

LOCAL NEWS

Colorado Capitol's \$17 million rehab unveils results

Shroud coming down from dome of state Capitol

By Joey Bunch

The Denver Post

POSTED: 12/26/2013 07:59:46 AM MST 16 COMMENTS

UPDATED: 12/27/2013 04:53:04 PM MST



Crews work on removing the scrim surrounding the Colorado State Capitol dome, Dec. 26 2013. The weatherproof wrap that's covered the dome for nearly two years is starting to come off early Thursday morning. (RJ Sangosti, The Denver Post)

By the weekend, the gold of the Colorado Capitol should be glimmering once again, as crews slowly bring down the curtain that has shrouded the dome during the \$17 million restoration begun in 2010.

The scaffolding — 210 feet high — will be taken apart piece by piece over the next six weeks.

"If we have done our jobs well, you won't be able to tell we were there," state architect Larry Friedberg said, "except the building will be in much better shape than it was before we started."

The curtain began to come down a few inches at a time at daybreak Thursday.

Whatever the weather, the gauzy cloth had allowed work to proceed every day that crews were available, said Doug Platt, spokesman for the state Department of Personnel and Administration, which has overseen the work.

The curtain, called a scrim, could withstand sustained winds up to 60 mph, and when heated, it acted like shrink-wrap, making the 350,000 pounds of scaffolding capable of taking winds up to 90 mph.

The 270-foot dome has been closed since 2006, when a chunk of cast iron crashed on the observation deck where thousands of school children and tourists visit.

That kick-started a drive to make repairs. The [legislature appropriated \\$4 million for the overhaul](#). The rest came from grants, sponsors and other donations through a campaign called "[Share in the Care Colorado](#)."

The work [has been painstaking](#), especially replacing the thinner-than-paper sheath of Colorado gold that covers the dome.

The Capitol, constructed from 1886 to 1903, was designed by Elijah E. Meyers, the architect responsible for the capitol buildings in Texas and Michigan.



Dawn broke over Denver and the Colorado Capitol on Thursday, Dec. 26, 2013. (Joey Bunch, The Denver Post)

The dome was completed in 1898 and for the first 10 years was covered in copper, until state fathers decided that the flourishing state needed a glossier cap to honor the gold rush that drove the creation of Colorado.

The 65 ounces used for the current gild came from Cripple Creek & Victor Gold Mining Co. in Teller County, the same mine that produced the original covering.

The gold bullion used for the new gild [was donated in 2011](#) by mine owner AngloGold Ashanti. The 24-karat gold, valued at more than \$116,175, was shipped off to Florence, Italy, and milled into gold leaf.

At the time, Gov. John Hickenlooper said: "The gold is a true Colorado treasure and represents the state's past, present and future."

The dome has been regilded three other times — in 1949, 1980 and 1991.

"The unveiling of the new state Capitol dome really symbolizes Colorado's spirit of determination and our ability to emerge from difficult circumstances with a more solid foundation and bright outlook," Department of Personnel and Administration executive director Kathy Nesbitt said in a statement.

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\$17 million

The repair budget of the dome

270 feet

The length of the curtain on the dome, which can withstand 60 mph winds

350,000 pounds

The weight of the scaffolding, which is 210 feet high

90 mph

The dome's wind resistance

65 ounces

The amount of gold on the dome, which is spread 1/8000 of a millimeter thick

\$116,175

The value of the dome's gold

1898

The year the original dome, covered in copper, was completed

More than 140,000

The number of gold leaf sheets used in the repair

99

The number of stairs in the dome

11 stories

The comparable height of the statehouse

Updated December 27, 2013 at 9:00 a.m. *The following corrected information has been added to this article: Because of a reporting error, the architect of the Lincoln Memorial was misreported. Henry Bacon designed the Lincoln Memorial.*

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