Capitol Views

From the polished spheres of Montana granite at its base to the copper and bronze golden eagle perched atop its dome, Idaho's Capitol rises 208 feet above the streets of Boise.

Patterned after the National Capitol in Washington, D.C., the Idaho Capitol is built of native sandstone quarried by convicts, four kinds of marble and Montana granite. The exterior sandstone blocks, some weighing 10 tons apiece, were cut by inmates at the state-owned quarry above the original Idaho Penitentiary. Inside, green swirled Vermont marble creates the walls, gray Alaska marble with inlaid patterns of near-black Italian marble the floors and staircases, and Georgia marble of reddish-pink the trim.

The glass-rimmed dome is supported by eight pillars that ring the four-story rotunda. The large columns are not marble, but steel with a scagliola veneer. Idaho hired Italian artisans to create the scagliola veneer, a mixture of granite, marble dust, gypsum and glue.

The interior of the dome is decorated with 13 stars representing the 13 original colonies, plus 43 smaller stars representing Idaho's inclusion as the 43rd state in the union.

The golden eagle perched on a triple pedestal of sandstone stands 5 feet, 7 inches tall and weighs 250 pounds. It is solid copper dipped in bronze.

Begun in 1905, construction of the Capitol was completed in 1920 at a cost of $2.3 million. □