

Already a Sustainer?

[Click here to increase now](#)



MAY 8, 2025

[contribute now](#)



[In The News](#)

[Public media funding](#)

[OPB events](#)

[Portland sidewalks](#)

[Oregon school budge](#)

CULTURE

# When Oregon's State Capitol burned to the ground



By **Kami Horton** (OPB)

Salem, Oregon April 25, 2022 5 a.m.

It was just before 7 p.m. on April 25, 1935, when Salem residents noticed smoke coming from the Oregon State Capitol building. The city fire department arrived on the scene in minutes, but their equipment couldn't reach the source of the blaze somewhere in the basement. Firefighters fought from a distance as flames engulfed walls and jumped floors. Just an hour after firefighters arrived, the iconic bronze dome topping the building crashed to the ground.

Hundreds, then thousands, of residents gathered to watch as the fire burned throughout the night.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR:

[Become a Sponsor](#)



STREAMING NOW  
**Morning Edition**

The Oregon State Capitol was gone.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR:

[Become a Sponsor](#)

*Watch OPB's "Oregon Experience" video on the 1935 Oregon State Capitol Fire:*



By the time the smoke cleared, the fire had caused nearly a million dollars worth of property damage and destroyed priceless state records. It also left one firefighter dead. Eighteen-year-old Floyd McMullen had been a college student working at the east Salem firehouse in exchange for lodging.

This was not the first time an Oregon Capitol had burned.

On December 30, 1855, fire swept through a newly occupied Territorial Statehouse, destroying the structure. That building had only been in use for a month. At the time, there was controversy over where to locate the capital city. Lawmakers considered Corvallis and Oregon City but settled on Salem.

touch came in 1893 with the addition of a bronze central dome.

After the 1935 fire, the federal government helped to finance the rebuilding.

Construction began in 1936 and finished in 1938. Two wings were added in 1977.

Today, Oregon's State Capitol building hosts several permanent and visiting exhibits and artwork. It is open to the public for both self-guided and escorted tours.

THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR:

[Become a Sponsor](#)



**Your support is critical to the future of  
OPB's local, independent journalism.**

**Join as a Sustaining member now.**

**Thanks to our members, public media thrives in the  
Pacific Northwest.**

**Contribute Now**

THANKS TO OUR SPONSOR:

[Become a Sponsor](#)

STREAMING NOW  
**Morning Edition**