



NHL Executive Summary

Name of Property:	Wyoming State Capitol NHL (Updated Documentation)
City, State:	Cheyenne, Wyoming
Period of Significance:	1889-90
NHL Criteria:	1 and 3
NHL Theme:	II, Creating Social Institutions and Movements 2, Reform Movements IV, Shaping the Political Landscape 4, Political Ideas, Cultures, and Theories
Previous Recognition:	1973 National Register of Historic Places 1974 Historic American Buildings Survey 1987 National Historic Landmark
National Historic Context:	<i>“Capitols as National Historic Landmarks:” A National Historic Landmark Special Study</i> (2009, rev. 2017) 19th Amendment and Women’s Access to the Vote Across America [essay series] (2019)



NHL Significance:

- The Wyoming State Capitol and Grounds NHL was the site at which in 1889 the Wyoming State Constitutional Convention debated and wrote the state’s constitution for acceptance into statehood by the U.S. Congress. The constitution approved by the convention and the territorial electorate continued the full voting rights provided to women as established in 1869 by the Territorial Legislature. In 1890, Wyoming became the forty-fourth state and the first to guarantee women’s suffrage.
- Wyoming’s provision for women’s suffrage, first as a territory and then as a state, demonstrates the beginnings of what ultimately became a lengthy effort to achieve success in the women’s suffrage movement on a state-by-state basis, following on the heels of failed attempts in the 1860s to provide for women’s suffrage nationally through amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- Western expansion of the country during Reconstruction and afterward became a means, sometimes successfully used and other times not, by which suffragists made inroads state-by-state.
- This updated NHL nomination builds on and expands the 1987 nomination, using current documentation standards and criteria of the National Park Service (NPS) NHL program. Revisions include expanding the evaluation of the property’s significance under Criteria 1 and 3; establishing a contextual understanding of Wyoming’s singular place within the women’s suffrage movement and its early connections to Reconstruction and Western expansion; further evaluation of its regional architectural context and significance; and providing current documentation of the Capitol building’s historic integrity after completion of a major restoration and rehabilitation campaign in 2019.

Integrity:

- The Wyoming State Capitol retains excellent integrity to its period of significance. The area of Cheyenne surrounding the Capitol and Grounds has evolved since the period of significance, and the construction of the 1983 Herschler Building directly north of the Capitol grounds has diminished the integrity of setting. However, a key component of its setting, the axial avenue to the south providing unobstructed views from the Capitol to the Union Depot, remains intact, and views of the Capitol from the north were improved in 2019 when the Herschler Building was remodeled to reestablish the view along Capitol Avenue.
- The Capitol exterior retains excellent integrity of design, materials, and workmanship and its interior integrity is exceptional due to the extensive restoration work completed in 2019. Alterations to the exterior made after the period of significance were reversed, damaged historic materials repaired or replaced in kind, and significant design features restored. On the interior, design features such as ceiling heights, laylights, public galleries, corridor configurations and widths, and historic decorative features were restored to the period of their construction. Notably, the Territorial House Chamber, site of the 1889 Constitutional Convention, which enshrined women’s suffrage within the Wyoming State



Constitution, has been fully restored to its historic appearance when these nationally significant events took place.

- Following the recent restoration, which returned significant spaces and features to the period of the constitutional convention, the Capitol conveys a strong feeling and association with the time that the State Constitutional Convention debated and adopted women's full voting rights and the celebration of statehood took place.

Owner of Property: State of Wyoming

Acreage of Property: 4

Origins of Nomination: The NPS Heritage Partnerships Program, working in cooperation with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office, sought to prepare updated NHL nomination for the Wyoming State Capitol Building and Grounds NHL in celebration of commemoration of the Centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment and in recognition of completion of major restoration and rehabilitation.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: This update to the NHL nomination will provide expanded and more detailed documentation to allow for fuller interpretation to the public of Wyoming's role in the women's suffrage movement.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known

Landmarks Committee Comments:

- Revise architectural descriptions with reference to Beaux-Arts design principles and the American Renaissance in favor of additive interpretations of classicism during the Reconstruction era.
- Add Henry Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, *Temples of Democracy: The State Capitols of the U.S.A.* (1976) to the bibliography.

Landmarks Committee Recommendation:

The Committee recommends that the National Park System Advisory Board recommend to the Secretary of the Interior the acceptance of the NHL updated documentation for the Wyoming State Capitol National Historic Landmark in Cheyenne, WY, with any additions and corrections as noted by the Committee being made prior to the nomination being forwarded to the Secretary of the Interior for action.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of December 19, 2023):

- Senator Ogden Driskill, President of the Wyoming Senate, and Representative Albert Sommers, Speaker of the Wyoming House of Representatives
- Governor Mark Gordon, Governor of Wyoming
- Brian Beadles, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office
- Mary M. Hopkins, former WY SHPO
- Suzanne Norton, Secretary, Wyoming State Building Commission



Advisory Board Recommendation: