

Utah's Early History in Capitol Artworks

Points of Discussion for Teachers

ROTUNDA ARTWORKS

The four largest paintings depict the first non-native people then known to have entered the territory that would become Utah.

- Father Escalante and Father Dominguez (1776), accompanied by an expedition sent by the Governor of Spanish New Mexico, were some of the first to describe Utah Lake valley as conducive to settlement.
- Peter Skene Ogden (1828) was an experienced Canadian fur trapper and mountain man whose expeditions took him through large parts of Utah.
- Captain John C. Fremont (1843) was the first to map and describe the American west and systems of the Great Basin, making it much easier for people to move westward.
- Brigham Young (1847) and an advance group of 148 pioneers decided this is “the right place.”

In the Rotunda drum, eight murals depict important events in Utah's history along with scenes of cultural and agricultural life and industrial development.

1. Brigham Young hiked to the top of Ensign Peak to map out the Salt Lake City settlement.
2. To deal with their new, dry climate, pioneers had to divert fresh water from local streams to use for crops through irrigation systems.
3. The “miracle of the Gulls” saved the wheat fields of the pioneers’ first harvest.
4. Conflicts between natives and Mormon Settlers lasted until a peace treaty was signed in 1852
5. Utah housed 20 out of the 190 stations on the short-lived Pony Express mail delivery.
6. General Patrick Connor inaugurated mining in Utah and established the original Fort Douglas.
7. With the hammering in of the golden spike, the transcontinental railroads met on Utah territory in 1869.
8. An open structure, the Old Bowery, served as the first social meeting place for the settlers.

HOUSE CHAMBER MURALS

- Jim Bridger was one of the first discoverers of the Great Salt Lake. Legend says he tasted the water and doubted whether anything could grow in the region due to its saltiness.
- Seraph Young was the first woman to cast a vote in Utah territory (1871), making Utah the second place in the nation for women's suffrage (after Wyoming Territory).
- The Engen brothers built ski jumps out of old mining materials in the 1930s, helping to transfer the main source of Utah's economy from mining to winter recreation.
- Brigham Young shares his plans and “vision” for the Salt Lake LDS Temple with the architect, Truman Angell.