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Capitol Reconstruction Commission History

By Brian Brown, 2006

The Capitol Reconstruction Commission was established in November, 1935, during a special session of the Legislative Assembly. The Commission succeeded the State Planning Board in planning the construction of a new capitol building to replace the previous capitol which burned in April, 1935. . The Commission, which consisted of nine members and a secretary, was to oversee the "construction and equipping of a State Capitol building or buildings, including [a] State Library. The secretary, John Alton Bassett, was responsible for coordinating decision-making information to the various commissioners.

The Commission first met in December, 1935, and immediately began to select a site and design for the Capitol. Over the next three years the Commission presided over the selection of architects, artists, contractors, and others for the construction of the State Capitol, State Library, and Capitol Heating Plant.

Construction of the Capitol began in 1936 and ended in 1938. The State Library was completed in 1938. Financing for a large portion of these projects was secured from the Public Works Administration.



Artist Ulric Ellerhusen (right) sits with his sister and her brother, Montana Governor Frank H. Cooney, in front of a relief sculpture in circa 1933. Ellerhusen created the Oregon Pioneer statue on top of the Oregon State Capitol as well as five marble reliefs on the exterior of the building. (Capitol Reconstruction Commission Records, acc. 88A-018, photos, folder 4)
