



Dear friends,

Welcome to the People’s House, our state capitol and one of the Treasure State’s architectural treasures. I hope this guidebook helps convey a sense of the aesthetic wonder and historical significance of our state capitol.

The primary purpose of our Montana statehouse is to facilitate the workings of state government. For more than twelve decades, this building has borne witness to key political and historical events that continue to shape life in our state.

Just as important as the practical aspects of facilitating our government, however, is the symbolic role this building plays for those of us who call the Big Sky home. Our capitol serves as an icon of democracy and liberty, particularly as the statue Montana stands atop the dome with a torch to guide our way.

Our capitol is also a valuable museum that provides a stunning window into our state’s rich history and heritage. This storied building’s murals and statuary vibrantly illustrate the Treasure State’s past, reminding all who visit of its continuing importance.

I hope you enjoy your tour of our Montana state capitol and return often.

Sincerely,

Greg Gianforte
Governor



In 2019 the Montana legislature authorized the creation of a tribal flag plaza to recognize the contributions of American Indians to the state and the nation. The flags represent, from left to right, the Little Shell Chippewa, Fort Belknap Indian Community (Assiniboine and Gros Ventre), Crow, Blackfeet, United States, National League of Families POW/ MIA, Montana, Chippewa Cree, Confederated Salish and Kootenai, Fort Peck (Assiniboine and Sioux), and Northern Cheyenne.

This document was produced by the Montana Historical Society and was printed at state expense. Information on the cost of this publication can be obtained by contacting the MTHS.

VISIT US!
mhs.mt.gov/education/Capitol-Capitol-Art
(406) 444-2694



A brief history of the Montana State Capitol

- TIME IMMEMORIAL**
The Helena Valley is part of a vast hunting and gathering region used by the Blackfeet, Salish, and other indigenous nations.
- 1805** Explorers Lewis and Clark pass through the area on their journey up the Missouri River.
- 1864** Montana Territory is created; gold is discovered at Last Chance Gulch (now Helena).
- 1875** Helena becomes the third territorial capital, succeeding the gold camps of Bannack and Virginia City.
- 1889** Montana becomes the forty-first state.
- 1894** Helena wins a fiercely contested battle with Anaconda to become the permanent state capital.
- 1899** Construction begins on the capitol.
- 1902** Completed capitol is dedicated on July 4.
Style: American Renaissance
Architects: Charles E. Bell and John H. Kent of Helena
Exterior material: sandstone from Stillwater County
Dome: faced with copper, rises 165 feet
Interior design: French Renaissance design by F. Pedretti’s Sons of Cincinnati, Ohio, who painted the murals and designed the stained glass
- 1909-1912**
Wings added to the east and west ends of the building.
Architects: Frank Andrews of New York, John G. Link and Charles S. Haire of Butte
Exterior material: granite from Jefferson County
Murals: Montana artists C. M. Russell (House of Representatives), E. S. Paxson (House Lobby), and R. E. DeCamp (Law Library, now a senate hearing room)
- 1930s** Civil Works Administration repaints the walls of the rotunda to repair earthquake damage and re-faces the copper dome.
- 1960s** Major renovation modernizes the building and mitigates against earthquakes.
- 1999-2000**
Historic restoration and technical upgrades are completed.





EXTERIOR

1 *Tribal Flag Plaza* and *Thomas Frances Meagher*, bronze by Charles J. Mulligan, 1905. An Irish revolutionary beloved by Montana's Irish citizens, Meagher twice served as acting governor of Montana Territory.

2 *Montana*, bronze by Edward Van Landeghem, ca. 1901. *Montana* graces the capitol dome as a classical symbol of liberty.

Begin your tour indoors in the rotunda on the second floor.

SECOND FLOOR

3 *Wilbur Fisk Sanders*, bronze by Sigvald Asbjornsen, 1913. An influential figure in territorial affairs, Sanders was a prosecuting attorney, organizer of Virginia City's vigilantes, state senator, and founder of the Montana Historical Society.

4 *Jeannette Rankin*, bronze by Terry Mimnaugh, 1980. A leading suffragist and peace advocate, Rankin was the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress and the only person to vote against the U.S.'s entry into both World Wars I and II.

5 The four rondels in the dome of the rotunda depict archetypes of the state's early history, oil on canvas by F. Pedretti's Sons, 1902. *The Cowboy* (inspired by the artwork of Charles M. Russell); *The Indian Chief* (Chief Charlo, Salish); *The Prospector* (Henry Finnis Edgar); and *The Trapper* (Jim Bridger).

6 *Burton K. Wheeler*, bronze by Robert M. Scriver, 1977. Wheeler served as a U.S. Attorney during World War I and as U.S. senator 1927-1943.

7 *Joseph M. Dixon*, bronze by John W. Weaver, 1972. Dixon served as U.S. representative 1903-1907, U.S. senator 1907-1913, and governor 1921-1925.

8 *Thomas J. Walsh*, marble by Louise K. Sparrow, 1930. Walsh served as U.S. senator 1911-1930. In 1924 he uncovered the Teapot Dome Scandal; in 1930 he was appointed U.S. Attorney General, but he died before assuming office.

9 *Gallery of Outstanding Montanans*. The Gallery pays homage to citizens of the Treasure State who made contributions of state or national significance to their selected fields of endeavor while epitomizing the unique spirit and character that defines Montana.

THIRD FLOOR

10 *Driving the Golden Spike*, oil on canvas by Amédée Joullin, 1903. This mural depicts the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad, Montana's first transcontinental line, in 1883.

ART IN THE Montana State Capitol

11 *Women Build Montana*, oil on panel by Hadley Ferguson, 2015. This two-part mural—*Culture* on the east side of the staircase and *Community* on the west—illustrates the essential roles played by women in Montana's story from the traditional lifeways of indigenous peoples to women's contributions to home life, politics, community building, and the work force in the first half of the twentieth century.

12 *Mike and Maureen Mansfield*, bronze by Gareth Curtiss, 2001. Mike Mansfield served as a U.S. representative 1942-1952, U.S. senator 1952-1977, senate majority leader 1961-1977, and U.S. ambassador to Japan 1977-1989.

He insisted that his wife Maureen be included in the statue in recognition of the critical role she played in his career.

13 Murals in the Old Supreme Court (the original senate chamber 1902-1912, now used as a hearing room), oil on canvas by F. Pedretti's Sons, 1902. *Signing of the Enabling Act* which paved the way for Montana's statehood; *Lewis' First Glimpse of the Rockies*; *Signing the Proclamation*



of Statehood; *The Chase of the Buffalo*; *Farewell to the Buffalo*; *The Gates of the Mountains* on the Missouri River; and an *Emigrant Train Being Attacked by the Indians*. Oil on canvas by F. Pedretti's Sons, 1902.

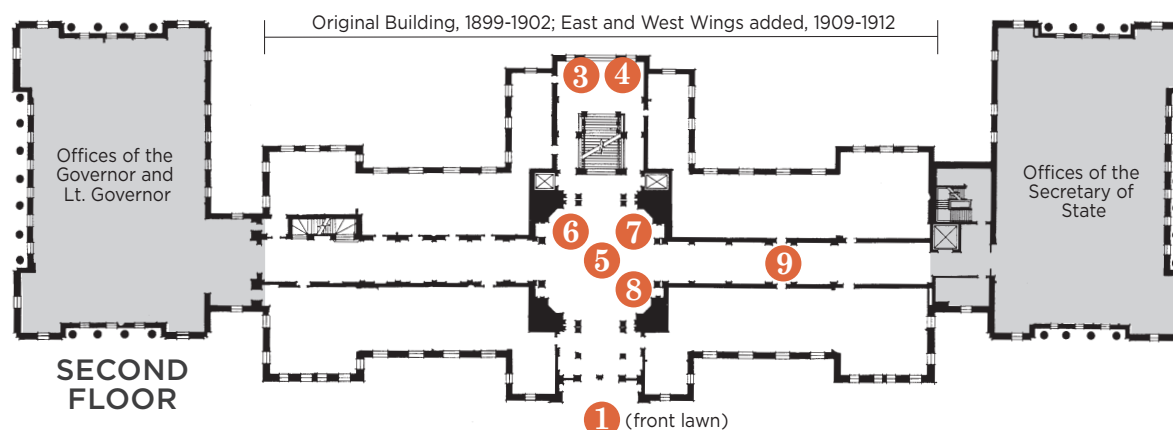
14 Murals in the Senate Chamber (original house chamber 1902-1912), oil on canvas by F. Pedretti's Sons, 1902. *The Louisiana Purchase* in an apocryphal meeting between Thomas Jefferson and Napoleon Bonaparte; *Prospectors at Nelson Gulch* near Helena; *Old Fort Owen* with Fathers Anthony Ravalli and Pierre-Jean DeSmet; *Custer's Last Battle*; *Lewis and Clark at*

Three Forks with York and Sacagawea; and *Old Fort Benton* with prominent fur traders Pierre Chouteau Jr. and Andrew Dawson.

15 *We Proceeded On*, bronze by Eugene Daub, 2006. This bas relief shows the members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition at daybreak as they prepare to re-embark on their upriver journey through Montana's famed Missouri Breaks.

16 Murals in the House of Representatives Lobby, oil on canvas by Edgar S. Paxson, 1912. Salish men searching *After the Whiteman's Book* in an effort to bring missionaries to the Bitterroot Valley; a symbolic meeting between American Indians and immigrants in *The Border Land*; *Lewis and Clark at Three Forks*; *Meriwether Lewis at Black Eagle Falls in present-day Great Falls*; French-Canadian explorer *Pierre de La Verendrye* who, at the time of the mural's creation, was believed to be the first non-Indian to reach what is now Montana; and The Surrender of Chief Joseph after the Bears Paw Battle near Chinook.

17 *Lewis and Clark Meeting the Indians at Ross' Hole*, oil on canvas by Charles M. Russell, 1912. Russell's largest painting relegates the titular explorers to the background while mounted Salish warriors dominate the foreground of this majestic mural.



SERVICES IN THE CAPITOL

Restrooms Located on first and second floors, east of the Grand Staircase.

Elevators Located on either side of the Grand Staircase and in both wings.

Gift Shop
mhs.mt.gov/store/

Post Office Located near the south entrance on first floor. Open 8am-12pm weekdays.

Free WiFi Network: MT-GUEST-WIRELESS

Wheelchair Available at the Information Desk on the first floor.

