The Utah State Capitol

self-guided tour

UTAH STATE CAPITOL
Commemorating a Century
1916 - 2016
Capitol Preservation Board
Welcome to the People's House!

Capitol History

In 1888, Salt Lake City donated nearly 20 acres of land to the Utah Territory for the construction of a Statehouse. However, it was not until 1909 that Utah could fund the building of the Capitol. When Union Pacific Railroad President E. H. Harriman passed away, Utah received nearly $800,000 in inheritance taxes from his estate. The Utah Legislature responded with a $1 million bond and the Utah State Capitol building project was underway.

Utah architect Richard K.A. Kletting won the design competition, and construction began in 1912. Kletting's plans incorporated modern methods and materials, including steel-reinforced concrete, electric lighting, and elevators. The building was dedicated in October 1916.

Capitol Restoration

A massive renovation project from 2004 to 2008 protected the Capitol against earthquake damage and restored its historic beauty. To seismically retrofit required the careful shifting of millions of pounds of concrete onto new footings, called base isolators.

Capitol Architecture & Symbols

Kletting’s neoclassical revival style design draws upon ancient Greek and Roman roots, which have become architecturally symbolic of American democracy. Simple yet dramatic, the building is stunning in its detail and symmetry.

Fifty-two Corinthian columns (known for their decorative acanthus leaves) made out of local granite quarried from Little Cottonwood Canyon line the outside of the building.

Kletting incorporated many details and symbols throughout his design. Look for the following as you explore the building, inside and out:

- Laurel wreaths—Symbolic of victory, vitality, and success
- Lions—Symbolic of pride, strength, authority, and protection
- Beehives—Utah’s state emblem, symbolic of industry and unity
1. Hall of Governors & State Seal (level 1)

The Hall of Governors displays portraits and biographies of Utah’s past governors. Natural light filters into the space from all sides, a prominent design element throughout the building. Replicas of Edison lightbulbs grace the ceiling, emphasizing the historic nature of the electric system.

A gift to Utah in celebration of the 100th birthday of the People’s House, the Great Seal of the State of Utah lays in the center of the Hall of Governors. Representing Utah’s diverse counties, 29 medallions line the perimeter of the seal.

2. West Gallery

The West Gallery features displays showcasing aspects of Utah’s unique culture and heritage. The rotating exhibits highlight these facets, with subjects pertaining to historically significant events, persons and cultures, the natural beauty of the State, the industries of Utah, and the fabric relating to the Capitol. Artifacts, images, and historical information on display bring to life Utah’s past and present.

3. Rotunda (level 2)

The most spacious room in the People’s House, the Rotunda serves as the backdrop for many public, private, and government events. The space is a symbol for government transparency, since all three branches of government are visible from the central location. The interior dome reaches 165 feet at its peak and seagulls fly across the blue sky. Twenty-four monolithic columns, the largest in the country, line the room and are carved out of the same Georgia marble found in the symmetrical wall panels and in the floor.

4. Cyclorama & Pendentive Murals

The Rotunda was left unfinished for nearly 20 years, until the Depression era Public Works of Art Project funded art commissions for the Capitol.

The circular cyclorama depicts scenes from 19th century Utah life. The pendentives on the large piers are home to four paintings depicting the earliest non-native explorations into the region.
5. Niche Sculptures

Kletting recommended four classical niche sculptures to symbolize values and ideals fundamental to Utah's culture. During the 2004-2008 Capitol restoration, artists were selected to fulfill Kletting's vision. Each of the 11-foot bronzes employs an adult mentor and a youthful learner.

6. Lunettes

The half-moon-shaped paintings at each end of the large, vaulted atrium were among the first commissioned artworks installed in the Capitol. The west mural is titled *The Passing of the Wagons* and the east is titled *Madonna of the Covered Wagon*.

7. Brigham Young

This monumental bronze is of Utah's first territorial governor, Brigham Young. It is next to images of the sixteen federally appointed governors who led Utah Territory between 1850 and 1896.

8. State Reception Room

The State Reception Room, nicknamed the "Gold Room" for its lavish furnishings and gold leafing, was designed to accommodate formal state functions. It features a Beaux-Arts ceiling mural titled *Children at Play*. The richly ornamented walls, draperies, fireplaces, and furnishings were preserved during the Capitol restoration to show the room in its turn-of-the-century glory.

9. Governor's Suite

The Governor's Suite consists of staff offices, conference rooms, a reception area, and both a ceremonial office and a working office for the Governor. While the working office is not visible to the public, the ceremonial office is used for bill signings, press conferences, and meetings with the public.

The "tornado desk" in the ceremonial office was created from trees toppled on the Capitol grounds by a tornado that ripped through Salt Lake City in 1999. The desk is a symbol of Utah's spirit and determination, a reminder that something good can come from a disaster.
11. Senate Chamber

The Senate is a body of twenty-nine individuals elected to four-year terms, each serving a district of 100,000 citizens. As Utah has a "part-time" or "citizen" legislature, the Senate and House meet in their respective chambers for 45-day annual sessions, beginning on the fourth Monday of January.

In 1916, the Senate Chamber's multi-paneled landscape of Utah Lake was painted. In 2006, the landscape of northern Utah and the landscape of the red rock and ancient ruins of southern Utah were commissioned.

10. Supreme Court Chamber (level 3)

The Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal in the state judicial system. It is made up of five justices appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Most of the court's business is now conducted in the Scott M. Matheson Courthouse in downtown Salt Lake City. The Capitol's historic courtroom is used several times a year for ceremonial functions.

The painting, titled *Natural Bridge (Caroline Bridge)*, depicts one of three natural bridges in Utah's Natural Bridges National Monument. The historic stoplight on the center podium was presented to the Court in 1916 to be used as a court timer.
Previous to the 2004 - 2008 Capitol restoration, the building’s fourth floor consisted of a narrow hallway and rows of offices. After the restoration, the fourth floor was reclaimed according to Kletting’s original plans, and it now includes an expansive gallery space overlooking the Rotunda. The gallery features rotating art exhibits and a close up view of the Rotunda’s cyclorama and pendantive murals.

The Rotunda chandelier, which can be seen clearly from the fourth floor gallery, was hung in 1915. Additional shades for the chandelier were donated during the restoration by the Arkansas State Capitol, which had an identical chandelier.

**12. House Chamber**

The House of Representatives shares responsibility with the Senate for creating the laws of the State. Seventy-five representatives serve two-year terms and are each elected from a district of approximately 40,000 citizens. The Latin phrase *vox populi*, which means “Voice of the People,” hangs behind the Speaker’s seat as a reminder to the purpose of the Chamber.

Original murals include *Dream of Brigham Young* and *Jim Bridger and the Discovery of the Great Salt Lake*. The murals *Seraph Young Votes* and *Engen Brothers Bring Skiing to Utah* were added in 2007.
Capitol Preservation Board

As the Steward of the Capitol, the Capitol Preservation Board (CPB) oversees and cares for the buildings and the grounds on the Capitol Hill Complex. CPB also preserves the building's treasured artifacts, artworks, and historic furnishings for the people of Utah, and welcomes more than 200,000 visitors each year for guided tours, meetings, weddings, free speech rallies, and official State of Utah business.

**Visitors Center Hours**
Monday - Friday
8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Closed Saturday, Sunday, and State Holidays

**Capitol Building Hours**
Monday - Friday
7:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.
Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays
8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**Visitors Center:** 801-538-1800
**Events & Scheduling:** 801-410-0011

Connect with us on social media! @UTStateCapitol

#utahstatecapitol

Capitol Preservation Board
350 North State Street
120 State Capitol | Salt Lake City, UT 84114
www.utahstatecapitol.utah.gov