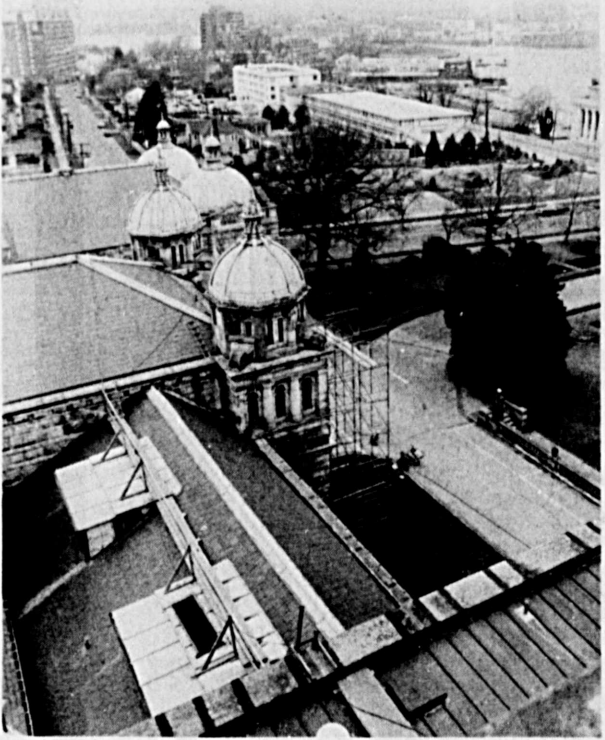
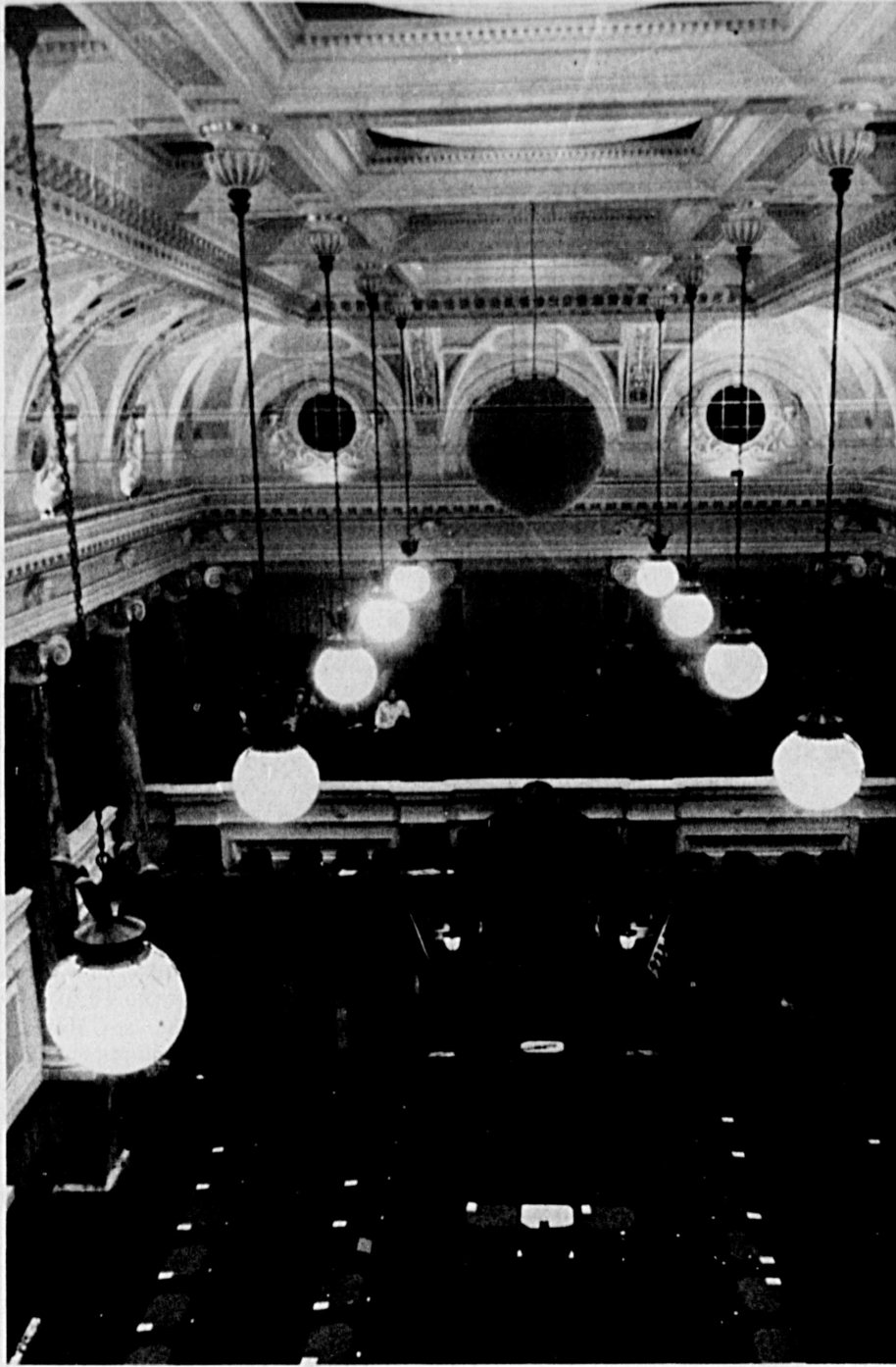




The foyer to the legislature building



Scaffolds visible on government buildings.



The legislative chamber

— Citizen photos by Tom Nixon

B.C. LEGISLATURE BEING RENOVATED

That old look being preserved

by TOM NIXON
Citizen Staff Reporter

If the ghost of Francis Rattenbury haunts the corridors of the British Columbia Legislature in Victoria, it likely approves of what they're doing to the old "marble palace".

Provincial public works craftsmen are restoring and renovating the 79-year-old stone building, designed in 1893 by Rattenbury, until then an unknown architect in his mid-20s.

Rattenbury entered a design competition, similar to one held in Prince George last year for the community cultural centre, won, and five years later saw his building open.

It cost about \$1 million, \$400,000 more than budgeted. The restoration will cost more than \$13 million, project manager Mac Lewis says.

"That's a bargain," he's quick to point out. "How much would a replacement cost?" Lewis, an architect, says nothing is being done to the building that the original designer would not approve if he were to see it.

"I'd like to think that we could take Rattenbury on a tour of the building now and he wouldn't disapprove of anything," Lewis says.

The "everything" amounts to a complete rebuild from basement to roof.

When the restoration was approved by the NDP government in 1973, the building had fallen into a state of disrepair.

The roofs leaked, the sub-foundations flooded, windows

were loose, plaster was loose and even the statue of Capt. George Vancouver threatened to plummet from its lofty perch on the centre dome.

After about \$8 million has been spent, however, most of that is changed. Most of the roofs have been repaired, the main areas all have been replastered or painted, many of the lead-framed windows have been rebuilt and Capt. Vancouver's rusted iron supports have been replaced with bronze.

Lewis says most of the work

has been done better than originally.

One example of poor original engineering is the use of iron support members near copper or brass coverings. The salt air and rain causes electrolytic corrosion similar to that suffered by dissimilar metals on ships.

The restoration work replaces the iron with compatible metal, even though it's much more expensive.

"It's hard to put a money value on some of the things we're doing," Lewis says, "but

we try and do it properly.

"In some cases it's better than it was originally."

Some of the details of the work:

The plaster mouldings are done as they were in 1895, moulded and then attacked with liquid plaster. In some cases the intricate designs are "struck in place" using custom framing. All as originally done.

"It's a marvelous project," Lewis says. "In the old days they just didn't have the psychological attitude of preserving buildings like this."

Luckily for the B.C. Legislature Building, times change and attitudes with them.

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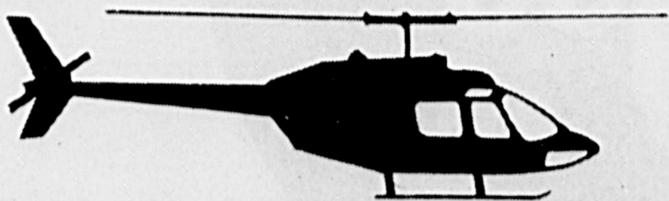
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