

# Self-Guided Tour for Parents/Teachers and Young Children

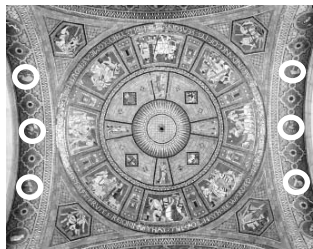
*The Capitol tells the story of Nebraska through its artwork. This self-guided tour helps young children explore the Capitol using the mosaics, paintings and sculpture.*

*This tour starts at the main north door on second floor and includes artwork in the Vestibule, Foyer, Rotunda and the Native American doors to the East Chamber.*

## VESTIBULE



The *floor mosaic* in the Vestibule represents the universe. The Sun, Stars, Moon, Planets and other cosmic bodies are represented in the abstract geometric patterns. Have the students find the sunshine design and have them identify the geometric shapes (circles, squares, diamonds, triangles) which make up the sunshine design. Explain that the marble (stone) mosaic picture of the sun is made of many shapes which makes a sun design. For very young children identify shapes and colors.



In the *Vestibule dome ceiling*, agricultural products and wild animals of Nebraska are pictured in ceramic mosaic tile. Unlike the floor mosaic the ceiling mosaics are irregularly shaped to create the patterns of arms, legs and clothing. In the outside arches of the dome are wild animals of Nebraska. Have the students identify the different animals they can see. The animals' location is circled in the dome photo at left. Find the White-tailed Deer, Nebraska's state mammal.

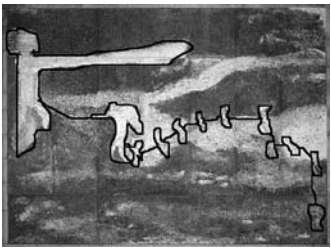
The *three oil paintings on the walls* of the Vestibule are called murals. These murals tell the story of the pioneer's arrival in Nebraska and their first activities, cooking supper, starting to plant crops and building a sod house. They were painted in sunrise and sunset colors. Ask the students if the colors used are true life colors (orange and blue oxen are not real). Ask the students if and when they see these colors in the sky. Have them explain what is happening in each picture.

*The figurative mosaic on the floor* between the Vestibule and Great Hall is to represent the Creative Forces of the Universe. The figure is not a Greek god but a figurative symbol of the Universe. The figurative mosaics on the floor are symbols of nature. The images around the figures give clues as to what part of nature they represent. Have the young students find the moon, the sun, a comet, a planet and a star. The figure holds the reins of the four winds in his hand. The four winds are north, south, east and west. The floor plan of the Capitol is a cross in a square oriented to the four directions.

# FOYER

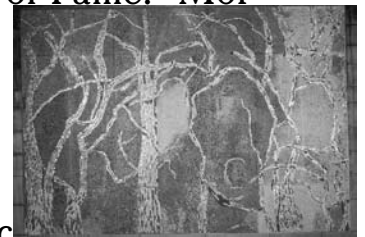
*The foyer, or great hall, has mosaic floors* to represent the earth's continents and oceans, and the plants and animals which live on the earth. Have the students guess which is which. The mosaics in the ceiling arches represent activities of life such as family, school, sports, art, work, patriotism, religion and citizenship. Have the students look for the activities as you mention them.

*The mosaic murals* on the walls are made of small one inch glass tiles. They tell about Nebraska's Pioneer History. Some of the murals also contain pieces of wood, bricks and clay tile. Two of the murals have special appeal to children. The black and white mural tells about a teacher who saves her children in a blizzard, and the golden mural with bright colors represents tree planting.



The morning of January 12, 1888 was almost 50 degrees. By noon the temperature was 25 below zero and the strong wind blew the roof off a school house in Valley County. Snow started to blow in. Rather than let the children walk home alone the teacher tied them together with a rope and lead them to safety. The children believed an Indian spirit had helped them through the snow. The teacher, Minnie Freeman, and her students were saved. Over 100 people died in the Blizzard of 1888.

J. Sterling Morton proposed a tree planting holiday in Nebraska in 1872. Governor Robert Furnas made Arbor Day a State holiday. Both men are in Nebraska's Hall of Fame. Morton's bust is at his home in Nebraska City. Ask the students what the colors in the mosaic might mean. The gold lines are trees and branches. What part of trees are green? The blues could be sky and water, yellow shines like the sun and orange is for soil or leaves in fall.



*The sculpted busts* of the **Nebraska Hall of Fame** members are located in the great hall and the side halls of the rotunda. The sculpted figures seem more real than photos and show the members in three dimensions. Notice the hats, glasses, and clothes and how the artists have sculpted them. There are three Native American members. Have the students find Standing Bear, Susette LaFlesche Tibbles and Red Cloud. Notice Standing Bear's bear claw necklace, and the different colors in Red Cloud's bust. Is Susette LaFlesche Tibbles dressed in native or American clothes?

# ROTUNDA

*The Rotunda floor* has a central mosaic of the Earth providing food and water. Surrounding it are four smaller medallions which represent the four basic elements, water, fire, air and soil. Have the students look at each mosaic and decide which element it represents. Look at what's happening in each picture for clues.



**WATER**

is in the ocean with fish and his hair floats.



**FIRE**

is surrounded by lightning and he is pushing rocks up like a volcano.



**AIR**

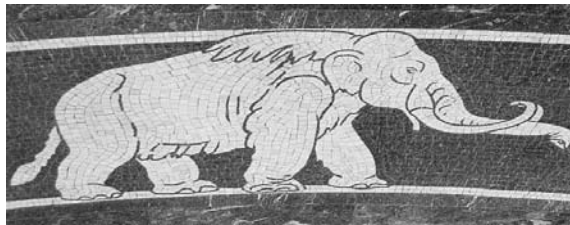
moves through the wind on a cloud with birds around him.



**SOIL**

is using his hammer to smash mountain for soil.

Surrounding these four elements are prehistoric animals which have lived in Nebraska, and birds and insects which still do. Have the students find our state bird, the Western Meadowlark, and our state fossil, the mammoth.

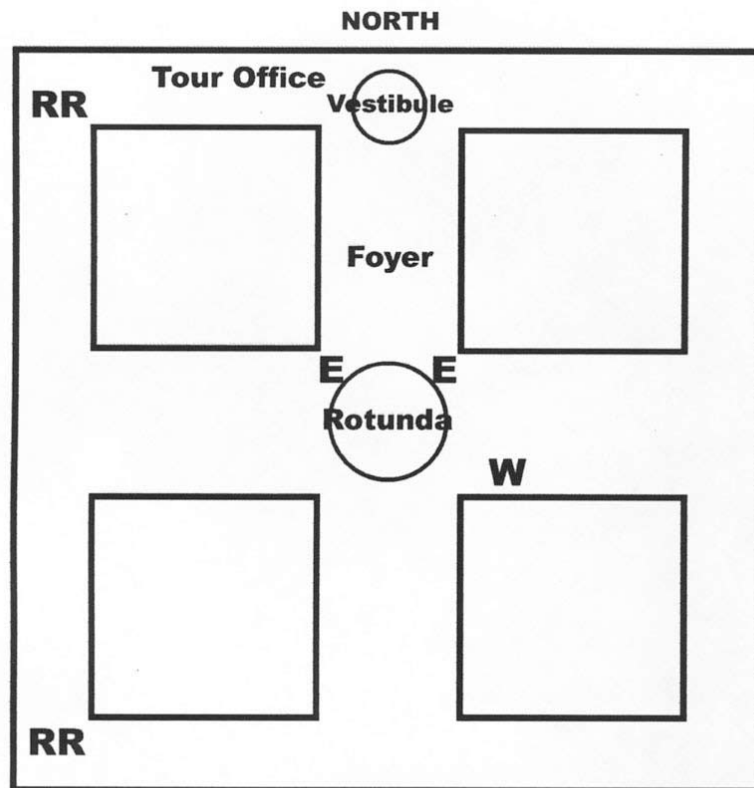


*On either side of the Rotunda* are legislative chambers. Nebraska is the only state with a unicameral, or one house legislature. The room with the open doors has desks where senators meet to make laws for Nebraska. On the other side is the old senate chamber which was used until we changed our government in 1937. The East Chamber doors are brightly colored with symbols of Native American heritage.



In the center of the doors is a tree or cross that has corn at the ends. The corn, or maize, represents Native American agriculture and food. The woman stands on a turtle to represent fertility and longevity. The man stands on an otter to represent productivity and good luck. In the center of the door is a thunderbird which the Indians believed lived in the sky with a lake on its back. When it flew rain spilled from the lake. They believed it flapped its wings to make thunder and blinked its eyes to make lightning. Have the students pretend to be a thunderbird, flapping their arms and turning side to side to spill the rain. At the top of the doors, the sun is on one side and the moon and star on the other. These show how the Indians counted time. Ask the students what time is counted by the movement of the sun? (day) and what time is counted by the moon? (month)

*The elevators to the 14th Floor* Memorial Chamber and the observation decks are marked with **E** on the map. The Memorial Chamber has painted murals which show how citizens are called to serve. There are police and firefighters, soldiers, doctor and nurses, people helping during a flood, and people helping the less fortunate. Observation decks are open when the weather permits.



On the map the restrooms are marked with **RR**. The men's and women's restrooms are located together on first and second floor. The drinking fountain on 2nd floor is marked with a **W**. Courtyards are accessible from first floor, weather permitting. Please visit or call the Capitol Tour Office (402)471-0448 for more information.