

THE MILLION DOLLAR STAIR

BY C.W. LATTIN

Find that there are many people who have never heard of the Grand, Western or "Million Dollar Staircase" (It's known by all three names) at our state capitol in Albany. Unquestionably, it is considered to be one of the most beautiful and extraordinary staircases in the world.

The architectural beauty of the capitol is largely due to the artistic ability of three 19th century architects: Leopold Eidlitz, H.H. Richardson and Isaac G. Perry.

The western staircase attests to the skill and genius of Mr. Perry (1822-1904) who designed it and supervised its construction. He was born in Vermont and served an apprenticeship with his father who was a contractor. After gaining a fine reputation as an architect he moved to New York City, where for 20 years he engaged in that business. In 1872, he moved to Binghamton, where he designed many beautiful churches and public buildings in that area of the country. In March 1883, he was appointed capitol commissioner by Gov. Cleveland.

The work of erecting the staircase began in March 1884, and took five and a half years to complete. It is located in the center of the western portion of the capitol, which occupies a space measuring 70 by 75 feet. From the floor to the top of the dome above the staircase it is 119 feet. From corridors at the east and west of the staircase are broad central runs of steps which ascend to a central landing about one-third the total height. From this landing short runs of steps rise at right angles to landings along the walls, from which are four runs of steps, two on each side, to the corridors above. Thus, four large wells are formed which emit light from the dome above, to the main-floor. Romanesque in style, it is reminiscent of the



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grand staircase at the Paris Opera House in France.

The Medina Quarry Company, whose general offices were located in Albion, published a brochure 100 years

ago and in it is printed a letter signed by Isaac Perry. Here is an excerpt:

"... I have used considerable

Medina Sandstone for building purposes and regard it as one of the best known sandstones... I used this stone for the steps of