



Learn about the various places the State government has called home.



Experience the fire of 1862 and how it established the legacies of two great architects.



Hear personal stories about the Old State Capitol as told by historians, architects, and people like yourself.

For more than 120 years, Louisiana's state capital has remained in Baton Rouge. This has not always been the case. Since Louisiana became a state in 1812, the capital has occupied 13 distinct buildings in five different cities: New Orleans, Donaldsonville, Baton Rouge, Opelousas and Shreveport. Visit the Old State Capitol to learn more about the history of the State Houses of Louisiana.

Louisiana's Old State Capitol Center for Political and Governmental History
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Hours

Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
 Sunday 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
 Closed Mondays

Special guided tours are available by appointment only. Group and family admission rates available.

Student groups who have scheduled a guided tour at the Old State Capitol are admitted free of charge. To schedule a tour for a school or a student group, please call 225/342-0500 or 800/488-2968.



The Old State Capitol operates under the administration of W. Fox McKeithen, Secretary of State. It was under his direction that the building was restored as The Center for Political and Governmental History in 1994.

This exhibit was initiated and developed by the Old State Capitol Associates and the staff of the Old State Capitol and is dedicated to Lois Elmer Bannon.

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THE STATE HOUSES OF LOUISIANA



An exhibition about Louisiana's State Houses and the political struggles, numerous fires and the Civil War that ultimately led to one magnificent building!

NEW ORLEANS · DONALDSONVILLE · BATON ROUGE · OPELOUSAS · SHREVEPORT



Charity Hospital – 1831

During the 1800's, New Orleans was home to many of the early state houses. A theater, a convent, a hospital, and a hotel are just some of the places where the legislature met. Due to the interruption of war, shifts in political power, and fires in the state houses during this time the legislature continually debated where the government might be located.



Donaldsonville Statehouse – 1830

Government square was the first building specifically designed for Louisiana's capital, but when legislators arrived in Donaldsonville for the 1830 session, they found the new state house woefully inadequate and in 1831 voted to move back to New Orleans.



Shreveport Statehouse – 1863

Shortly before Opelousas fell to Union troops in January 1863, the capital changed locations once again, this time to

Shreveport's Caddo Parish Courthouse. General Henry Watkins Allen was inaugurated as confederate Governor on the courthouse steps.



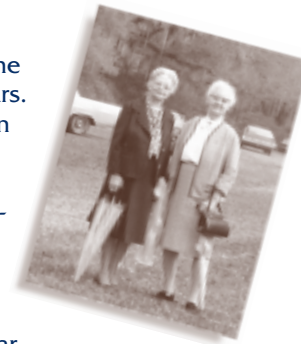
In 1845, New Orleans architect, James Dakin, was contracted by the legislature to design a building in Baton Rouge specifically for use as a State House. The building took two-and-a-half years to complete and used over 4,039,000 bricks. During construction of the brick walls in 1847, Dakin climbed upon the scaffolding and began pulling out inferior 'half-baked' bricks. These bricks would eventually prove his legacy – they survived a fire in 1862 that gutted the entire building and left nothing but the brick shell standing.



William Freret was appointed the job of restoring the State House in 1880 after the building had stood empty for almost 20 years. Freret's legacy is found in the ornamental detailing of the interior and

exterior (the stained glass, the lantern above for light, cast iron buttresses). He restored the building to its original glory as a show place for Baton Rouge.

When Huey Long threatened to raze the Old State Capitol, Mrs. Irvin 'Puffy' Dameron and Mrs. J.W. Tucker (Aunt Puffy to her friends), staged a sit-in on its steps reportedly saying,



"Over our dead bodies will you tear this building down!"

Mrs. Irvin 'Puffy' Dameron and Mrs. J.W. Tucker



George Brian

In the late 1930's, the Old State Capitol was empty except for the Department of Veterans' of Foreign Wars, the Louisiana Art Gallery, and a family living on the third floor. The father, George Brian Sr. acted as custodian of the building. His son, George Brian Jr., recalls his time living there:

"I thought it would be quite interesting to live in a castle at age 18 or 19. . . The Senate room was empty; the House of Representatives room was empty. We went all over the building."

The quote by George Brian Jr. is taken from the Old State Capitol's Oral History Project.

Please visit the Old State Capitol if you have an exceptional memory about the building and would like to give an account of it for the project.