



## STATE CAPITOL

In two more months the State Senators and Representatives, who were elected this month, will be in session in our State Capitol at Raleigh. Few, if any, of these men and women will give any thought to this proud and noble edifice; but will be giving their time and thoughts to the business at hand.

Thinking that the invaluable history of this building will be of interest to many of you, the following information was obtained from the State Department of Archives and History.

At the time of the erection of the Capitol, it was one of the most notable buildings in the United States. Whether we consider its massive structure or its admirable design or the thorough execution of every detail of the work, it was a remarkable performance; and when we recall the condition of affairs of the State in the 1830's we find greater cause to regard the structure with admiration and to praise that generation of North Carolinians for the public spirit which led to its erection.

For more than a century our people had no Statehouse. In early Colonial days the public documents were kept at Edenton, but there was no government building. In 1766 an appropriation was made to build a governor's mansion at New Bern, and four years later the public offices were established there—the General Assembly, however, frequently met elsewhere.

During the Revolution, in 1779, in order to have a central meeting place, the Assembly appointed a committee to select a site, either in Johnson, Wake or Chatham counties, for the State Capitol. Two years later, however, Hillsboro in Orange County was selected as the Capital. The offices were established there, and the palace at New Bern was sold. The Capital had not been established long before the Tory, Farming, captured Hillsboro, carrying off the Governor and all the State officers who were present at the time. Because of the activity of the Tories in the Upper Cape Fear region, the Assembly began to hold their meetings in various places—as far west

as Salem and as far east as New Bern.

This was one of the darkest hours of the Revolution, so the legislative body was protected from a Tory raid by a regiment of militia. It would have been sorrowful had the dreaded Fanning swooped down on the Assembly and again carried off the officials of the State, unless the legislators had taken the bushes, like Patrick Henry and the Virginia Legislature.

Eventually, in 1792, one thousand acres of old fields and thickets near the Wake County Courthouse were purchased, and the streets, squares and Statehouse were planned for the capital city.

The Statehouse, erected as soon as the trees and underbrush was cleared away, was similar in general plan to our present Capitol, with passage ways on the first floor and the legislative halls above. The brick was made near-by, and the construction was hurriedly and roughly done.

After we had won our second war of independence and the exterior of the building was covered with stucco, an order was given to Canova, the great Italian sculptor, for a colossal statue of Washington. This statue was brought from Italy by a man-of-war especially detailed for the purpose, was transported to Fayetteville by water and with great ceremony conveyed into Raleigh. It was huge, massive and perfect in every detail. It was one of the masterpieces of the world—there was nothing in America comparable to it.

In 1830 the Statehouse caught fire and the records in the public offices were for a time in danger of being destroyed. Fortunately, the fire was stopped in time. The Assembly of that year directed that the damages be repaired, and that fire-proof materials be used in every place possible. It was while this work was going on that the flame started that destroyed the building and Canova's statue of Washington.

At that time the people of the State were dreadfully poor. The West had no outlet for its surplus production, there were no internal improvements, and railroads had not been introduced. This was truly the darkest period in the