



## Investigation Summary Report

### Old State Capitol Baton Rouge, LA



### HISTORY

Louisiana's Old State Capitol, a Gothic architectural treasure, stands high on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River. The 150-year-old statehouse has withstood war, fire, scandal, bitter debate, abandonment and an occasional fistfight. Today, the building stands as a testament to bold, inspired leadership and active citizenship.

In 1990, the Louisiana Legislature placed the former statehouse under the jurisdiction of the secretary of state and appropriated funds for a major restoration project. The building re-opened as the Center for Political and Governmental History in 1994. Now referred to as the Museum of Political History, the Old State Capitol has received awards for its architecture, exhibits and preservation. In 1847, Baton Rouge lured Louisiana's capital away from the city of New Orleans with the donation of a plot of land high on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi. Architect James Harrison Dakin (1806-1852), a New York native with a thriving practice in New Orleans, was

retained to design the new capitol building. Dakin described the building as "Castellated Gothic" because of the cast-iron decoration of its crenellated battlements and turrets. The building's construction started in 1847 and ended in 1852, the same year as Dakin's death. The statehouse featured heavy masonry walls covered with lime mortar plaster scored to resemble stone blocks.

The statehouse served as the seat of Louisiana government until 1862 when Union troops captured Baton Rouge. Fleeing Union troops, Louisiana legislators abandoned the building in which they had voted to secede from the Union in 1861. The building was used as a Union prison and garrison until December 28, 1862 when the interior of the building was destroyed due to an accidental fire started by Union soldiers.

The ruined interior was completely reconstructed in 1882 by architect and engineer William A. Freret who installed the signature grand staircase. Since older legislators remembered the darkness from the 1850 period, Freret added the magnificent stained glass "lantern," or dome, in an effort to emit more light. A single ornate central pier was included to support the dome, the whole resembling a grand umbrella of painted glass.

On March 1, 1882, Governor McEnery and other state officials arrived in Baton Rouge to officially take possession of the newly restored statehouse and the new life of the capitol began.

The Capitol Advocate, March 3, 1882, reported: "For Baton Rouge, the restoration is the auspicious beginning of a new era. The new movement of prosperity felt here during the past year was impelled by the expectation of this event. Now, we will have the solid reality. Old citizens will tell you how the city sprung into new activity, when the Capitol was first established here in 1848."

In 1932, construction of the new State Capitol was completed and the Legislature officially transferred the seat of Louisiana government to the new building. The abandoned statehouse became the headquarters of the Works Progress Administration in 1936.

In 1991, after decades of neglect, a group of dedicated, concerned citizens and politicians saved the Old State Capitol from demolition and began a massive reconstruction to restore the historic building.

We arrived at the Old State Capital around 8:00pm on March 22, 2009 and were greeted by their staff and security. We brought with us 12 investigators, 2 DVR set ups, a thermal camera, various voice recorders and cameras. We conducted a quick walk through of the building to familiarize ourselves with it again. Once all equipment was set up, we broke into 6 groups of 2. There were several great personal experiences had by all. Whistling was heard in the balcony on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor by 2 separate groups at separate times. One group, the investigators camera battery went out while the other group, the investigators battery on his flashlight went out. One group was in the House Chamber and while they were discussing movable properties, both of the doors closed all of the sudden. They tried to recreate by any means necessary, but could not. Another group was in the basement, in one of the storage rooms, and an investigator seen a black shadow walk right past where another investigator who was sitting down in a chair at the time.

Sad to say that no real evidence was captured on video other than EMF spikes in response to questions asked up in the tower. The Tower was a "EMF dead zone" for the evening, except at one time I asked "Are you the one who started the fire?" and we got a spike, asked again and got another spike. Past that there were no other spikes. We did get a few interesting EVP's:

1. When an investigator asks what year it is, a response of “die” is heard. (in the tower)
2. While in the tower, an investigator asks a question and a response of “look behind you” is heard
3. Several whispers of “Hey” while walking up the staircase to the tower
4. The song, you are my sunshine being sung in the background
5. While in the House Chamber, the name Molly is heard

Over all we had a wonderful time at the investigation, and would love to go again! We would like to thank all those at the Louisiana’s Old State Capital for being so hospitable and allowing us to investigate such a historic location!



