Old State Capitol
Dedicated as a Memorial to Veterans of World War 2

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Old State Capitol Memorial Commission

The Old State Capitol, on the corner of North Blvd. and St. Philip Street, has been made a Memorial, and dedicated to the Veterans of World War II. It houses many veteran organizations including the Amvets, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Spanish-American War Veterans, Marine Corps League, Disabled American Veterans, and The Army and Navy Club. Meeting rooms are provided for these and various civic organizations. In the basement is the Fox Hole, where refreshments, cigarettes, sandwiches, candy and snacks are sold.

On approaching the building, the green terraces, the ancient magnolia trees, the monument to Brigadier General Henry Watkins Allen, all tend to give the old building a venerable atmosphere. The inscriptions cut into the marble panels are of deep interest, and on entering, the eyes follow the big, winding staircase to the stained glass dome, which seems to blossom from the spreading arches of the great central column. In the various rooms are picturesque mantels of marble and slate, and in some of the rooms, there still hang the many branched chandeliers of unusual design. These may be seen in what is now called the Ball Room on the second floor, which is furnished for entertaining. Many Veterans' Organizations hold their conventions here. Over all broods the feeling of antiquity, as if the ghosts of the great men of Louisiana, who once passed through the halls, had left a trace of their greatness behind them.

In the Veterans' Lounge, set up and furnished by The Memorial Commission, the modern trend predominates. The walls are done in chartreuse and green, with blond writing desks and tables. The green sofas, the red shaded lamps and the Radio-Record player lend a homey atmosphere. This room was provided as an added convenience and pleasure of Veterans, their families and friends, as well as visitors and workers in the building.

A museum has been set up and is being filled with souvenirs, trophies, photographs, and flags of all wars. Many objects of interest are on display here.

The building was planned by James Harrison Dakin and was started in 1847 and completed in December, 1849, at a cost of $396,000. It was outfitted with furnishings shipped from Europe to the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, but which arrived too late, after that unhappy ruler's death.

From 1850 to 1862, when Baton Rouge was captured by Federal troops, the building housed the Louisiana State Government. In 1882 the building was reconstructed and another story added. Again it served as the State Capitol until the present Capitol was erected in 1932.

The building was rehabilitated in 1946-47 and dedicated as a Memorial to the Veterans of World War II.

Monument to Confederate General on Grounds

The pink marble monument located on the north side of the building was dedicated in memory of Henry Watkins Allen, Brigadier General in the Confederate Army. He was buried in his Confederate uniform.

Also located on the north side of the building, at the corner of St. Philip Street and North Blvd., is the Louisiana box car of the "Merci" train from France, expressing the gratitude of the people of that nation in appreciation of the generosity of the American people. It was presented to the state by Consul General Lionel Vasse on February 22, 1949. The dedication was made on these grounds by Drew Pearson on June 12, 1949. The erection of this monument was made by The Old State Capitol Memorial Commission. The American and the French flags are flown here daily.

Iron Fence

Of special interest is the cast iron fence. Upon each gate post rests an eagle with outspread wings, a symbol of Liberty. The center of each gate is fashioned like a Roman fasces, symbolizing Unity and Strength. Throughout the whole design, recurring again and again, is the fleur-de-lis—symbol of France, typifying the stock from which the greater part of Louisiana sprang.

Once Lighted by Candles

The old building was once lighted by candles, until 1857, when "modern" gas lighting was installed. In 1894 the build-
ing was wired for electricity, and few fixtures were installed in the building.

It was here that the Veterans Bonus was paid to the veterans of Louisiana who participated in World War II.

At this very site the legislature voted to secede from the Union. William Jennings Bryan, Chief Justice White, Jefferson Davis, Mark Twain and many other notable men have climbed the beautiful old spiral stairway. From the top of the building, the muddy Mississippi can be seen for miles.

The Old State Capitol was used, as a seat of government during the following administrations:

Isaac Johnson .................................................. 1846-1850
Joseph M. Walker (died in office) .......................... 1850-1853
Paul O. Hebert .................................................. 1853-1856
Robt. C. Wickliffe .............................................. 1856-1860
Thos. O. Moore .................................................. 1860-1862
Damuel D. McEnery ........................................... 1881-1888
(As Lieutenant Governor succeeded Wilts who died in office)
Francis T. Nicholls ............................................ 1888-1892
Murphy J. Foster .............................................. 1892-1900
Wm. J. Heard .................................................... 1900-1904
Newton C. Blanchard ......................................... 1904-1908
Jared Y. Sanders .............................................. 1908-1912
Luther E. Hall .................................................. 1912-1916
Ruffin G. Pleasant ........................................... 1916-1920
John M. Parker .................................................. 1920-1924
Henry L. Fuqua (died in office) ............................ 1924-1926
Oramel H. Simpson ........................................... 1926-1928
Huey P. Long (resigned) ...................................... 1928-1931
Alvin O. King ................................................... 1931-1932