

**A PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY
OF THE CONNECTICUT STATE
LIBRARY AND SUPREME
COURT BUILDING**

1908-1910

Part 2 Architectural Details

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Connecticut State Library**

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Main Lobby

"Passing through the main entrance one at once receives an impression of sweeping arches, lofty pillars and impressive stairways..." *Hartford Courant Dec.17,1910, p. 18.* Tennessee Pink marble is used in the flooring, base course, and treads of the stairs, while Tavernelle Pink marble is used in all other areas

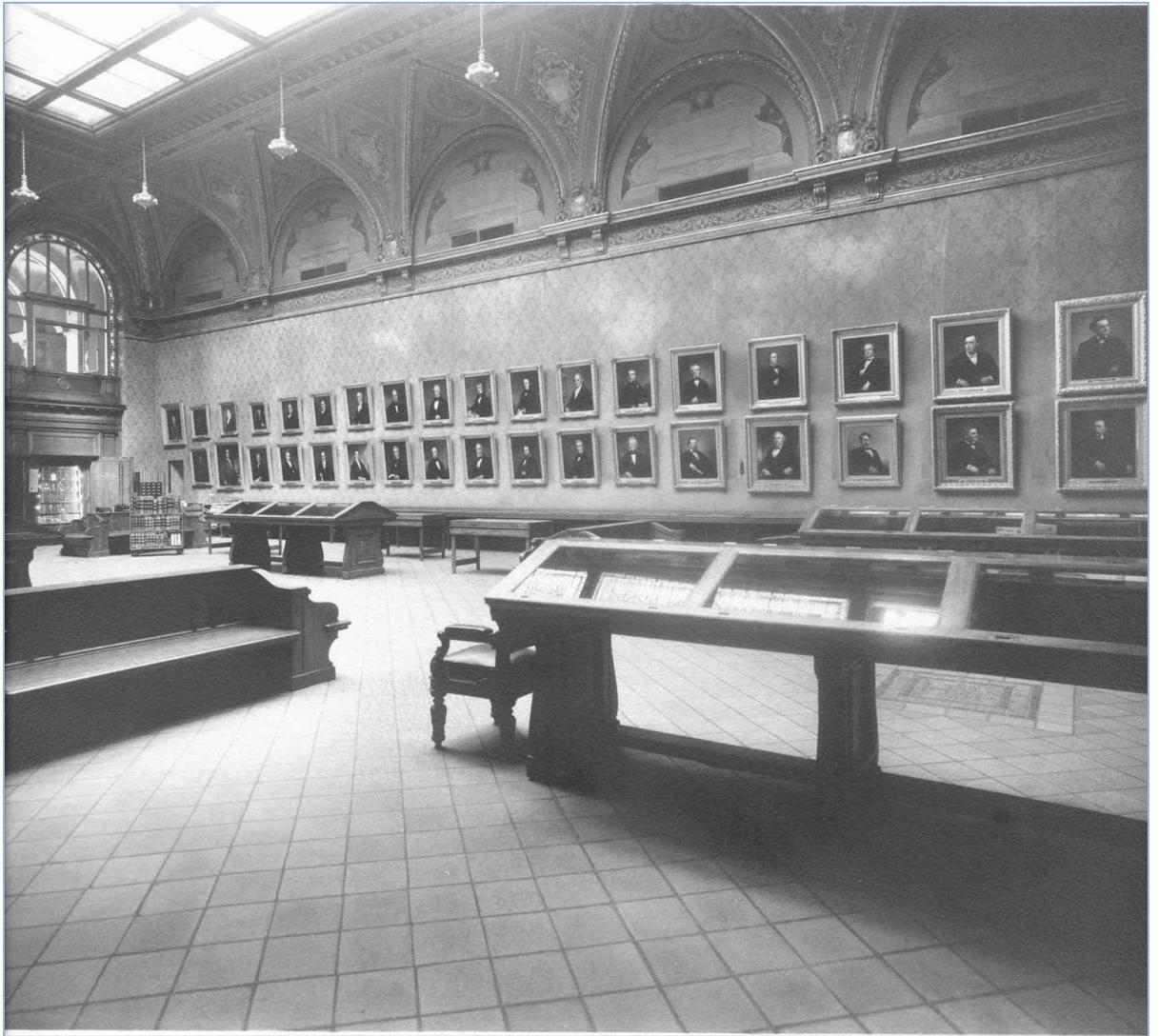


Photo courtesy of Patrick Smith



"The ceiling is of plaster divided into deep plaster mouldings. These are ornate to the extreme and consist of large octagonal and smaller square panels. They are toned in white and light yellow to correspond to the general coloring of the hall."

Hartford Courant Dec. 17, 1910 p. 18. Intricate carvings beautify the marble pillars and doorways.



State Archives, PG 220, Box 6

Memorial Hall

Memorial Hall was designed to properly display the portraits of Connecticut Governors and provide exhibit space for items relating to Connecticut History. The floor is red Moravian tile, and the walls were covered with heavy, gold silk brocade. The room is fifty-one feet wide, eighty-five feet long, and thirty-five feet high. Memorial Hall is now used as the primary exhibition area for the Museum of Connecticut History.



"The light comes from a great central skylight, made of colored glass...Above the skylight are rows upon rows of electric lights in brilliant reflectors. These are entirely invisible from the hall itself, and when the lights are turned on they will flood the room with a radiance like that of the brightest day." *Hartford Courant* Dec. 17, 1910 p. 18-19

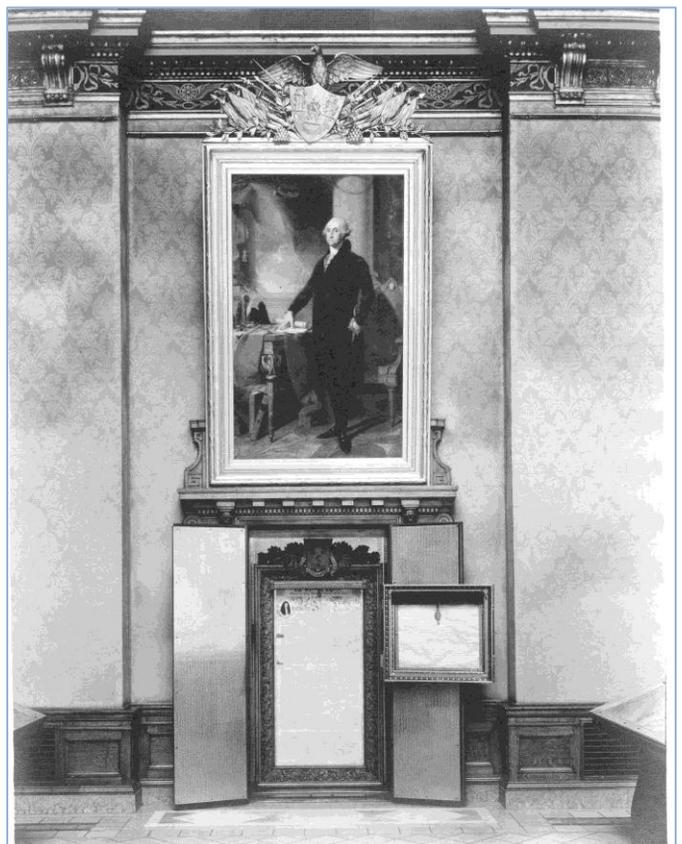




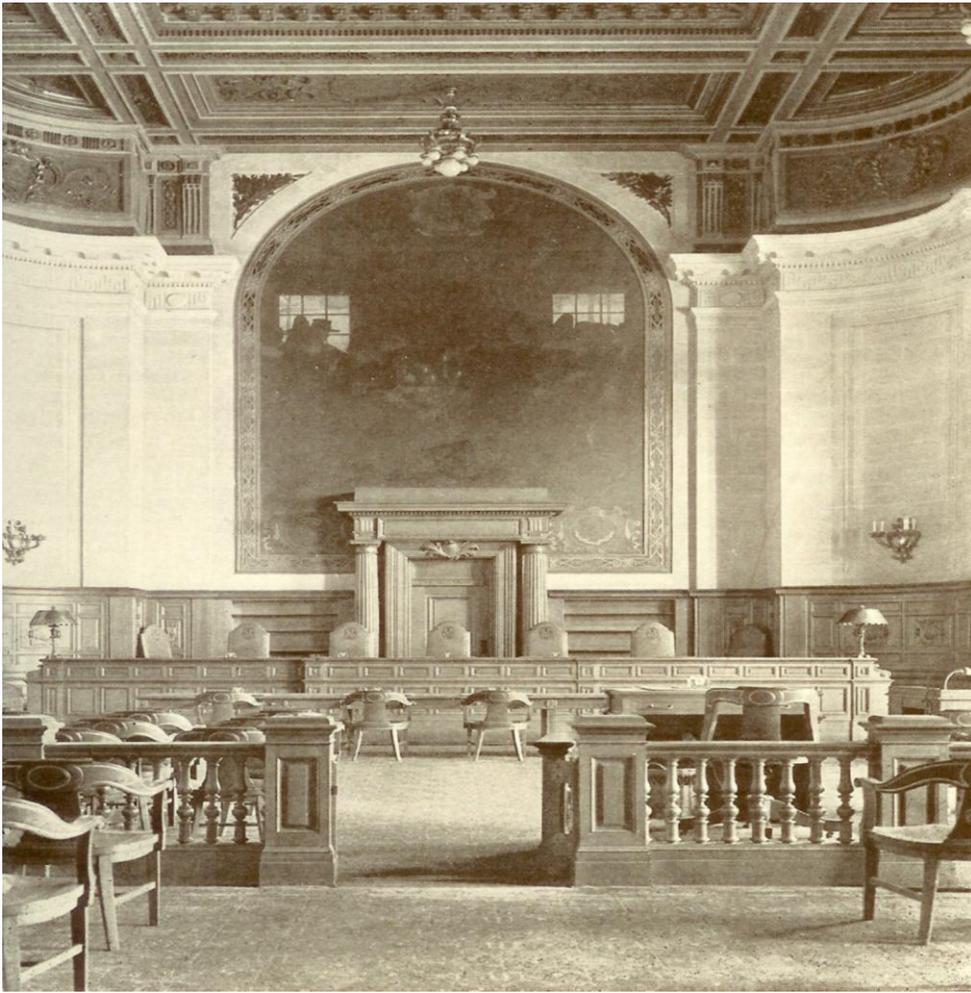
Two vaults were installed on either side of the main entrance for display of the Mitchelson Coin Collection and to safely and securely display other important artifacts. The elaborately carved oak balcony over the entrance is accessible from the Main Lobby.

State Archives, PG 220, Box 6

Against the south wall, the original 1662 Charter of the Colony of Connecticut was, and still is, securely enclosed in its specially constructed vault. The Gilbert Stuart portrait of George Washington now hangs in the Old State House.



Report of the State Librarian, 1912, after p. 36



Monograph of the Work of Donn Barber, published by John Cordis Baker, 1924. State Library Collection

Courtroom

The Supreme Court courtroom is forty-three feet wide, fifty-six feet long and thirty-five feet high, and "running entirely around it is a wainscoting of light oak, eight feet high, carved with remarkable beauty and showing in the various panels thirty-four reproductions of the seal of Connecticut...The walls above the wainscoting are of artificial Caen stone, and studding them at regular intervals are twelve gold wall lamps. A heavy stone cornice surmounts the wall and above this, flaming with reds and blues and greens, and dominated by the gilding, is the cornice with the seal again the chief design." *Hartford Courant Dec. 17, 1910, p. 18-19.*



Behind the bench hangs a mural painted by Albert Herter, *The Signing of the Fundamental Orders of the Constitution* 1638-39

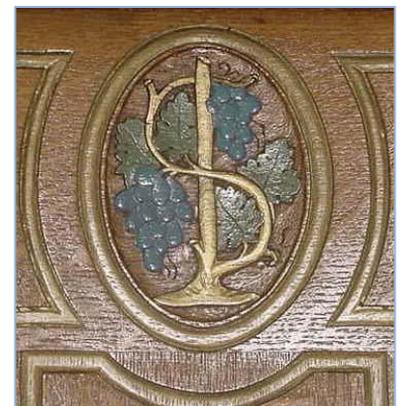


View of the Courtroom from the bench. The carved oak balcony is accessible from the Main Lobby.

Monograph of the Work of Donn Barber, published by John Cordis Baker, 1924. State Library Collection



Details of the carvings of the Seal of the State in the oak paneling surrounding the courtroom and the painted grapevines on the chairs.





State Archives, PG 220, Box 4, Folder 42

The design for the Court side included an office suite for each Justice, workspace for their staffs, a robing room, and several conference rooms. This conference room off of the Main Lobby featured heavy oak paneling, a lavatory, a fireplace, and windows along the south wall.

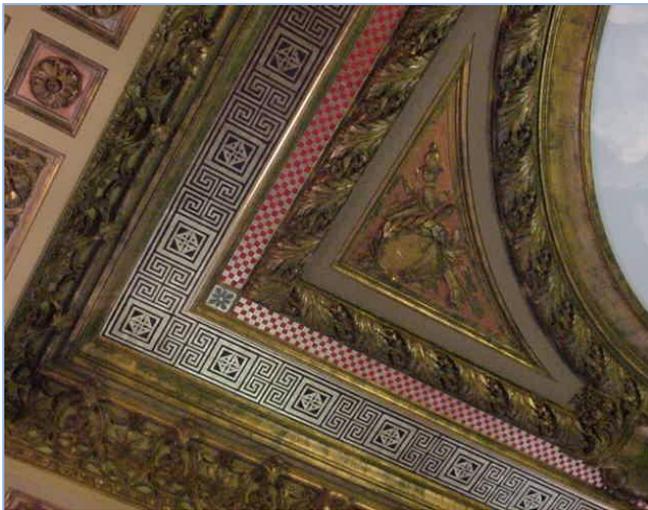


Monograph of the Work of Donn Barber, published by John Cordis Baker, 1924. State Library Collection

Main Reading Room

The Hartford Courant described the ninety foot long, forty-three foot wide, thirty-five foot high Reading Room as "a strikingly handsome room in which the same massive and brilliant decorative scheme that characterizes the rest of the building is not departed from."

Hartford Courant Dec. 17, 1910, p. 18-19



The elaborate Beaux Arts style ceiling is highlighted with greens, gold, reds, and three central panels painted to resemble the sky and clouds. It is illuminated by 2 huge, intricately cast chandeliers and surrounded by 14 smaller chandeliers. The chandeliers were all attached to winches in the attic so they could be lowered to change the hundreds of light bulbs.



Detail in the chandeliers



State Archives PG 220, Box 5, Folder 48

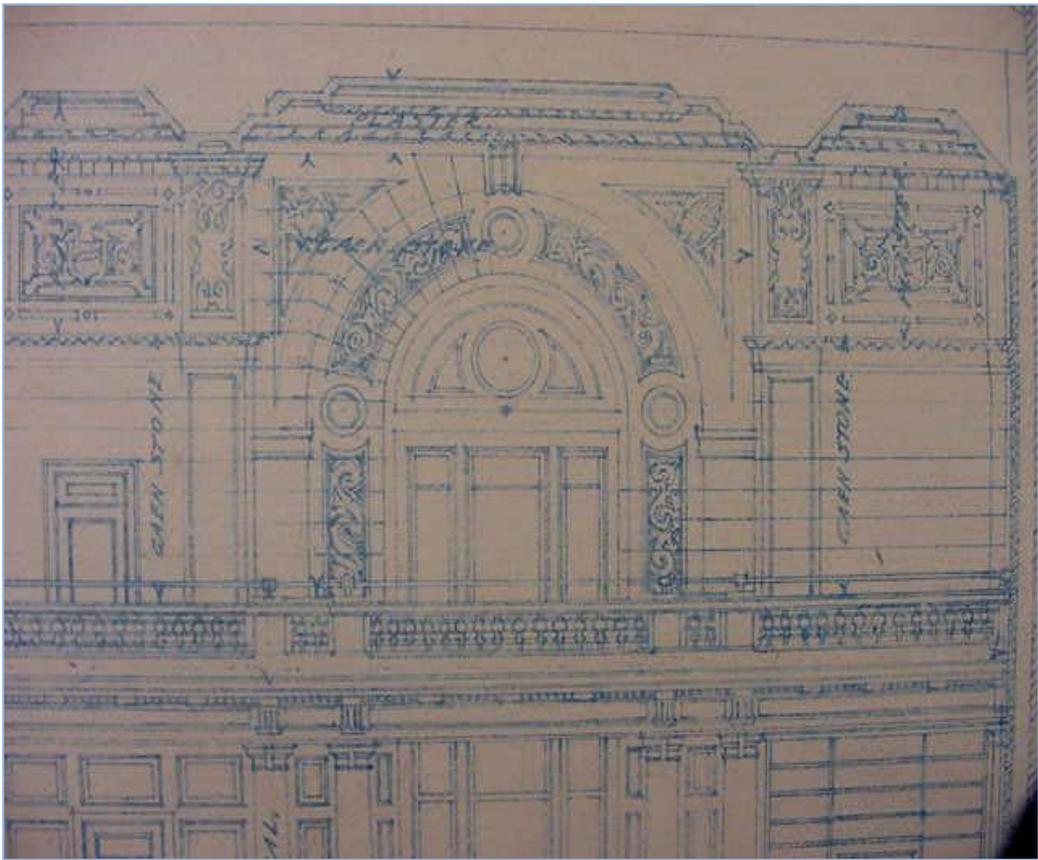
The two tiers of bookcases lining the southern third of the Reading Room were also steel. Flooring was red Moravian tile and one-half inch thick cork. The patron tables are steel and bronze, and feature built in electric lighting and bronze medallions of the state seal. Patrons were also provided with inkwells, trashcans and spittoons.



Thoughtful design even went into the brass doorknobs on the metal doors, which feature the Seal of the State of Connecticut.



Connecticut State Library and Supreme Court Building Plans,
v.2, Probate Vault 727.8 C716d



The architects designed intricately carved window arches for the east Balcony window and elaborate cornices. They selected Caen Stone for the walls.



CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY, HARTFORD.
LIBRARIAN'S OFFICE. LOOKING WEST INTO MEMORIAL HALL.

The State Librarian's office was conveniently located just off the Reading Room and featured a fireplace and a door leading directly into Memorial Hall.

Protection from fire was a chief concern of the architects and Mr. Godard. The Art Metal Company from Jamestown, New York installed 14 foot high steel wainscoting and bookcases around the perimeter. All the steel was painted and treated to resemble a richly grained Circassian walnut wood. This view from the west end of the Reading Room is looking south into Mr. Godard's office.



State Archives, PG 220, Box 5, Folder 48

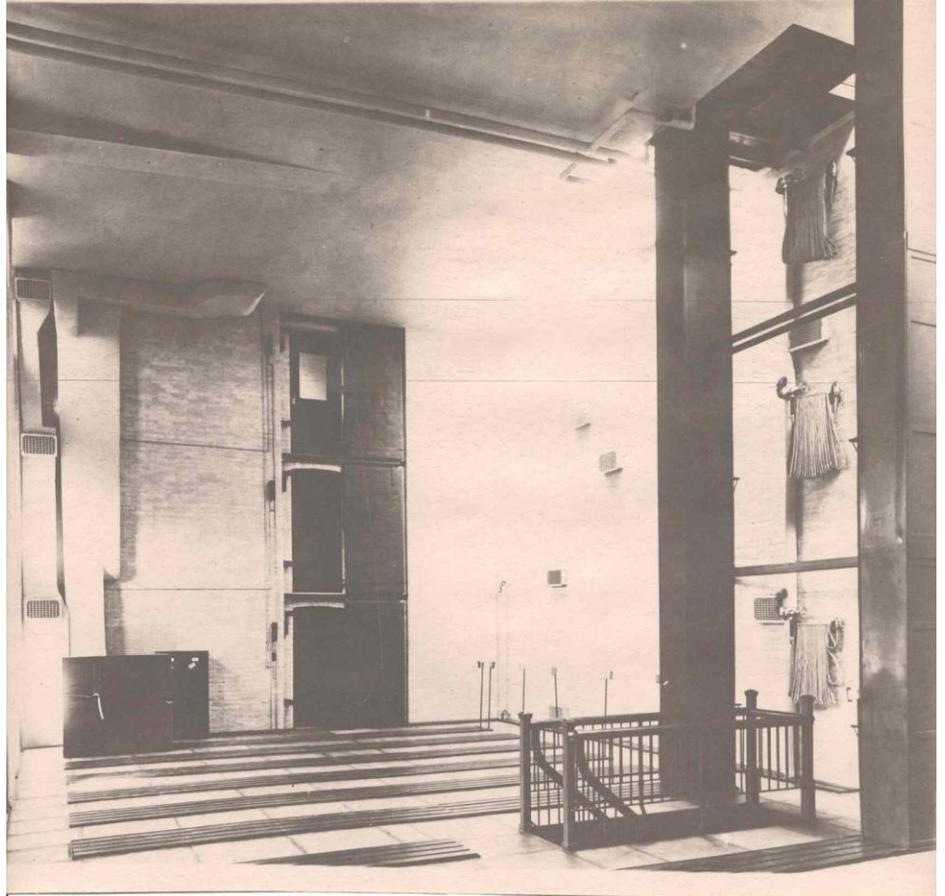


State Archives, PG 220, Box 5, Folder 48



Originally, only 4 levels of book stacks were completed. The stacks area provided 17,000 linear feet of shelving and featured an electric book lift and adjustable, all-steel shelves. Windows lining the south wall of each level, as well as small electric lights, illuminated the stacks and thick translucent glass floors served to disperse the light.

Unfinished Stack Levels, 5, 6, and 7. Doors in the background lead to the stairs by the west elevator and the railing in the center protects the stairs leading down to completed stack levels 1-4. Planks cover the openings in the glass floors where book stacks will be attached in the future. Emergency fire hoses were installed on each level.



Guastavino tiling, a fireproof system of construction was employed to create the vaulted ceiling of the public areas of the ground floor. Rafael Guastavino developed this method of vaulting space utilizing the ancient technique of "timbrel" vaulting. This technique was very popular when the Library was built and was used in many municipal buildings including Grand Central Station and the Main Hall at Ellis Island

Ground Level



The cavernous lower lobby was referred to as the "rathskeller"



Sub Basement Level



Though never completed, a subway tunnel was started to facilitate travel to the Capitol. The entry was designed with a “commodious stairway and elevator” to reach the ground floor lower lobby.

State Librarian’s Report, 1912, p. 52

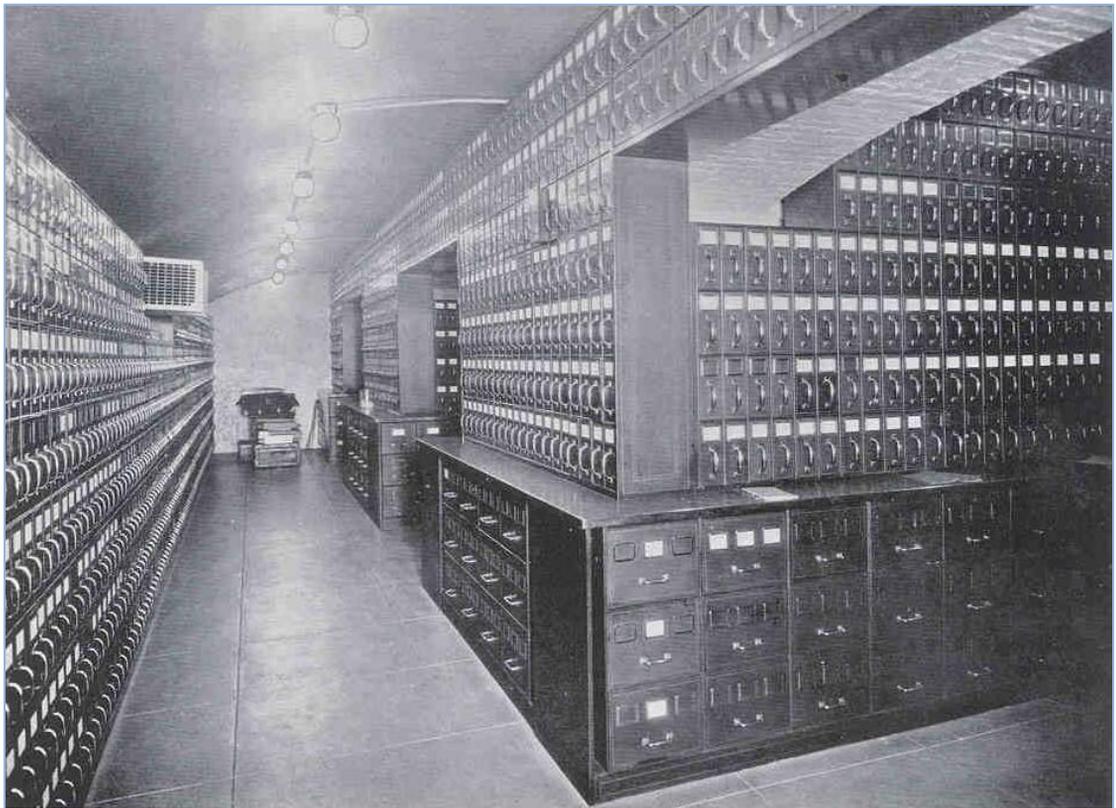




In the Probate Department, the second tier of the stack area was surrounded by the railing originally used in the Library Reading Room in the State Capitol, decorated with bronze carvings of the State Seal.

State Archives, PG 220, Box 5, Folder 46

State Archives, PG 220, Box 5, Folder 47



The extensive fireproof Probate Vault on the ground floor featured all metal cabinets and tiled floors and ceilings.

Sources consulted for this compilation included:

- State Archives, Picture Group 220, Connecticut State Library 1909-1976
- State Archives Record Group 12, Records of the Connecticut State Library
- State Archives Record Group 60 , Commission to Make Repairs to Capitol and Procure Site for New Building for State Officials.
- State Archives Record Group 128, Ex Libris Club Records
- The Connecticut State Library Echo*
- The Report of the State Librarian*
- The Hartford Courant*
- Vertical file folder “Connecticut State Library – Building” at the Library

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