



COTTONWOOD HEIGHTS

WALKING TOURS

Route 4: Top of the World

Distance: 2.4 miles

Online Map: cottonwood-heights-walking-tours-chcity.hub.arcgis.com



Throughout this walk, look west across the Salt Lake Valley which once was the massive prehistoric Lake Bonneville. This neighborhood sits above the valley floor on a bench that was formed by glacial outwash running from Big Cottonwood Canyon into the ancient lake.

The Salt Lake Valley was once the ancestral lands of the Paiute, Goshute, Ute and Shoshone peoples, distinct bands of American Indian nomads who practiced a hunter/gatherer lifestyle. See Walk 7 Crestwood Park. “Wasatch” means “low place in the high mountains” derived from Ute or other Numic languages.

The Wasatch Fault Zone stretches from Idaho into Utah and runs to the west of this walking route along Wasatch Blvd. The geological action of this fault zone is responsible for creating the dramatic mountains east of Cottonwood Heights.

In the late 1800s, this area was known as the Upper Butler Bench, named for the five Butler brothers who were among the first settlers in the area. The farmers who cultivated this land used dry-farm techniques, relying on rainfall to grow wheat, hay and alfalfa. Many also grazed cattle here.

1. Ferguson Canyon Overflow Parking Lot

The names of the nearby streets, Prospector, Quicksilver, Mine Shaft and Lost Canyon, reflect Utah’s mining history beginning in the 1860s. Many prospectors explored both Big and Little Cottonwood canyons seeking gold, silver, lead and zinc. The last of the mines in Big Cottonwood Canyon closed in the 1960s.

2. Butler Jr. Homestead

This is the homestead that Philander Butler Jr. received in 1900, the last homestead patent to be issued by the federal government within Cottonwood Heights’ current city limits. Philander Jr. was the son of Philander Butler Sr. and Charlotte Burrell Butler. When Philander Sr. sold his brewery and hotel, located on the Big Cottonwood Creek, he left for Oregon. The property on the north was part of the

McGhie homestead. See Walk 3 Big Cottonwood Trail.

3. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp

A Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp once occupied this area. It was established in 1935 as part of President Roosevelt’s Great Depression-era New Deal Program. The men employed at the CCC Camp were mostly young Catholics from New York and New Jersey. They constructed many of the amenities in Big Cottonwood Canyon, including the Storm Mountain Amphitheater and picnic area and the Spruces Campground. The CCC camp closed in 1942 and was repurposed to inter German nationals during World War II.

4. Ferguson Canyon Amphitheater and Trailhead

This amphitheater was constructed in 2008 and affords views of the Great Salt Lake, Antelope Island and downtown Salt Lake City. A trail from the amphitheater goes past the water tank and along an intermittent stream into Ferguson Canyon, which is part of the Twin Peaks Wilderness Area established in 1984. The trail continues past vertical canyon walls popular with rock climbers and after a steep climb leads eventually to an overlook. Paragliders and parasailers can often be seen overhead. The canyon is also home to many rattlesnakes.

5. Land Grant College Programs

The land north to 7800 South was given to the State of Utah to support the Land Grant College programs under the Morrill Act of 1862. The State was allowed to sell the property and used the proceeds to fund the Agriculture College in Logan, now known as Utah State University.

The foothills between Points of Interest 3 and 5 include natural springs and abandoned mines. Much wildlife lives along this stretch, including mule deer, hawks, quail and the occasional fox or cougar. Coyote packs can be heard at night.

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