



Hours

Saturday – Sunday 10am - 4pm (First Capitol will reopen for general admission in May 2024.)

Memorial Day - Labor Day

Admission

General Admission

Location

18904 County G

Located North of Belmont on County Rd. G. west of Belmont Mound State Park.

[First Capitol on Google Maps](#)

Information

Open all year for prearranged group tours and field trips.

Tours are self-guided but there is a guide on site during operating hours.

Phone: (608) 987-2122

Email: [firstcapitol \[at\] wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:firstcapitol@wisconsinhistory.org) (Subject:

First%20%20Territorial%20%20Capitol%20%20Belmont%20WI)

[Website](#)

You can step back in time into Wisconsin history at the the First Capitol historical Site. There are two restored buildings of the first capitol of the Wisconsin Territory. The Council House is furnished much as it was when the territorial legislature met here in 1836. The Supreme Court building has displays of frontier life and other historical displays.

The Wisconsin Territory was created by a bill signed on April 20, 1836 by President Andrew Jackson; who then appointed Henry Dodge as governor. The territory included all of the present day states of Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, and parts of North and South Dakota. About 22,000 people lived in the territory. The lead-mining region of southwestern Wisconsin was the most densely populated area.

Belmont was the first capitol of the Wisconsin Territory, and the territorial legislature met here for 46 days in 1836. Legislators met in the council house and passed 42 laws; which would

become the basis of law and order when Wisconsin became a state 12 years later. A second building, the Supreme Court building was never used for its intended purpose. In addition, there was a lodging house built for the legislators, and a residence for the governor. James Doty, one of the legislators, lobbied hard for a city on which he owned land, Madison, to be declared the capitol. The legislature ended their first and last session in Belmont in December 1836; thereafter Madison was the permanent capitol.

The establishment of Madison as the permanent capitol city had significant impact on the Belmont community. Many people and businesses left town. Belmont maintained its post office and a few other businesses until 1867, when a new town was set up along the railroad tracks.

The present First Capitol site consists of the two remaining buildings which were used during the 1836 Territorial Legislature; the Council House, where the legislators met, and the Supreme Court House. After the capitol was moved to Madison, both buildings were used as residences for a time. The Supreme Court House became the residence of the territorial Supreme Court Chief Justice Charles Dunn. The Council House was later moved and turned into a livestock barn.

In 1910 the Wisconsin Federation of Women's Clubs began raising funds for the restoration of the buildings. In 1917, the Wisconsin Legislature appropriated \$3,000 for the purchase of the buildings and their removal to the site on which they were located in 1836. In 1924, the Council House was moved to its original site and restored. The Supreme Court House followed in 1956. The site is now a part of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

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Directions

18904 County Highway G
Belmont, WI 53510
United States

[View in Google Maps](#)

42.7478956, -90.3430548