

Oklahoma's Dome

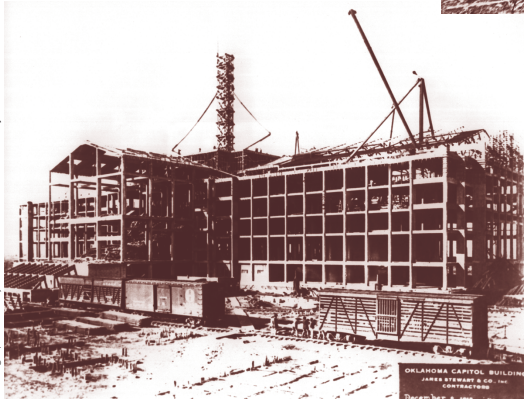
A Crowning Achievement

The Oklahoma State Capitol Building was designed by architect Solomon Andrew Layton, who from 1902 until his death in 1943, lived and practiced architecture in central Oklahoma. With various partners, he designed more than 100 other public buildings in the state, including 16 courthouses, 46 buildings for the Oklahoma City Public School System, the Skirvin Hotel, and the original University of Oklahoma stadium and library.

The Capitol was constructed by the James Stewart Company, Inc. It is hard to imagine today



Photograph courtesy—Oklahoma Historical Society



Photograph courtesy—Oklahoma Historical Society



Photograph courtesy—Oklahoma Historical Society

(upper right) Governor Lee Cruce breaks ground for the State Capitol Building July 20, 1914. ■■ (above) The Oklahoma State Capitol Building during construction, December 2, 1915. ■■ In the photograph (right), the saucer dome construction is visible. When constructing the high dome—more than 80 years later—the construction team removed more than 2 million pounds of brick and concrete that comprised the saucer dome. The task, using jackhammers, took four months.

that such a large public building project would start with only a handshake, but the State Capitol began that way—with the use of day labor. A contract was not signed until nearly a year later, August 3, 1915. The cost: \$1,515,000. Five thousand people attended the groundbreaking ceremony July 20, 1914. The building was constructed under the direction of the State Capitol Building Commission, chaired by Governor Robert Lee Williams. The Capi-



Aerial view of the State Capitol Complex, circa 1940s

tol was built on land donated by William F. Harn and John J. Culbertson.

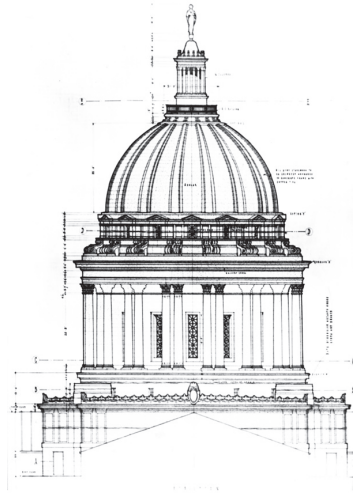
Arm wrestles and dogfights

It does not seem odd, given the earlier political fights about the location of the Capitol city, that the construction of the Capitol Building would be ac-

complished without disagreements. Though the building was “finished” (*sans* dome) June 30, 1917, the subsequent dome construction involved much political and financial wrangling that emerged and subsided for more than eight decades.

When magic happened

The creation of the Capitol Dome Builders, a joint venture of Oklahoma companies, occurred in 2000. J. Blake Wade, executive director of the Centennial Commission and major fundraiser for the dome project explained, “It was a fate deal. Everything that could happen did happen, good and bad. We, Oklahomans, merged to go ahead with the imagination and



Photograph courtesy—Oklahoma Historical Society

The high dome structure as proposed and rendered by architect Solomon Layton. Note the similarities to the final results.

ideas.” When the Oklahoma companies started pooling their resources and gaining cooperative spirit, this historic partnership was formed, and “that’s when magic happened.”

Capitol Dome Builders included Manhattan Construction, building in Oklahoma since 1896 and the company that built the Territorial Capitol in Guthrie, and Flintco, Inc., a family-owned Oklahoma Native American construction firm begun in 1908. Frankfurt-Short-Bruza, an Oklahoma-owned 57-year-old architectural-engineering company and one of the state’s oldest, served as architect-



Two Oklahoma construction companies, competitors on many occasions, pooled their resources and formed a partnership in order to build the dome.