

celebrate the completion of the first transcontinental railroad that passed through Montana. **Before automobiles and highways, how did people travel to and around Montana? Do you know how your own family first traveled to the Treasure State?**

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*Women Build Montana* is a two-panel mural exhibited on either side of the Grand Staircase. It was painted by Missoula artist Hadley Ferguson in 2014 (b. 1977). The panel on the east wall depicts *Culture* during the late nineteenth century. The panel on the west wall depicts *Community* in the 1920s. **Based on these two paintings, what are some ways that life in Montana changed during this thirty-year period?**

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**What aspects of women’s lives remained the same?**

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- **Descend the Grand Staircase, returning to the Rotunda where you began your tour, then circle around beneath the stairs and stop at the two statues:**

Read the text for the two statues and then briefly summarize why these two people are commemorated in our State Capitol:

**Jeannette Rankin is honored because:**

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**Wilbur Fisk Sanders is honored because:**

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Your interactive tour of the Capitol is now complete. Hopefully, it has been both enjoyable and thought-provoking. As you leave: **How would your experience touring the Capitol have been different if there had been no paintings or sculptures depicting people and events from Montana’s past?**

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For more information, contact:  
406-444-2694 or [www.mhs.mt.gov](http://www.mhs.mt.gov)



# Explore Your Statehouse

## An Interactive Student Guide to the Montana State Capitol

**Note:** For additional information, this interactive guide can be supplemented with *A Short History & Self-Guided Tour of Montana’s State Capitol*, which is available on the first floor of the Capitol.

- ***Begin your tour in the Rotunda on the second floor.***

The rotunda features a Grand Staircase crowned by an art glass barrel vault, a highly ornamented dome, and four paintings that depict figures from Montana’s past—*The Indian Chief*, *The Cowboy*, *The Trapper*, and *The Prospector*. **Do you feel that these figures represent the most important aspects of Montana history? Why or why not?**

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There is also a niche (a shallow recess, especially one in a wall to display a statue or other ornament) in each of the four “corners” of the Rotunda. Three of the niches have busts (a sculpture of a person’s head, shoulders, and chest) of notable Montanans. **Who are they?**

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_

**Why is the fourth niche empty? What person from Montana’s past would you honor with a bust in the empty niche?**

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In addition to the paintings and sculptures, the designers of the capitol placed great emphasis on the Rotunda’s overall decoration. Some of these elements are purely ornamental (they serve no purpose other than to beautify the space) while others are both functional and ornamental. **Can you find examples of each?**

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- ***Enter the hallway on the west side of the Rotunda leading to the Secretary of State’s office.***

The Gallery of Outstanding Montanans honors citizens of the Treasure State who have made contributions of state or national significance in a variety of different fields. Examine the biographies of the current honorees and **name the scientist:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Name the two writers: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

As you walk down the hall, continue to notice the decoration. **What state symbol is on the doorknobs of many of the office doors?** \_\_\_\_\_

Look at the exhibit at the end of this hallway. **What important document does it feature?** \_\_\_\_\_  
**How many of these documents has Montana had?** \_\_\_\_\_

- ***Continue left around the corner and proceed up the stairs (or elevator) to the third floor; turn left and go into the House of Representatives Lobby.***

Native Americans were the first people to live in the place we now know as Montana. Five of these six murals, painted by Missoula artist Edgar S. Paxson (1852-1919), depict Indian peoples and their roles in Montana’s history. **With which of the figures/scenes depicted are you already familiar? Which leave you wondering about what is going on?** \_\_\_\_\_

Look through the double doors into the House of Representatives Chamber where you’ll see Charlie Russell’s (1864-1926) masterpiece. The painting is titled *Lewis and Clark Meeting Indians at Ross’ Hole*, but the famous explorers are not the focus of the mural. **Who does the mural focus on?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Why do you think Russell placed Lewis and Clark in the background on the right side of the mural?** \_\_\_\_\_

- ***Return to the stairs (or elevator) and go to the fourth floor; turn right and proceed down the hallway to the Gallery (viewing area) for the Senate Chamber.***

Often, when there are no visitors, the fourth floor is dark, so you may have to turn on the lights. As you do so, think about this: Montana’s statehouse—which was completed in 1902—was the first state capitol in the country to include electricity as an original feature of the building.

As you continue your tour, **can you find electrical components that you believe are original to 1902 (or 1911-12 when the wings were added)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**More recent additions?** \_\_\_\_\_

After you enter the Gallery, rest for a minute in one of the seats and examine the art and other decoration in the room. All of these paintings except one depict realistic scenes from Montana’s past. *The Louisiana Purchase* (located in the front of the room) depicts a meeting between U.S. President Thomas Jefferson (seated on the left) and French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte (seated on the right). In reality, these two men never met so the scene is only symbolic (that is, it represents a bigger idea).

**Why is *The Louisiana Purchase* (of which Montana was a part) portrayed in this way when the other scenes are realistic? Do you think this was a good approach—why or why not?**

The large mural beneath *The Louisiana Purchase* is a bronze relief (a wall-mounted sculpture in which the three-dimensional elements project outward from a flat base) by Eugene Daub (b. 1942). Titled *We Proceeded On*, it depicts members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition breaking camp as they travel up the Missouri River. **What might be on your mind if you were traveling with Lewis and Clark? How might you view this scene if you were a member of one of Montana’s Indian tribes watching the action from a distant bluff?**

- ***Exit the Senate Gallery through the northeast doors (opposite the doors you came in), turn to your left, and proceed down the hallway to the opposite side of the Rotunda where you will enter the doors to the Old Supreme Court Gallery.***

This room has served several uses. Originally, it housed the Senate. After the Capitol was expanded in 1911–12, the room became home to the Supreme Court. Today, it is used as a hearing room when the legislature is in session. As elsewhere in the Capitol, the columns are made of scagliola (imitation marble made of plaster mixed with glue and dyes, which is then painted or polished). **What image might the architect have been trying to evoke by designing the scagliola columns to resemble Italian marble? Why didn’t they use real marble?**

- ***Exit the Old Supreme Court Gallery through the same doors you entered, turn to your left, then descend the stairs (or elevator) to the third floor. Turn to your right and stop at the large bronze statue.***

Mike Mansfield (1903–2001) served the people of Montana and the United States as a soldier, congressman, senator, and ambassador to Japan. When Montanans wanted to honor him by placing a statue in the State Capitol, he insisted that his wife Maureen also be included in the monument. **Why do you think he felt this way?** \_\_\_\_\_

- ***Turn around and look at the rounded painting on the south wall.***

Historically, railroads were an extremely important form of transportation. The rounded mural on the south wall is titled *Driving the Golden Spike*. It was painted by Amédée Joullin (1862–1917) to