

OLD STATE CAPITOL BUILDING.

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

Pulaski Co

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PHOTOGRAPHS.

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

DISTRICT № 32.

HISTORIC-AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

LAWSON L. DELOMY DISTRICT OFFICER.

807 SOUTHERN BLDG. LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

ARKANSAS STATE CAPITOL  
(War Memorial Building)

Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

HISTORICAL NOTES:

Located on Markham and Center Streets, Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas.

Governor John Pope, in his first message to the General Assembly, October 13, 1829, urged the necessity for better quarters in which to conduct the affairs of the Territorial Government. He gave it, also, as his opinion that the United States Government, if properly approached, would provide the means for the financing of the necessary building. Accordingly the General Assembly addressed a memorial to Congress upon the subject; the merits of which memorial were ably presented at Washington both by Governor Pope and Ambrose H. Sevier, the delegate to Congress. Thus, on March 2, 1831, President Andrew Jackson approved an act of Congress appropriating ten sections of public lands in Arkansas "for the purpose of raising a fund for the erection of a public building at Little Rock". The said act of Congress left the matter of selection and sale of the ten sections to the discretion of the Legislature. Whereupon, they, the General Assembly, passed an act in October, 1831, giving the whole ten sections to Robert Crittenden in exchange for his residence in Little Rock; which act Governor Pope promptly vetoed. Congress then passed another act placing the disposal of the lands and the erection of a statehouse entirely in the hands of Governor Pope. Pope appointed Chester Ashley as his agent to select and sell the lands. By January, 1833, a sufficient sum had been realized to warrant the commencement of the building. Original plans were drawn, at the instance of Governor Pope, by Gideon Shryock, who had designed the Kentucky capitol. The latter recommended, as superintending architect, George Weigart, who brought Shryock's plans to Little Rock. Finding the plans as drawn by Shryock too elaborate, considering the funds available, Governor Pope, with the aid of Mr. Weigart, modified the plans in a manner to cut down the cost to the sum which it was expected would be realized from the sale of ten sections of land. In the meantime, Congress by an act of June 15, 1832, had granted the territory another 1,000 acres for the erection of a courthouse and jail at Little Rock. This "thousand-acre tract" was sold and the proceeds applied to the erection of a statehouse. Again, in 1836, Congress gave an additional grant of five sections of land towards the completion of the building. Altogether, there was raised from the sale of the original ten sections \$31,722; from the sale of the 1,000 acre tract \$16,657; from the sale of the five sections \$38,000. The General Assembly of 1840 appropriated \$37,000 with which the building was finally completed.

Thus the total original cost of the building amounted to \$123,379.00. The land upon which the building was erected was acquired through donations by Chester Ashley, David G. Eller and William Russell, and by purchase of three other lots from William Russell. The site was conveyed to the Territory by deeds from Ashley, Eller and Russell, made on January 14, 1833.

Description - Two stories and partial basement. Built of heavy brick walls, stuccoed, wooden floor joists, wood stair, trim, etc., and has wooden roof covered with tin. The building is owned by the State, is now used by the University Medical School but the building is in charge of the War Memorial Commission, R. W. Sisson, Custodian. The building is in a good state of repair, having been reconditioned under the C. W. A. work - completed March, 1934.

See Publications of the Arkansas Historical Association, vol. 1,  
p. 287

Source of information:  
High Lights of Arkansas History,  
by Dallas Herndon - pp53.

*Reviewed 1936 by H.C.F.*

*Lamon L. Delony*

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Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

Architectural Notes:

Gideon Shryock designed the old state capitol of Kentucky and used the Greek Ionic hexastyle temple as a model. When he made the drawings for the capitol of Arkansas, he reverted to the Greek Doric tetrastyle type. The main part of the Arkansas Capitol was erected in 1836 and the wings were added about four years later.

The Doric portico has triglyphs and metopes of metal, and the great seal of the state in the pediment. The wrought-iron balconies give a southern atmosphere to the building. Near the center of the capitol the two grand staircases, of horseshoe design, rise from the main floor to the balconies of the senate and house chambers.

by Henry Chandler Forman  
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