



BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF THE ROTUNDA

SECRETS of the CAPITOL

Uncover many mysteries that lie within the history of Pennsylvania's most notable building

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A hidden passageway. Underground tunnels. Historic treasures. A bullet hole. And so much rich folklore.

Pennsylvania's Capitol, designated a National Historic Landmark in 2006, is considered one of the best examples of American Renaissance architecture in the U.S. It also offers a lot of little-known secrets that even people who have worked there for years don't know exist.

Many intriguing sites in and around the Capitol are omitted from public tours or require special permission to access. PennLive/The Patriot-News set out to uncover secrets that lie within and around the historical buildings where legislators, lobbyists, staffers, visitors and reporters roam on an almost daily basis.

In my travels around the Capitol Complex in the last couple of months with photographer Christine Baker, I discovered more hidden treasures worth sharing.

— J.M.



THE ROTUNDA PASSAGEWAY

Walking into the Capitol rotunda is breathtaking, with its colorful artwork and 23-carat gold-leaf accented features that lead your eye heavenward. Few know about a tunnel running through the dome, separating the ornate inner shell from the outer one that you see poking into the city skyline.

This 4-foot-wide passageway inside the 52-million-pound dome, modeled after St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, is taller than one might think. Christopher Ellis, the Capitol Preservation Committee senior preservation project manager, who is 6 feet 6 inches tall, could easily make his way around without worrying about

hitting his head.

When I first learned about this passageway, I was told it used to be included in the public tour of the Capitol. Visitors were permitted to trudge through the brick passageway as well as walk along the brass rail-lined ledge that encircles the base of the inner dome. From there, they could gaze down at the marble staircase and the tiled floor and enjoy a spectacular view of the rotunda's full grandeur from their perch 122 feet up — about 12 stories.

The tiled floor, which includes 377 mosaics by Bucks County craftsman Henry Chapman Mercer, is the largest piece of artwork in the Capitol.

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For more on the secrets of the Capitol, visit PennLive.com and see **Pages D2-4**:

- » Governors' favorite spots in the Capitol.
- » Urban legends and paranormal activity.
- » Buried history and forgotten treasures at the Treasury vault.
- » Attractions not mentioned on public tours.
- » Jan Murphy's observations about visitors to and details at the Capitol.

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