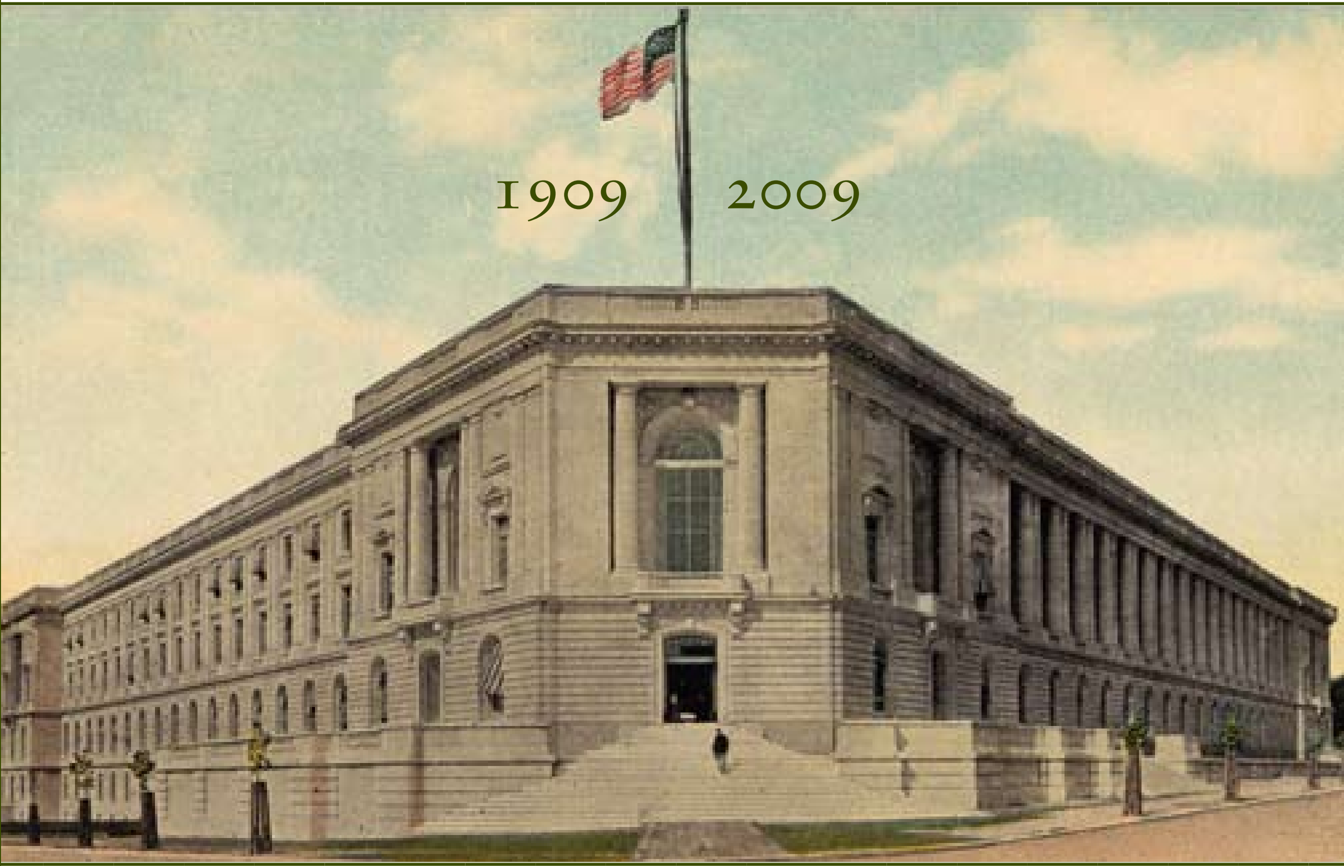
Russell Senate Office Building

THE FIRST CENTURY

1909 2009



UNITED
STATES
SENATE

Cover: *Postcard showing the newly completed Senate Office Building, circa 1909*. U.S. Senate Historical Office.

Inside front cover: *Panoramic photograph of Capitol Hill, circa 1909. From left to right: Union Station, Senate Office Building, Library of Congress, House Office Building*. Library of Congress.

Inside back cover: *Panoramic photograph of Capitol Hill, 2008*. Architect of the Capitol.

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Russell Senate Office Building

THE FIRST CENTURY

Prepared by the Senate Historical Office
Under the direction of
Nancy Erickson, Secretary of the Senate

1909–2009
RUSSELL
SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

Russell Senate Office Building
The First Century

With the steady growth of legislative business over its 220-year history, Congress has constantly struggled to create sufficient work space, from adding massive wings to the Capitol in the 1850s to constructing—a century ago—its first office buildings. Throughout much of the Senate's first century, senators' official working space consisted of their desks in the Senate Chamber, where they were subject to constant demands and frequent interruptions. Senators conducted business at their desks, in the aisles of the Senate Chamber, in the corridors of the Capitol, and in boarding houses and hotel lobbies. As space became available, those who chaired committees found refuge in the Capitol's committee offices, which doubled as the chairman's personal office. As new states entered the Union, sending more members to Congress, senators and representatives used any available space in the Capitol, including alcoves in the attic, corners in the basement, and converted storerooms and closets. In desperation, some senators rented their own office space in nearby buildings. Finding a place for support staff proved even more difficult.

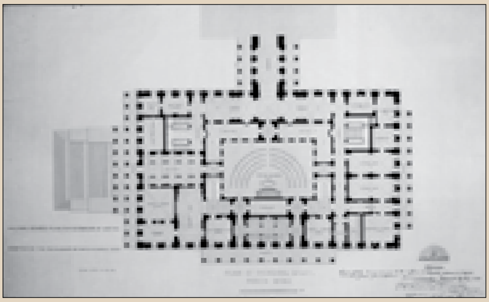
Senator William Peffer of Kansas works at his desk in the Senate Chamber in 1897, reflecting the crowded conditions of the Capitol at the turn of the century.

A CROWDED CAPITOL

The demand for adequate working space for the Senate and the House of Representatives prompted the addition of two new wings to the Capitol in the 1850s. The Senate wing included a spacious new chamber as well as additional committee offices. At the same time, however, Senate committees began hiring clerical staff, increasing the number of employees. In the wake of the Civil War, southern states returned to the Union and new states were formed, and their senators and representatives needed accommodations as well. Consequently, by the 1870s, Congress again felt cramped. When legislators sought to enhance the attractiveness of the Capitol grounds, therefore, they combined that goal with a plan to ease the workspace shortage. In 1874 the nation's leading landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, redesigned the Capitol grounds and added elaborate marble terraces across the west front. Olmsted's ingenious design provided space beneath the terraces for nearly 100 new rooms.

While Olmsted's work on the terraces continued, the Senate moved towards employing a larger and more permanent staff. In 1882 it authorized each senator to hire a clerk, whether the senator chaired a committee or not. Within a decade every senator employed at least one clerk. Some employed other clerical staff as well, usually family members, and often at their own expense. To house the additional staff, the Senate sergeant at arms was authorized in 1884 to rent space for committees in

In the 1850s, construction began on two new wings of the Capitol to provide larger chambers and more space for the House and Senate.



The new Senate wing of the Capitol included a spacious new chamber as well as additional committee offices.

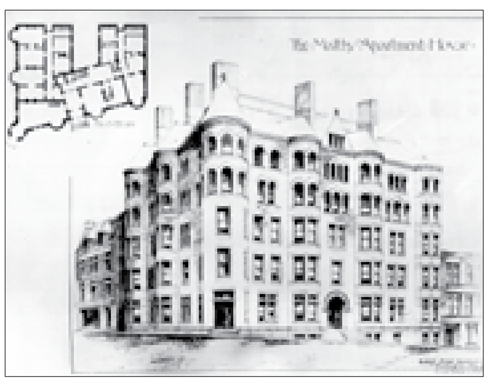
Noted landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted redesigned the Capitol grounds.

Frederick Law Olmsted's redesign of the Capitol grounds added marble terraces across the Capitol's west front that provided space beneath for nearly 100 new rooms.

buildings close to the Capitol. Meanwhile, senators without much seniority and those in the minority party continued to work out of rooms in boardinghouses, sometimes located miles from the Capitol. The bitterly cold winter of 1888-1889 increased the pressure to find more convenient work space on Capitol Hill, since a walk or carriage ride to the Capitol proved to be a severe hardship in such cold weather.

THE SENATE'S FIRST OFFICE BUILDING

For a while at the end of the 19th century, the Senate seemed to have solved its space problems. Thirteen west front terrace rooms became available in 1891, about the same time that the Senate acquired a nearby apartment building. The five-story, red-brick Maltby Building, located north of Constitution Avenue on the modern site of the Taft Carillon, had been built in 1887 by New York developer Maltby Lane. Later known as the "Senate Annex," the Maltby Building was converted into 81 offices and committee rooms, providing relief for the Capitol's overcrowded occupants (and becoming the envy of House members). Yet, even that space filled quickly. "I happen to be located in the Maltby Building," Texas Senator Joseph Bailey commented, ". . . and so crowded is it that when our constituents come to interview us on matters affecting the public interest, they are often compelled to wait in a hall



The Senate acquired the Maltby Building around 1891 and converted it into 81 offices and committee rooms.

until it may suit our convenience to see them." Beyond overcrowding, the Maltby was plagued with other problems. Almost immediately, senators and their employees saw signs of deterioration in the building. In 1893 the architect of the Capitol found flaws in the foundation and cracks in the walls and windows. Upper rooms proved to be insufferably hot during the summer, making them unusable. By 1904 senators were so alarmed by the building's rapid rate of settlement and general signs of decay that they questioned the building's safety and asked for an inspection.

Superintendent of the Capitol Elliott Woods, who supervised the inspection, explained that the Maltby Building stood on unstable ground. As a result, its brick elevator shaft had sunk about seven inches, "carrying with it adjacent walls and floors." Other structural aspects of the building had shifted as well. "Floors, partitions, and doorways," Woods explained, had also settled and were "now very much out of level." The building needed a complete renovation. "If the Senate desires to make the Maltby House a permanent annex," Woods recommended, "the building should be entirely reconstructed within the outer walls, and that construction should be of the fireproof type, both as to floors and partitions." The fire marshal agreed on the building's unsound condition, condemning it as a firetrap. "We consider this building extremely hazardous in regard to the liability of fire therein," the fire marshal concluded in his report, "and we are of the opinion that, on account of the conditions mentioned, it is dangerous for the purpose for which it is used." The conversion from apartment to office building had also proved to be problematic. "It was never intended to be an office building," Sergeant at Arms Daniel Ransdell maintained, "and is not suited to the uses to which it is now put." The Senate agreed and over the next year most of the building was emptied of Senate offices, leaving behind only storage space on the lower floors. Once again, senators and their staff were sent scrambling for suitable work space.

Superintendent of the Capitol Elliott Woods.

Prime real estate opened up in the Capitol in the late 1890s, providing a temporary respite for frustrated senators. The Library of Congress had occupied much of the west front of the Capitol throughout the century. Filled beyond reasonable capacity with old and brittle books, the library had suffered several disastrous fires. Consequently, Congress appropriated

The filled-to-capacity Library of Congress, located in the west front of the U.S. Capitol, finally moved to its own building in 1897, providing much-needed space for Congress.

funds to build a larger, separate Library of Congress building, planning to take possession of the library's choice space when it moved across the street into its own building in 1897. Within four years, the Capitol's former library quarters had been reconfigured to serve Congress' escalating space needs.

THE NEED FOR A NEW BUILDING

The 20th century brought new states, new members, and a burgeoning staff to cope with the increased legislative workload. Since the House Chamber had opened in 1857, 148 more members had been added. When the Senate entered its new chamber in 1859, there had been 66 senators; by 1900 the number had grown to 90. Innovations in transportation and communication also made possible more immediate contact between citizens and their representatives on Capitol Hill. A growing volume of constituent demands taxed the Senate's clerical staff. At the same time, legislative responsibilities expanded as the federal government assumed a larger role in the daily lives of Americans. The need for working space in the Capitol grew accordingly. Junior senators, often assigned to dark and damp quarters in the lower terrace area or in the Capitol basement, complained that their offices were not suitable for visitors, constituents, lobbyists, or public officials. The *Washington Post* called those arrangements "obnoxious and unfitting the Capitol." Superintendent of the Capitol Elliott Woods commented that "every year we heard the clamor from Congress for more room." To cope with the problem, Congress considered two new Capitol construction projects in 1901. The first would have provided for a $2 million extension of the Capitol's east front, but this project proved highly controversial and unpopular among those who wanted to preserve the building's original exterior. Consequently, the idea was put on hold for another 50 years. The second project, calling for two new office buildings, moved ahead more quickly.

The House of Representatives approved an amendment to an appropriations bill in February 1903 calling for a new fireproof building for the House, to be located on the south side of the Capitol. Elliott Woods submitted six designs for a three-story structure that would occupy a square city block

Architect John Carrère.

Architect Thomas Hastings.

and complement the architectural design of the Capitol, preferably "carried out on classic lines." The various plans ranged from a building housing 285 member offices to a larger model designed to hold 400 offices and some 125 supporting rooms. The cost estimates ranged from $2.5 million to $4.3 million. The final Civil Appropriations Act of March 3, 1903, provided for initial funding of $500,000 to acquire land for a new House office building, and an appropriation of $3.1 million for construction. It also created a bipartisan commission of House members to oversee construction, including Representative (soon-to-become House Speaker) Joe Cannon, and Representatives William Hepburn, James Richardson, and Walter I. Smith.

Meanwhile, the Senate began considering an office building of its own to replace the deteriorating Maltby Building. (After senators left the building, some Senate services continued to use the space, until the building was demolished in 1930 during the expansion of the Capitol grounds.) When the 1903 appropriations bill came before the Senate, senators made approval of a new building for the House contingent upon plans being made for a corresponding building for the Senate. The Appropriations Act of April 28, 1904, authorized $750,000 for the purchase of land for a new Senate office building, set an overall budget for construction at $2.25 million, and created the Senate Building Commission to supervise design and construction. The bipartisan building commission included Senators Shelby Cullom of Illinois, Francis Cockrell of Missouri (later replaced by Henry Teller of Colorado), and Jacob Gallinger of New Hampshire.

When the commission held its first meeting on April 29, 1904, in the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee Room (which doubled as Senator Cullom's office), it became clear that senators had definite ideas about the form and function of the

Laying the cornerstone of the Senate Office Building, July 31, 1906.

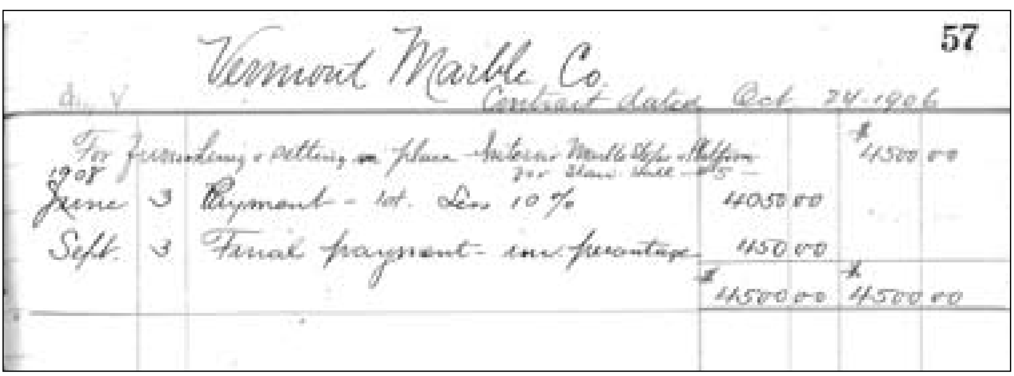
building. They discussed plans to include at least two rooms for each senator and to provide for a public "audience hall." The commission held a number of hearings in 1904 and 1905, often grilling the design team on materials and costs. Congress charged Elliott Woods with the task of supervising construction and overseeing all contracts, and some hoped that Woods would serve as principal architect. Not a trained architect, however, Woods instead convinced members of Congress to bring in more expert help. In 1904 he recommended hiring the architectural team of John Carrère and Thomas Hastings as consulting architects. Carrère and Hastings also received support from Senator Nelson Aldrich of Rhode Island, the powerful chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, who took a keen personal interest in the project. One of Aldrich's sons worked for Carrère and Hastings, and the senator admired their designs so much that he commissioned them to build a mansion for his family in Rhode Island. Woods served as planner and supervisor, overseeing all construction—in essence the general contractor—while Carrère and Hastings brought to the project their expertise in design and a prestigious reputation among American architects. The firm also agreed to accept the very modest fee of $10,000 per year. Over the next few years, Hastings supervised development of the House building, while Carrère oversaw the design of the Senate building.

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

On July 31, 1906, with the Senate adjourned for the year, Woods was joined by a few Senate staff members and local dignitaries for a modest ceremony to place the cornerstone of the Senate office building. A far more elaborate ceremony had taken place for the corresponding House cornerstone laying on April 14, 1906, attended by President Theodore Roosevelt and other dignitaries. "The occasion [of the Senate ceremony] was altogether different from the corner stone laying of the office building of the House of Representatives a few months ago," noted the *Washington Post*, "when the President made his celebrated 'muck-rake' speech, and the Masonic body laid the stone with much pomp and Masonic services." During its quiet ceremony, the Senate placed a time capsule in the cornerstone that included such items as a copy of the Declaration of Independence, a Bible, an American flag, and the 1906 telephone directory of Washington, D.C. "No box ever incased in a corner stone," noted the *Post*, "was more generously provided with material for the future searcher of historic ruins than that put in the corner stone of the Senate office building."

The Senate Office Building under construction in 1907.

Over the next three years, Elliott Woods kept close supervision over all construction and, as the *Washington Post* explained, "devised a very perfect system of keeping account of all expenditures." Woods visited both the House and Senate construction sites daily, talking with the designers and builders, and particularly with the consulting architects, Carrère and Hastings. He kept all the players informed and working in harmony, but the construction phase was not without complications. The sites were prone to flooding during construction. Strikes and union disputes among stone-



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Vermont Marble Co.

Contract dated Oct 24-1906

		For furnishing & setting in place Interior Marble Style Platform for Stair Hall #5			$4500 00
1908 June	3	Payment - 1st. Less 10%	4050 00		
Sept.	3	Final payment - on percentage	450 00		
			$4500 00	$4500 00	

Superintendent of the Capitol Elliott Woods maintained a detailed accounting of all expenditures for the Senate and House office building projects.

The grand and classical exterior of the Senate Office Building recalls the 18th-century facade of the Louvre in Paris.

cutters and bricklayers threatened further progress in 1907. During the summer of that year, two construction workers lost their lives working on the Senate building, one becoming entangled in machinery and another falling from scaffolding. Long before the building was complete, criticism emerged about both design and cost. "In no country in the world," commented one critic, "is the legislative body housed with such imperial disregard of expense. Congress is not satisfied with the accommodations that have served for nearly a century, and is building two marble palaces adjacent to the Capitol." Mostly, officials and visitors to the construction site marveled at the beauty and grandeur of the new buildings.

CARRÈRE AND HASTINGS AND A CLASSICAL DESIGN

John Carrère and Thomas Hastings received their professional education at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, which trained them in a traditionally academic and classical manner. The École emphasized that a building's aesthetic qualities should be derived from the classical tradition while the "form [of the building] follows [its] function." The Senate and House office buildings brilliantly display the architects' classical training. The beauty of these edifices rests not only with the aesthetic decoration chosen by the architects, but also with their careful and pragmatic planning. Decoratively, Carrère and Hastings turned to French classical sources. The grand and classical exterior of the Senate building—the rusticated lower base, the double colonnade which supports an entablature and heavy cornice, and the classical balustrade—recalls the 18th-century facade of the Louvre in Paris. Even the swags under the fourth-floor windows were typically French. Yet Carrère and Hastings produced a modern office building equipped with all the conveniences of the era, including a forced-air ventilation system, steam heat, electricity, telephones, elevators, and a post office and telegraph office. They provided the structure with ample entrances, exits, stairwells, toilet facilities, and storage and office space so that the interior conformed to the standards of an early 20th-century building, while maintaining the beauty of a classical design. According to Thomas Hastings:

> Were it necessary, we could trace two distinctly parallel lines, one the history of civilization and the other the history of the style in art. In each case we should find a gradual development, a quick succession of events, a revival, perhaps almost a revolution and a consequent reaction always together, like a cause and effect, showing that architecture and life must correspond. In order to build a living architecture, we must build as we live.

To conform to the scale of the Capitol, the Senate office building rises only three stories above ground on its Constitution Avenue side. Due to the steep slope of its side streets, it is five stories above ground on its C Street side. The architects similarly kept the

Marble pillars and flooring added to the Senate Office Building's elegant appearance.

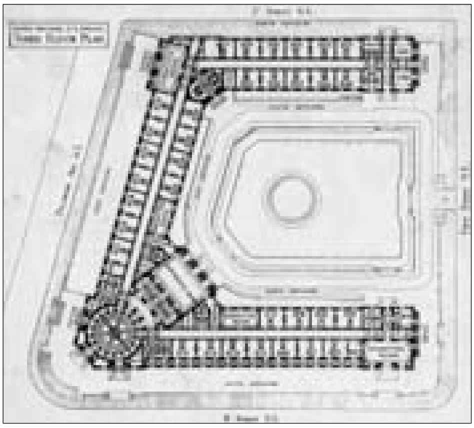
President William Howard Taft greets the public on the Capitol's East Plaza following his inauguration, one day before the Senate Office Building, visible in the right background, officially opened.

design of the office building simple, to avoid any detraction from the Capitol.

THE BUILDING OPENS

"Much to the delight of the Senators who have been compelled to find offices in the dark, dungeon-like rooms of the Capitol Building terrace and in the Senate Annex, the Maltby building," reported the *Washington Post* in August of 1908, "the announcement has been made by the superintendent of the Capitol building that the new Senate office building will be ready for use of the Senators when Congress convenes." The Senate Office Building—often identified by its acronym SOB—opened officially on Friday, March 5, 1909, one day after the presidential inauguration of William Howard Taft. Gradually, and without ceremony, senators moved into their offices throughout the spring of that year. Even before individual office suites were ready for occupancy, senators already had made use of committee rooms in the uncompleted building. Throughout 1908 they maneuvered across wooden planks and along dusty pathways before the building's sidewalks were paved, and glanced out of the committee windows onto a stark courtyard littered with construction debris.

Office suites were fitted out for each of the 92 senators from the nation's 46 states. Each offered imposing mahogany partner desks and round-arm chairs, upholstered couches, handsome carpets, lavatories with hot, cold, and ice water, and one telephone. Whereas each House member had only one room at first, senators had two—a large office for the senator and a smaller room for a staff that generally consisted of a clerk and a stenographer.



Although the original office building plan called for four connecting wings, the Senate chose to initially complete just three wings.

These rooms were connected by a hallway with a private bathroom and storage closets. The senators could choose their own color schemes for the walls. Some chose to prepare detailed instructions, while others left the decorations to the superintendent of the Capitol. Light green, light blue, and buff became the predominant paint colors, and a few selected wallpaper to coordinate with the handsome rugs.

Visitors to the new building could see that in many interior details it surpassed its House counterpart. Although the House and Senate office buildings used similar architectural plans, the House's was quadrangular while the Senate's had only three sides—being open entirely along First Street. Completing only three sides allowed senators to use their excess appropriated funds to upgrade the building's features, giving it a more elaborate and elegant appearance than its House counterpart. Bannisters were made of bronze in the Senate's stairways, and cast iron in the House's. Doors in the Senate building were trimmed with solid mahogany, but representatives got painted trim. The Senate restaurant was fitted with marble pillars and flooring, while the House restaurant made do with plaster and cement. Noting the Senate's stately marble rotunda, high ceilings, tall windows, gold-framed mirrors above the mantles, as well as the chandeliers, private bathrooms, and a Turkish bath, the *New York Times* commented that "it looks about as much like a prosaic business office building as a lady's boudoir does."

Owing to his special relationship with the architects, Senator Nelson Aldrich became the building's first occupant. Aldrich claimed an impressive suite on the third floor featuring floor-to-ceiling French windows that opened onto a balcony with marble pillars and a panoramic view of the Capitol. In spite of the new office building's amenities and Aldrich's example, some of the senior senators felt reluctant to leave their fine committee

The two-room office suites in the new office building provided senators with mahogany partner desks, round-arm chairs, upholstered couches, and handsome carpets.

rooms in the Capitol. Gradually, they were enticed across the street with the offer of modern personal offices outfitted with telephones and electric clocks connected to a single master clock that set time uniformly. The ringing of bells alerted senators to quorum calls and pending votes. Subway cars, part of Carrère and Hastings' modern design, carried them swiftly to the Capitol and the Senate Chamber. A telegraph office in the new building provided speedy communications. Perhaps most enticing of all to reluctant senators, most of the committees now met in the new office building, shifting much of the Senate's daily work there. A squad of messengers and elevator operators served their needs, while a night cleaning crew kept offices and halls tidy without interfering with senators' daily business activities. Except for three women attendants in the ladies' restrooms, men made up the entire staff when the building opened.

Chairmen of the major standing committees received the largest suites, consisting of a reception room, chairman's office, and an office for the committee staff connected to the committee hearing room. Furnished with a large mahogany table, committee rooms allowed members to sit on one side of the table, with witnesses and staff on the other sides. Reporters and spectators occupied chairs around the room's perimeter. In 1912 Democrats won control of the Senate for the first time in 20 years, which caused the first major swap of offices in the Senate Office Building. Although senators retained their personal offices, the new majority took over the committee chairmen's more commodious suites, bumping senior senators who had been reduced from the majority to the minority into smaller, less desirable space further away from the Capitol. One senator who profited by the exchange estimated that his new office put him a half mile closer to the Senate Chamber, since he was now located in the building's corner closest to the subway.

When the building opened in 1909, the Senate had 75 standing committees, only

Furnished with a long mahogany table, committee rooms allowed members to sit on one side of the table, with witnesses and staff on the other, as shown in these images of a committee room, and the same room during a Titanic Disaster hearing in 1912.

Many old buildings situated between the Capitol and Union Station, including the Maltby Building on the left, were demolished to create an attractive park-like setting.

20 of which held hearings or considered legislation. The rest were created solely for the purpose of providing their chairman with an office in the Capitol. Consequently, some of these were chaired by senators from the minority party. The move to the new building made such sinecure committees unnecessary, but it took almost a decade after the senators had gotten their own office suites for the Senate to streamline its operations. In 1920 the Senate eliminated some 40 committees that rarely if ever met, opening up rooms in the Capitol for additional work space for senators.

Once they settled into the new building, senators began making plans to improve its surroundings by demolishing the ramshackle assortment of old buildings situated between it and Union Station to create an attractive park-like setting. The First World War interrupted these plans, and the government hastily constructed dormitories for women war workers in the proposed park. These structures remained in place until 1930, when the Capitol grounds were enlarged and the park established. Beyond providing an attractive and restful green space, the new park covered an underground parking garage connected to the office building, to accommodate senators and staff who commuted by car. The majority of the staff took the public streetcars that stopped at all corners of the office building.

Wandering the 12-foot-wide halls of the Senate Office Building during its first decades of operations, a visitor would encounter mostly closed doors. Since the 1950s, however, senators have routinely left open the doors to their reception rooms, creating a more welcoming atmosphere. With that change came the practice of hanging state seals at the main entrance to a senatorial office, and placing free-standing national and state flags outside the main door. This trend served a useful purpose as senatorial offices expanded in size, signaling the main entrance among the suite's many doors.

One suite in the Senate Office Building was reserved for the Senate's presiding officer, the vice president of the United States. With the opening of the Capitol's Senate wing in 1859, vice presidents had claimed an office immediately behind the Senate Chamber. In the days when tourists could wander unimpeded throughout the Capitol, visitors routinely peered in at the vice president. Thomas R. Marshall, who served as Woodrow Wilson's vice president from 1913 to 1921, complained of feeling like a zoo animal. When Marshall requested a private room where he could put his feet on the desk and smoke, he received space in the Senate Office Building, described as dark "cellar-like" rooms. In 1928, when Senate Majority Leader Charles Curtis of Kansas won election as vice president, he arranged for better real estate. Curtis took rooms on the second floor of the office building, facing the Capitol, and had the corridor outside his office partitioned off to serve as a reception room. When Missouri Senator Harry Truman became vice president in 1945, he preferred to remain in the rooms he had occupied as a senator, as did his own vice president, Kentucky Senator Alben Barkley. Richard Nixon, vice president from 1953 to 1961, would be the last vice president to occupy an office in the Senate Office Building.

Harry Truman maintained the office he used as a senator in the Senate Office Building when he became vice president in 1945.

EXPANDING THE SENATE CAMPUS

Within a generation, an increase in legislative business caused both the Senate and House office buildings to overflow, once again prompting calls for additional space. The House raised the roof of its office building in 1913 to provide additional offices in its attic. Even this was not sufficient, so in 1933 the House opened a second office building (later named for Speaker Nicholas Longworth), with an additional 251 two-room suites. The original House office building was then reconfigured to give every representative two rooms. Space in the Senate building also had become increasingly tight. Within a year after the

The Senate Office Building consisted of three wings surrounding an open courtyard along First Street before the Senate implemented the original architects' plans for a fourth wing in 1932.

building's opening, basement rooms were outfitted as offices. Within 20 years, the Senate implemented the original architects' plans for a fourth wing that would enclose the courtyard. The contract was awarded in March 1932, and work was completed by April 1933. Construction of this wing—the first building on Capitol Hill to have air conditioning as part of its original equipment—not only alleviated the Senate's space problems but also was part of the federal government's stepped up public building effort to put people back to work during the Great Depression. The fourth wing added 28 office suites and two committee rooms, as well as basement areas designated as workshops for painters, carpenters, upholsterers, electricians, and others who maintained the building. The Washington architectural firm of Wyeth & Sullivan designed the wing, and the George A. Fuller Company constructed it.

No sooner was the fourth side opened for occupancy than the federal government expanded in size and scope during the New Deal years and the Second World War. Even with four completed wings, the building filled to capacity. Whereas senators had once been able to read and answer all the mail sent to their offices, the stacks of letters, postcards, telegrams, and petitions that arrived during the 1930s had grown beyond any individual's ability to handle. In 1930 senators had a maximum of four clerks to run their offices. In 1939 the Senate authorized senators from states with populations greater than three million to hire an additional clerk, which set the precedent for those representing larger states having larger staffs and expanded office space. In 1942, as American forces entered World War II, all senators added extra clerks, to a maximum of six. Senators began to contemplate a second office building, but the war delayed implementation of such plans. With victory secured, Congress passed the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946. That statute provided an administrative assistant for every senator, and authorized committees to hire four professional staff members and six clerical staff, putting even greater pressure on the office building's capacity. By 1949 some committee staffs had grown to as many as 15, and the Senate was again forced to rent nearby space at premium prices. The Senate Office Building, at its most crowded, contained 419 office rooms and 11 committee rooms. Thirty-six of the rooms used for offices were either in the basement or in partitioned corridors. Some offices became so crowded that the senators' staff worked in shifts.

The larger the state, the greater the diffusion of staff. In 1952 New York Senator Herbert H. Lehman's three-room suite on the fourth floor of the Senate Office Building housed his administrative assistant, executive secretary, and six other secretaries and stenographers, along with the senator himself. In the basement, eleven additional staff handled the senator's mail and answered his constituents' requests. In a tiny room formed by a partition at the end of a corridor in the Capitol were three research assistants who compiled data and prepared Lehman's speeches. Still another staff person worked out of the Library of Congress, responding to requests for private bills. Three more staff handled constituent issues at his New York City office.

Television coverage of congressional hearings in the 1950s raised the legislature's national visibility, encouraging more citizens to contact their senators and bringing record numbers of visitors to the Capitol and Senate offices. To handle a surge in constituent mail, the Senate in 1953 again expanded the staff for senators' offices. The 62 senators from states with populations less than three million could hire one additional clerk, while the 20 senators from states with populations between three and five million could hire two new clerks. The 14 senators from states with populations larger than five million could hire three new clerks. By 1954 the number of Senate staff was double what it had been when the building opened in 1909.

Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas and his staff sort through the increased volume of mail, including letters, postcards, telegrams, and petitions.

Generally regarded as a slum, "Schott's Alley," located across First Street from the Senate Office Building, was scheduled for demolition to make way for a new Senate office building.

Having outgrown their original two-room suites, senators by the 1950s had four- and five-room offices. Many of the rooms in these suites were not contiguous, or even located on the same floor. A survey showed that five senators had four-room suites with one detached room; three senators had three-room suites with two or three detached rooms; 36 senators had four-room suites; 34 senators had three rooms and one detached room; and 18 senators had only three-room suites. This jumble of offices caused inconveniences; however, there were some advantages to the close proximity of senatorial and committee staffs. Warren Featherstone Reid, who served on the staff of Washington Senator Warren Magnuson, chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, noted there was a small enclave of the committee's staff located directly across the hall from the senator's personal office: "And there was an interplay between those staffs, at the higher, 'professional level,' and at the secretarial level," that created "a very good working relationship."

Still, with some staff working out of converted bathrooms and hallways, and offices carved out of corridors and corners of the committee hearing rooms, the need for more space became obvious. Senators considered putting offices in the attic, as the House had done with its own building, but in the intervening years air-conditioning had been installed and the amount of mechanical equipment in the attic made that space no longer an option for offices. Critics also raised aesthetic concerns,

Vice President Richard Nixon attends the ground breaking for the Senate's new office building in July 1955.

noting that adding another story would destroy the architectural harmony between the Capitol and its surrounding buildings.

By 1949 the Senate had started buying property to the east, across First Street, for a second office building. Authorization for the new building ground to a halt, however, when it encountered opposition from Louisiana Senator Allen Ellender, chairman of the Legislative Appropriations Subcommittee. He argued that a new office building would displace more than 500 residents of the block during an acute housing shortage in the capital. Other senators rebutted that much of the housing scheduled for demolition was substandard, including many tiny dwellings in an area known as "Schott's Alley," generally regarded as a slum. Senator Ellender prevailed. The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 further delayed the project. Not until 1954 did Congress approve funds for construction. At the groundbreaking ceremony in 1955, Vice President Richard Nixon commented that if anyone doubted the need for more space, they should walk across the street "and see four and five secretaries jammed into one small office." The new office building was ready for occupancy in 1958.

The two Senate office buildings became universally identified as the Old SOB and the New SOB. Opening the new building allowed for all the temporary rooms in the old building to be dismantled. This left 383

The New Senate Office Building, shown here under construction in 1957, eased crowding in the Old Senate Office Building.

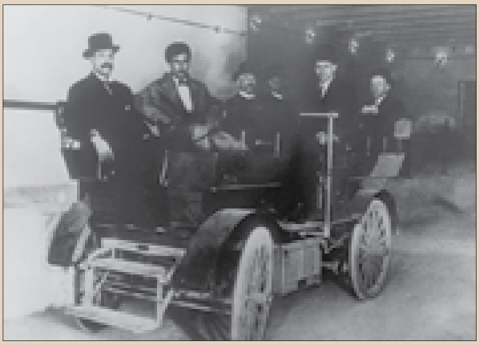
office rooms for senators and staff in the original office building, including 40 newly configured five-room suites. An additional 20 offices were assigned to the four committees that remained in the building, with a few rooms left unassigned for future use, such as the pending addition of senators from the new states of Alaska and Hawaii.

The master plan intended to shift most of the committee activity into the new building, which boasted hearing rooms specifically designed for television coverage. Raised podiums for the senators replaced the old committee tables. Offices adjacent to the hearing rooms were provided for the committee staffs, with five-room suites for the committee chairs. Only the Committees on Armed Services, Agriculture, Rules, and Aeronautics and Space Sciences remained in the Old Senate Office Building. Rooms in the new building were assigned on a seniority basis, with the chairmen offered the prime space near their committees. Once again, some of the senior senators declined to leave their accustomed space in the venerable old building. Appropriations Committee Chairman Carl Hayden of Arizona, who had spearheaded the effort to construct the new building, was among those refusing to relocate his personal office, referring to the suite that he had occupied for 20 years as "home, sweet home." Forty-two of the 96 senators moved into the new building.

The original Senate Office Building contained 735,783 square feet of space, while the new building added another 661,600 feet of space. The new building featured wood-paneled hearing rooms, an auditorium, two cafeterias, and a private dining room for the senators, but it lacked the architectural charm of the old building. Critics compared its starker, unadorned exterior to a warehouse. Some of the senators insisted on bringing their office furniture from the old building to the new, particularly their desks, even though they clashed with the modern decor. The new building was also located a block further away from the Capitol, requiring a longer walk to the Senate Chamber, prompting construction of a new subway tunnel.

THE SENATE SUBWAY

The distance between the Old Senate Office Building and the Capitol was only a fifth of a mile, but senators needed to traverse it multiple times on a typical legislative day. Had the Capitol been a skyscraper, elevators would have whisked members from their offices on different floors to the Chamber. Instead, the office building and Capitol were linked by a horizontal elevator: a subway. Initially, transportation in the subway tunnel was provided by battery-powered yellow Studebaker coaches. Ten passengers could ride in each car, facing each other on benches. The buses ran along a concrete roadway at a maximum speed of 12 miles per hour. Rather than turn around at each terminus, they backed up for the return trip. Running backwards made them more difficult to steer, raising fears that someday the two cars might collide in the curved tunnel. In 1912 the Senate authorized installation of



Battery-powered yellow Studebaker coaches served as the first means of transportation between the Capitol and the Senate Office Building.

In 1912, the Senate authorized installation of a double-line electric monorail system that ran on fixed tracks. The cars pictured here made their last run in 1961.

a double-line electric monorail system that ran on fixed tracks. Built by the Columbia Construction Company, the trains held up to 18 passengers each, in rows of wicker seats. Senators received priority in boarding the cars, and the front seats were reserved for them at all times. One operator commented that he never waited for other passengers when there was a senator aboard, "unless it's the Vice President." Senators summoned the trains by ringing a bell three times. (The same signal also alerted elevator operators.) During Senate votes, the trains would shuttle back and forth furiously, a one-way trip taking 45 seconds. Each car made an average of 225 trips per day when the Senate was in session. The press dubbed this Senate subway the "shortest and most exclusive railway in the world."

After the subway was extended to the new office building, a new tunnel and rail system was constructed for the original office building. The first subway tunnel was converted into storage space, offices, and facilities for the Senate Recording Studio. The old cars made their last run in 1961, and were captured on film by the Hollywood movie *Advise and Consent*, shot during the trains' final weeks in service. The new cars featured upholstered seats and a plastic shield to protect passengers' hair from becoming windblown. Not everyone appreciated the improved services. Arkansas Senator J. William Fulbright lamented the closing of the old line, which he described as "soothing to jangled nerves." Senator Fulbright argued that the quaint old cars had put senators "in a friendly and amiable frame of mind as they arrive to do battle over the nation's business."

SERVICES AND FACILITIES

From 1909 to 1958, the single Senate Office Building contained a spacious restaurant on the second floor at its northwest corner, with a separate entrance onto Delaware Avenue. The dining room was called the "show place" of the building, with marble floor and pillars, silver chandeliers, and views of a nearby park. At a time when almost all of the senators and staff worked out of the same office building, the dining room became a popular meeting place throughout the day for meals or coffee breaks. "Everybody knew everyone in the building," said one long-term committee clerk. "We would go up there and have a coffee klatch in the morning. It was like a social club, at ten o'clock in the morning for a half an hour or so." It also offered an attractive place to take visiting constituents. There was also a small basement café and carry-out window for quick lunches. This subway-level cafeteria was alternately dubbed the "Plastic Palace," and the "Hayden Arms," the latter in honor of Senator Carl Hayden, who regularly came in for coffee. The elderly senator would make his way through the "L" shaped cafeteria line, and when he passed the table located where the "L" joined, he would place his cane upon it, indicating that he intended to sit there when he had gotten his coffee. If the table was occupied, the staff would quickly finish their lunch and move on, knowing he was about to claim it. The movie *Advise and Consent* recorded the unadorned features of the cafeteria, but staff "regulars" enjoyed its coziness and warmth, and the personal attention that the cafeteria workers gave them. The routine was "practically the same thing every day," a staff member recalled, "a hamburger, a piece of pie or cake and ice cream, a bowl of bean soup, and back to the office. You'd be through eating in fifteen, twenty minutes."

Although African Americans mostly comprised the restaurant staff, the dining room itself followed Washington's practice of racial segregation and catered only to a white clientele. This changed in 1953 when African Americans serving on the Senate staff began to rebel. Christine McCreary, a secretary for Missouri Senator Stuart Symington, told of her experience on the first day she entered the dining room for a meal. "When I went over there and I got to the door, the hostess came rushing over to the door where I was and asked if she could help me. I told her I'd come for breakfast. She said, 'Oh, no, this is only for people who work in the Senate.' I said, 'Well, I work in the Senate with Senator Stuart Symington.'" The hostess gasped but invited her to take a seat. McCreary joined the cafeteria line, where cooks put the food on a plate and passed it to the customer. "My plate was shoved at me and I stepped back because I didn't want it on my clothes, and it all went on the floor. Well they were looking at me, but I had to deal with it. So anyway I got another plate. And then I went back the next day, and the next day, until finally they got used to seeing me coming in there. . . . That's where I met all the secretaries and other office staff who worked in the Senate . . . especially on a Monday because they would tell you about all the fun they'd had on the weekend. I'd always be with them, and it was nice, because they weren't prejudiced."

After 1958, when two large staff cafeterias and a senators' dining room were opened in the New Senate Office Building,

The Caucus Room, with its decorative ceiling, columns, and pilasters, became the site of the Senate's most significant public hearings.

the old dining room was converted into a committee room for the new Aeronautics and Space Sciences Committee, chaired by Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson of Texas, whose personal office was located next door. When that committee was abolished in 1977, the Commerce Committee moved into the space. By then, drop ceilings had been installed to hide air conditioning ducts, and the room had lost most of its grand appearance. In the 1990s, however, the room was renovated, and much of its original appearance restored.

Over time, the basement level of the connected office buildings offered an array of services to the growing staff, making it unnecessary to leave the campus during working hours. Along the basement corridors one could find a beauty parlor, barber shop, credit union, ticket office, and stationery room. Tunnels connected the Senate office buildings to each other, to the Capitol, the House office buildings, and the Library of Congress, making it possible to reach most of Capitol Hill without ever going outside.

THE CAUCUS ROOM

The largest chamber in the Senate Office Building was designated as an "audience hall" and became the Caucus Room. Fifty-four by 74 feet in dimension, and 35 feet high, the room can seat 300 people. Marble walls and columns, a highly decorated and gilded ceiling, large crystal chandeliers, and three oversized windows make an impressive setting, and the room has served as the stage for some of the Senate's most dramatic moments. Originally used for party conferences or caucuses—hence its name—the Caucus Room became the site of the Senate's most significant public hearings, particularly its investigations. The first occurred in 1912, shortly after the luxury ocean liner *Titanic* sank in the Atlantic on its maiden voyage. The 1,500 passengers who lost their lives included some of America's wealthiest and most prominent citizens. When the surviving passengers, crew, and officials of the White Star Line arrived in New York, members of a special Senate committee called them to testify. Because of intense public interest, the committee met in the Caucus Room, which filled to overflowing with senators, representatives, diplomats, reporters, and members of the curious public, including women delegates to the Daughters of the American Revolution convention taking place in Washington at the time. When police blocked further entrance, many spectators rushed to nearby rooms and climbed out onto balconies to get a glimpse of the proceedings through the Caucus Room's large French windows. Disconcerted by this raucous mob, the subcommittee held the rest of its hearings in a much smaller committee room. "This inquiry is official and solemn," announced Chairman William Alden Smith of Michigan, "and there will be no hippodroming or commercializing of it."

Such fears reflected a persistent problem. In seeking to draw public attention to a specific issue through public hearings and press coverage, congressional investigators have often skirted the boundaries of sensationalism. In 1923 and 1924, Montana Senator Thomas J. Walsh conducted hearings in the Caucus Room on the leasing of naval oil reserves at Teapot Dome, Wyoming, to private business interests. The committee found that Secretary of the Interior Albert Fall had accepted a bribe in return for secretly leasing the naval oil reserves. Attacked for partisanship and witchhunting in the early stages of the investigation, Walsh's committee went on to prove its case, discrediting the administration of President Warren G. Harding and sending a cabinet officer to prison for the first time in American history.

One of the most successful investigations took place from 1932 to 1934, during the depths of the Great Depression, when the Senate Banking Committee examined Wall Street banking and stock exchange practices. Led by its chief counsel, Ferdinand Pecora, the committee uncovered shocking evidence of financial mismangement, which led to major banking reform and the creation of the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Emphasis shifted to military matters when the United States entered the Second World War, and senators conducted a long-running investigation into the national defense program, looking into military contracts and war profiteering. The inquiry brought into the spotlight its chairman, a hitherto obscure senator from Missouri, Harry Truman. After the war, a new dimension was added to Senate investigations when television cameras began recording some of the hearings. Long before cameras were permitted in the Senate Chamber in 1986, the Senate Caucus Room

The Foreign Relations Committee held hearings on the Vietnam War in the Caucus Room during the 1960s.

had become a familiar spot on Capitol Hill to television viewers. This was particularly true when television cameras captured the epic clash between Wisconsin Senator Joseph R. McCarthy and the U.S. Army, which took place in the Caucus Room in 1954. McCarthy had frequently used the room for hearings to publicize his charges of Communist subversion and espionage in the federal government, and it was here that his debate with army counsel Joseph Welch turned the tide of public opinion against him. Soon after, the Senate censured McCarthy for behavior that was "contrary to senatorial traditions."

In the late 1950s, the Senate's investigation of labor racketeering brought Teamster leader Jimmy Hoffa to the witness table to testify on Teamster policies, and also shined public attention on committee member Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts and his brother Robert Kennedy, the committee's counsel. In 1960 John Kennedy used the Caucus Room to declare his presidential candidacy, and eight years later Robert Kennedy chose the same setting for his own presidential announcement. Numerous other senators also launched presidential candidacies from the Caucus Room.

Chairman J. William Fulbright held Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings on the Vietnam War in the Caucus Room during the 1960s, grilling administration witnesses and demonstrating a widening breach between Congress and the White House on defense matters. Fulbright viewed these hearings as an educational experience, and the press and television coverage as a way to expand his classroom. The

Watergate Committee member Howard Baker (left) and Chairman Sam Ervin (right) vote during hearings held in the Senate Caucus Room.

media also captured North Carolina Senator Sam Ervin in 1973 as he chaired the Senate Watergate investigation that heard testimony from White House counsel John W. Dean, establishing President Richard Nixon's knowledge of and participation in the Watergate coverup.

A new central hearing facility opened in 1988 in a third Senate office building, designed specifically for modern television coverage. This reduced the use of the Caucus Room, although it is still used for many meetings, receptions, and occasional hearings. Television viewers continued to see the room as the backdrop for a number of contentious confirmation hearings, most prominently the controversial judicial nomination of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas in 1991.

CONTINUED GROWTH

Opening of the second office building in 1958 did not end the need for additional work space. As the legislative load continued to increase, the Senate permitted senators to add more legislative assistants to their staffs. The number of subcommittees expanded, and before long, the Senate witnessed the familiar sight of subcommittee staffs operating out of former hotel rooms and apartments in private buildings near the two Senate office buildings.

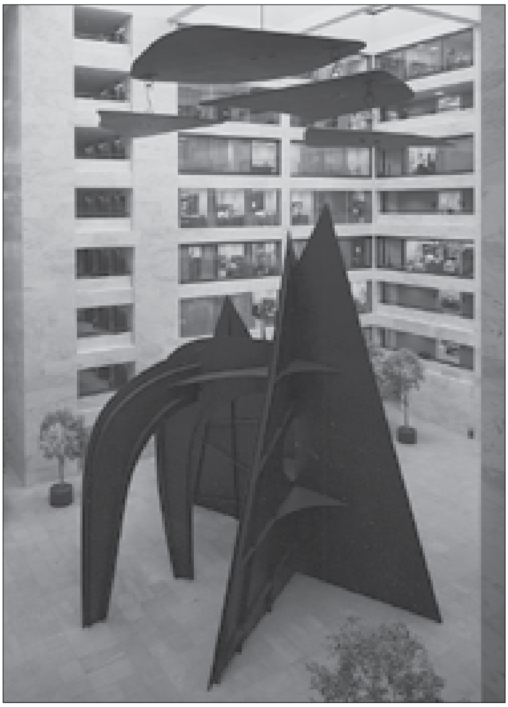
In 1972, the Senate authorized construction of a third building, for which funds were appropriated in 1976. The building was completed in 1982. By then the classical ornamentation of the original office building would have been too expensive to incorporate into the new building, and a more modern design was adopted by the architectural firm of John Carl Warnecke & Associates. The third office building provided "duplex suites," a senatorial office with a 16-foot ceiling, surrounded by two floors of staff offices with eight-and-a-half-foot ceilings. The largest of the Senate Office Buildings (at 1,020,000 square feet), it included suites for 50 senators and their staff, varying according to the size of their state's population. Office space was also available for committee and subcommittee staff and various support offices. The shift of so many senators into the new building allowed another major reconfiguration of the original Senate Office Building, creating office suites that contained between eight and ten connecting rooms.

NAMING THE RUSSELL BUILDING

Periodically, there had been proposals to name the first office building, one of the most persistent suggestions being the Thomas Jefferson Building. In 1972 the Senate named the building after Richard B. Russell, who had served as a Democratic senator from Georgia from 1933 until his death in 1971.

Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia introduced the resolution to name the original building for Senator Russell. "I do not think any man who has ever served in this body contributed more of his intellect, his knowledge, and his extraordinary skills, to enhance the integrity of the Senate, which he so deeply revered," said Senator Byrd. At the same time, senators named the second building for former Senate Republican Leader Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois, who had served from 1951 until his death in 1969. The sole dissenter to naming the buildings was Senator Philip Hart of Michigan, who took the position that the Senate was acting too soon after the two senators' deaths and should delay acting until "history's estimate" of them could be recorded. Ironically, in 1976 the Senate named its third building after Senator Hart, who was retiring due to ill health.

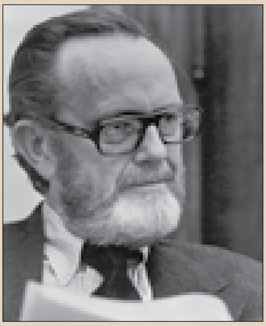
A quarter century later, in 1996, a larger than life marble statue of Senator Russell, sculpted by Frederick Hart, was installed in the Russell Senate Office Building rotunda. In 2003 a group called "Change the Name" made a case for removing Senator Russell's name and statue from the Senate Office Building because of his leadership in favor



The modern design of the Hart Senate Office Building features an open central atrium, highlighted by Alexander Calder's mobile-stabile, *Mountains and Clouds*.

Senator Richard Russell of Georgia.

Senator Everett McKinley Dirksen of Illinois.



Senator Philip Hart of Michigan.

of racial segregation during his long Senate career, but the Senate had named the building for reasons other than the policies he advocated. Recognizing him as a man of his times, representing the prevailing sentiments of his state, they honored him for his strength of character as a "senator's senator."

Since 1909 the elegant Russell Senate Office Building has graced Capitol Hill, providing much-needed office space for United States senators and their staffs. From its vast Caucus Room—the stage for dramatic hearings and investigations—to its myriad offices and niches that have enabled an expanding staff to handle mounting legislative business and ever-increasing constituent demands, the building has made the Senate's modern operations possible. Beyond housing much of the Senate's day-to-day business, it has hosted countless meetings, receptions, and other public functions, been the setting for Hollywood films, and the destination of millions of visitors. It will continue to serve the Senate and the nation in its second century.

In 1996, a statue of Richard Russell by Frederick Hart was installed in the Russell Senate Office Building rotunda.

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1909-2009
RUSSELL
SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

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