Louisiana’s OLD STATE CAPITOL

Center for Political and Governmental History

Recipient of the 1994 National Honor Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation
Step Into the Past...

High on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River stands Louisiana's Old State Capitol, a Gothic architectural treasure. The nearly 150 year old building has withstood war, fire, scandal, bitter debate, abandonment and an occasional fist-fight.

Significant events in the history of the Old State Capitol:

- Designed and built by James Harrison Dakin, 1847-1849.
- Louisiana legislature voted to secede from the Union in the House Chamber, 1861.
- Seized and burned by Union soldiers during the Civil War, 1862.
- Abandoned for 20 years, the seat of government moved from Baton Rouge to Opelousas and Shreveport, and later New Orleans.
- After its lengthy exile, Louisiana's government returned to Baton Rouge, and architect William Freret supervised restoration of the Capitol, 1882.
- Impeachment proceedings against Huey P. Long, the fabled “Kingfish”, were brought about in the House Chamber, 1929.
- Down the road, a neoclassic architectural structure became the new state capitol, 1932.
- The Old State House was vacated as the seat of government in 1932. For the past 60 years, it served as headquarters for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and later housed the offices of Selective Services, various veteran's organizations and the Louisiana Arts Commission.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977.

Under the direction of Secretary of State W. Fox McKeithen, the building was reborn as the Center for Political and Governmental History in 1994. The Center is the state's official repository of film and video archives and houses state-of-the-art interactive exhibits and a multimedia presentation. The Old State Capitol was the recipient of the National Honor Award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1994.

With this rebirth, the Old State Capitol will again serve the purpose for which it was built... to bring people and government together.

Look For:
- Faux-bois and gold leafing in the Rotunda.
- 1882 cast iron staircase.
- 1882 stained glass windows in the House & Senate Chambers.
- Original 1882 cathedral dome and marble floors.
- Unique blend of Gothic and Victorian architecture.
- Magnificent replica chandeliers in the House and Senate Chambers.
- Intricate brass hardware on doors.
- 1855 cast iron fence encompassing the five acre grounds.
- The tomb of Confederate Governor Henry Watkins Allen.
- “Merci Train” boxcar on the grounds, France's gift to Louisiana after WWII.

...And into the Future.
For this replica of a medieval castle that was built in 1847, and stands on a high bluff in Baton Rouge, has a strange story to whisper...It is a story of great men, magnificent gestures, political entanglements and war.

Annette Duchein
New Orleans Times Picayune
November 16, 1930

"...We are now within sight of Baton Rouge. It is a fine looking town with a stately Capitol... At a distance, its white appearance and bulk... give it the look of an iceberg..."

Traveling writer from Natchez
July 13, 1855

"In making this design, I have endeavored to adopt such a taste of style and architecture as would at once give the edifice a decided distinctive, classic and commanding character as is appropriate to its purpose."

James Harrison Dakin, Architect -1849

Located on the high bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, the majestic Old State Capitol has been preserved as one of Louisiana's most significant contributions to American architecture.

National Register of Historic Places Nomination form, November 15, 1972

"It is original, grand and unique in design, partaking of the boldness and simplicity of the middle ages, softened down by modern improvement and invention."

Maunsel White
Address to the Louisiana Senate
April 9, 1847

$M$ue$m$u$m Information

Louisiana's Old State Capitol
100 North Boulevard at River Road
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70801
(504) 342-0500

Museum Hours:
Tuesday thru Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Sunday 12:00 noon - 4:00 p.m.
Closed on Christmas, New Year's Day and state holidays.

Admission:
Ask about our family rates. Group rates available for groups of 20 or more by advance reservation.

Handicap Access:
An elevator is located on the ground floor, south side.

Museum Shop:
You will not want to miss our museum store specializing in political memorabilia, reproductions, maps and artifacts as well as a variety of Louisiana books and gifts.

Special Events:
The magnificent Rotunda and Senate Chamber are available for after-hours rentals, receptions and special events. Elegant conference/public meeting rooms may be used for smaller meetings and gatherings during the day, as well as for conferences and lectures. The beautiful five acre grounds are ideal for outdoor functions such as concerts, plays and picnics.

Library Information:
The Center houses the state's archives for film and video as well as a political reference library. These libraries are available by appointment only. For more information, contact the Center at (504) 342-0500.
Founding Family:

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Marine Shale Processors
Entergy
The 1994 Louisiana Senate

W. Fox McKeithen
Secretary of State

Return this brochure to the Old State Capitol for $1.00 off admission.
January 3-June 1, 1995

Louisiana’s Secretary of State W. Fox McKeithen, in participation with the National Archives, presents the original Louisiana Purchase Documents, including the French version of the Treaty, which is rarely displayed. In purchasing the Louisiana Territory from Napoleon’s France in 1803, President Thomas Jefferson’s administration concluded the largest real estate deal in history.

Grateful appreciation is expressed to Georgia-Pacific Corporation for sponsoring this exhibit.

Louisiana’s
OLD STATE CAPITOL
Secretary of State W. Fox McKeithen

Special Thanks to the Louisiana Office of Tourism.
The Original Louisiana Purchase Treaty on display at Louisiana's Old State Capitol January 3-June 1, 1995

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