

National Statuary Hall Collection

Washington, D.C., 1864. Still in the middle of a devastating civil war, the U.S. Congress met in the Capitol building to make laws for our country. One congressman wanted to create a national statue collection. Because a new hall for the House of Representatives had been built a few years before, the old hall they used to meet in was empty. So, his idea was to use that hall and have each state donate statues to a national collection.

House Joint Resolution 66 was signed into law on July 2, 1864 and stated that:

“the President is hereby authorized to invite...all the States to provide...statues...not exceeding two in number for each State, of deceased persons who have been...illustrious for their distinguished services such as each State may deem to be worthy of this national commemoration; and the same shall be placed in the Old Hall of the House of Representatives, in the Capitol of the United States, which is set apart...as a national statuary hall...”

His idea became a law. The President of the United States invited each state to donate two statues of people they thought deserved to be in this national collection. As states began donating statues, they were all placed in the “Old House Hall” or National Statuary Hall. Visitors to the Capitol enjoyed seeing the beautiful works of art. Over time, more states were added to the U.S., and soon the hall was overcrowded with statues. Congress created an amendment to the original law so statues in the collection could be moved to different places in the building. When an underground visitors center was finished in 2008, some of the collection was placed in the new Capitol Visitor Center.

Utah has donated 2 statues to the collection: one of Brigham Young in 1950, and one of inventor Philo T. Farnsworth in 1990. A statue of Dr. Martha Hughes Cannon will replace the statue of Mr. Farnsworth in 2022.

Adapted from “About the National Statuary Hall Collection” www.aoc.gov