THE OLD ARSENAL MUSEUM
(State Capitol Grounds, Baton Rouge, Louisiana)

The OLD ARSENAL, recently restored and converted to a museum, is located in Baton Rouge, east of the State Capitol. It has been saved for future generations through the interest of Governor Jimmie H. Davis and now houses a small historical museum with the theme "Under Ten Flags". More flags have flown over Baton Rouge than any city in the United States.

The ARSENAL was built on a mound and surrounded by a 10' brick wall. It is rectangular with 54" walls and a ceiling 4' thick, fashioned of interlocking curved brick, an architectural rarity. The absence of gun holes and presence of many air vents so constructed that no bullet could possibly have entered the building, lend a credence to the theory that it was used as an arsenal. At either end, narrow windows are heavily barred. There is one entrance -- a central door held closed by iron bars. Inside an attractive appearance is created by a series of square, heavy columns which form perfect arches overhead. The architecture reflects a definite Spanish trend.

It is possible that the ARSENAL figured in one of the few battles of the American Revolution fought outside the original thirteen colonies, though its exact origin has never been established. This battle took place in 1779 when Don Bernardo de Galvez, Spanish Governor of Louisiana, led a small fleet and a small band of poorly trained men up the river and captured the British Garrison at Baton Rouge.

During the War Between the States, Federal troops were quartered in the ARSENAL after the Union army had taken Baton Rouge. Mute evidence to prove this may still be seen inside the Museum. Writings on the wall refer to the presence of Michigan soldiers of the 6th Regiment. One loyal Michiganer printed the name of his town, 'NILES', in bold letters. Private J. J. Kelly drew a graphic sketch of the battle of Baton Rouge as he saw it, and signed his name with the notation '6th Regiment Michigan'. A copy of this sketch hangs on the museum walls. Unfortunately, painters employed in the restoration of the ARSENAL removed part of this recorded history, and also covered an early American free hand drawing of an Eagle which had been on the walls for many years.

The ARSENAL was used to store rifles when Louisiana State University was on the present capitol grounds. During the early 1930's it was used as quarters by local units of the National Guard. Prior to World War II the state police had a pistol range inside the building.

To restore the ARSENAL, Governor Jimmie Davis secured an appropriation of $40,000, after O. W. Welch, head of the Tourist Bureau, realized what a wonderful tourist attraction it would become. The City-Farish Government of Baton Rouge gave $5,000 - and the Louisiana Society Daughters of the American Revolution collected $2,500 towards furnishing five of the ten cabinets.

Dick Roussel rendered yeoman service in setting up our exhibits and history professors at Louisiana State University aided in substantiating authenticity. Several cabinets contain mannequins representing historical figures including DeSoto, LaSalle, and Galvez, all attired in authentic costumes.

An act introduced by Wendell Harris, creating a commission to administer and operate the Museum was passed, and a small appropriation secured to partly defray the expenses. A Commission of 5 members was named to conduct museum affairs. Your aid, interest and suggestions will help make the OLD ARSENAL one of the best small museums in the country.

OLD ARSENAL MUSEUM COMMISSION

Hours Daily:

Nov. 1 - April 1 - 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.
April 1 - Nov. 1 - 10 A.M. to 5 P.M.