

Westward Mural



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The great mural painting *Westward*, by Edwin H. Blasfield, a New York artist, is located between the first and second floors at the east side of the Capitol. The mural painting, depicting the migration of early pioneers traveling through Iowa, extends the full width of the wall over the Grand Staircase. This work of art measures 14 feet high and 40 feet wide. The mural, painted in 1905 at a total cost of \$10,000, was painted on six pieces of canvass and placed into the frame.

In describing his mural painting, Blasfield wrote:

"The main idea of the picture is symbolical presentation of the Pioneers led by the spirits of Civilization and Enlightenment to the conquest by cultivation of the Great West. Considered pictorially, the canvass shows a 'Prairie Schooner' drawn by oxen across the prairie. The family ride upon the wagon or walk at its side. Behind them, and seen through the growth of stalks at the right, come crowding the other pioneers and 'later men.' In the air and before the wagon, are floating four female figures; one holds the shield with the arms of the state of Iowa upon it; one holds a book symbolizing Enlightenment; two others carry a basket and scatter the seeds which are symbolical of the change from wilderness to ploughed fields and gardens that shall come over the prairie. Behind the wagon, and also floating in the air, two female figures hold, respectively, a model of a stationary steam engine and of an electric dynamo to suggest the forces which come with the 'later men.'"