

North Parlor fireplace ceramic tiles

Former Governors' Mansion State Historic Site

The ceramic tiles inset in the north parlor's fireplace surround are original to the homes construction in 1884. The tiles were manufactured by the J.&J.G. Low Art Tile Works of Chelsea, Massachusetts. The smaller, unadorned dark blue tiles inset in the floor in front of the firebox were imported from Stoke-on-Trent England, which to this day is still the main pottery center of England. At one time a decorative J.&J.G. tile surrounded the dark blue floor tile, but the feet of many governors and their families sitting in front of the fireplace wore them out and they were replaced with concrete painted blue. Two of the decorative floor tiles remain preserved under the black walnut mantel.



Flowers are a common art tile design of the time. This art tile shows four different plant types arranged in a geometric pattern.



This tile is referred to as the Shylock; Shylock was a character in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* and was a money lender in the play. Asa Fisher founded and was president of the First National Bank, and possibly selected this tile to indicate his role as a money lender in Bismarck.



Some sources site this tile as "Lady Liberty," but more likely it is Ophelia, a character from the Shakespeare play *Hamlet*. Ceramic tiles with female portraits abound during the late 19th century.



This decorative floor tile was found under each side of the wood mantel.