

The Arsenal
615 St. Peter Street
New Orleans, Louisiana

Orleans Parish

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District Louisiana

Historic American Buildings Survey
Richard Koch, District Officer
614 Audubon Building, New Orleans, Louisiana

"THE ARSENAL" (State Museum)

615 St. Peter Street New Orleans Orleans Parish
 Louisiana

Owner

State of Louisiana
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Date of Erection

1839

Architects

Dakin and Dakin

Builders

Dakin and Dakin

Present Condition

Building is in fair state of preservation. No exterior departure from original construction except for ordinary repair to stucco. Interior of building, re-conditioned in 1914 for museum purposes. Some repair work and remodeling being made at present by Federal Emergency Relief Workers.

Number of Stories

Three

Materials of Construction

Walls are of red brick with a gray granite base on the front. Exterior brick walls are covered with stucco. Lintels and window sills in the rear elevation are of granite. All trim and sash in cypress. Ground floor is cement while other floors are of wood. The roof is covered with slate. Interior walls were originally plastered, floor and railing around center well are of wood and are later additions.

Other existing Records

Handbook and Guide to the Louisiana State Museum
New Orleans, 1934, published by Louisiana State Museum

Historical Sketch Book and Guide to New Orleans
Will H. Coleman, New York, 1885

Acts by City Council of New Orleans on December 18 and
December 27, 1837

Other existing records, cont'd.

Building Contract

Act by State of Louisiana, February 25, 1836

Additional Data

On February 25, 1836, E. D. White, Governor of Louisiana, approved an Act of the Legislature entitled:

"AN ACT AUTHORIZING THE GOVERNOR TO PURCHASE ARMS
FOR THE USE OF THE STATE AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES"

which among other things enacted:

"That the Civil Engineer shall draw a plan and estimate of an Armory, to be built on a lot of ground belonging to the City of New Orleans on the site of the old prison, near the principal; and that said building shall be at least two stories high and so constructed as to contain twenty pieces of artillery, and ten thousand stands of arms; and that the sum of twenty thousand dollars be appropriated for that purpose. Said Building to be commenced as soon as the City Council of New Orleans, or a majority thereof, shall have notified the Governor of the State, of their consent to transfer to the State the property of the ground necessary for the aforesaid building."

The transfer of the property was effected by a resolution of the City Council December 18, 1837.

As a result of these two acts, the arsenal now standing on St. Peter Street directly behind the Cabildo was erected.

There is also included in the records of this Survey a photostat of an old drawing of a building taken from the Notarial Archives, which bears such a remarkable resemblance to the elevation of the Arsenal as to make it practically certain that both designs were the work of the same Architect. This old drawing bears the

dates of April 9, 1836 and May 24, 1836 and is signed by the Mayor and Council but not by the Architect. An examination of the Council Records of the dates indicated revealed that the plan was for a building intended to house the pumps and apparatus of the Company of Pumper No.4. The erection of this fire station was authorized on the land situated on Levee Street, between Bienville and Conti under the joint direction of the City Surveyor and a committee of the fire company, provided the cost was not over \$7,500.00. It is not known if the building was ever built. Its design, however, undoubtedly formed the basis for the design of the Arsenal which was authorized the same year. James Harrison Dakin of the firm of Dakin and Dakin was the architect and builder, his brother Charles Bingley Dakin, the other member of the firm having died before the building was erected. The contract by which Dakin and Dakin agreed to construct the building for \$19,500, receiving an additional \$500.00 for the plans, was signed before Felix Grima, N. P., July 1, 1839. A copy of this contract is attached hereto.

The site selected for the Arsenal was one of some importance historically, being occupied as early as 1728 by a French guard house and prison which was destroyed by the fire of March 31, 1788. It was rebuilt by the Spanish and again destroyed by fire December 8, 1793. It was again rebuilt in connection with the Cabildo by Don Almonaster y Roxas in 1795 and was used as a prison or "calaboose" until 1837 when it was demolished on completion of the prison on Orleans Street, which has also since been demolished.

The principal facade on St. Peter Street is an excellent composition, boldly designed, a striking contrast in light

and shade. The simple massive pilasters and deep reveals of the windows give the building a decided military character. These four heavy pilasters are of stuccoed brick resting on a gray granite base. They extend up almost the full height of the building's three stories and support a simple emblature pierced with three deep-set attic windows in the frieze. The architrave is defined simply by a dentil course below these windows, while the cornice above them consists only of a heavy ledge projecting out a foot and a half. Above this is a three foot parapet which practically conceals the hipped slate roof.

The principal entrance to the building between the two center pilasters is closed by great iron-sheathed, nail-studded doors. The space above the doors is occupied by three double hung windows separated from each other by two heavy wood mullions. There are two enormous double hung windows between the pilasters at each side of the central bay. A wrought iron grill is hung in front of each of the principal windows.

In plan the building consists of one large room with an open well on the third floor across the front windows and another one near the center of the room under the skylight. The stairs are at the rear.

Behind the main building is a small courtyard separating it from the small three-story portion which fronts on Orleans Alley. This portion of the building is divided into two small rooms by an inside passage which connects the court to the alley on the ground floor. The two upper stories are each divided into two rooms and are reached by an outside stair in the courtyard.

The elevation in Orleans Alley is not particularly noteworthy except for a very well designed, off-center balcony at the second floor level. There is an ornamental panel in the cast iron at the center consisting of crossed cannons surmounted by a torch. Below this is a pile of cannon balls and a wrought iron monogram "L. L.", initials of the Louisiana Legion, which first occupied the building as an armory.

From 1846 until the time of the War Between the States it was used by the Orleans Artillery, and in 1860 was also headquarters of General P. G. T. Beauregard, Adjutant General of Louisiana. During the war it was used as a base for military supplies until the capture of New Orleans in 1862, when it became a military prison and Federal Headquarters. From 1871 it was used as the arsenal for the Metropolitan Police who were routed by the White League in the celebrated battle of September 14, 1874, which put an end to "carpet bag rule" in Louisiana. It was subsequently used by the re-organized Orleans Artillery and as a State Arsenal until March 15, 1914 when the building was transferred to the Louisiana State Museum by the Adjutant General of Louisiana.

The Arsenal was re-conditioned and now houses the war relic department of the museum, being dedicated as a "Battle Abbey" on January 9, 1915, as a feature of the centennial celebration of the Battle of New Orleans.

June 24, 1935

Samuel Wilson, Jr.

BUILDING CONTRACT

State of Louisiana and Dakin and Dakin

Act 482 - Felix Grima
July 1, 1839

Be it known that on this first day of the month of July, in the Year of Our Lord, One Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty-nine, and the Independence of the United States of America the Sixty-third

Before me, Felix Grima, a notary public duly sworn and commissioned, in and for the Parish and City of New Orleans, State of Louisiana, and in the presence of witnesses hereinafter named and undersigned

Personally came and appeared His Excellency, Andre Bienvenu Roman, Governor of the State of Louisiana, herein acting in his said capacity in the name and on behalf of the said State of Louisiana, and being duly authorized hereto by: 1st. . . An act of the Legislature of this State entitled: "An act authorizing the Governor to purchase arms for the use of the State; and for other purposes" approved on the twenty-fifth day of February, Eighteen Hundred and Thirty-six" and: 2nd. . . by an act supplementary to that above referred to, approved on the fourteenth day of March last past,

Party hereto of the first part;

And James Harrison Dakin, of this city, herein acting as the surviving partner of the firm known and established in this

city under the name and style of DAKIN & DAKIN, architects and builders, which firm was composed of him, this appearer, and of Charles Bingley Dakin, deceased; the said James Harrison Dakin being authorized and empowered to continue and to carry on the business of said firm under the said style of "Dakin & Dakin", by virtue of an act of partnership between him and the said late Charles Bingley Dakin, made under private signature under the date of the twenty-fourth of December, eighteen hundred and thirty-five and duly registered in the office of Hilary Breton Cenas, notary in this city, by an act bearing date of the sixteenth day of August, eighteen hundred and thirty six

Parties hereto of the second part

And the said James Harrison Dakin, in his said capacity, declared that he does by these presents covenant and agree with the said party of the first part, to provide, furnish and supply all the materials to execute and perform all the work for the erection of a building to be called the "STATE ARMORY", on a certain lot of ground situate in the first municipality of this City, fronting on St. Peter & Orleans Streets, between Chartres and Royal Streets, and measuring thirty feet, eleven inches and seven eighteenths front on each of said St. Peter and Orleans Streets, by one hundred and seven feet, seven inches, six lines on the other side; The said buildings to be erected in conformity with four plans or drawings signed and paragraphed "ne varietur", by said appearers, in the presence of and together with the notary and witnesses undersigned, and handed and delivered to said James Harrison Dakin, who, in his capacity aforesaid, does hereby acknowledge the receipt and delivery of the same; And also in accord-

dance with the following specifications, viz.:

S P E C I F I C A T I O N

The style, form and dimensions and arrangement of the aforesaid building will be such as are represented by the various drawings above referred to. The ground upon which said building is to be erected will be cleared of its old buildings and rubbish, and the foundations dug and prepared in the best usual manner, with double thickness of flat boat planks, to all the required depths and widths for the reception of the various footings or foundations of the walls and piers or columns.

The foundations of all parts will be of the form and dimensions of the figured drawings, and laid with the best country or lake bricks, and grouted at every third course in the same manner that is practiced by the United States engineers, and with rich lime and sand grout. . . .

On the second course of bricks above the ground will be laid a course of slates in cements to prevent the moisture from rising in the walls.

The superincumbent walls will be of such heights and thicknesses as are represented by the figured dimensions on the aforesaid plans, and built of the best country or lake bricks laid in the best lime and sand mortar composed of one part river sand and one part of sharp of Natchez sand, with a proper proportion of the best Thomaston stone lime; the top of the walls will be covered with slates cemented.

There will be six flues built in the main flank walls for ventilation in each story; the yard walls will be carried up two stories high.

Bond timbers are to be placed in all end walls over the openings running the entire length of the walls.

The walls will be anchored with iron to the floor timbers at every seven feet distance apart, and at every pier in the ends of the building.

The roofs will be covered with best slates and the angles finished with tiles.

The roof of the main building will be finished with thirty inch, and that of the rear with twenty inch copper gutters and five inch conductors, and fancy heads to the front of the rear or small buildings on Orleans Street.

There will be a dormer skylight on the main roof, as shown by the section, fifteen feet long with the sashes fixed to swing up and down for the purpose of ventilation.

All of the first floor and the yard and passage will be paved with asphaltum, making proper gutters to convey the water into the street.

There will be eight cast iron six inch columns placed in the first and second stories to support the floors, as represented by the drawings; those of the first story to be based upon suitable granite blocks set upon brick piers of such dimensions as are shown by the drawings.

Over the columns of the first story will be placed a range of girders ten by eighteen inches square, and over those of the

second story range, ten by sixteen inches square for the support of the floor timbers.

The first tier of beams of the main building will be four by twelve inches, and the second four by ten inches, placed eighteen inches from centers. The roof tie-beams will be three by nine inches and the rafters three by eight inches placed thirty-four inches from the centres; each tie beam will be supported in the centre by an iron rod running through the tie beams and the head of the rafter, and finished with nuts and screws and a quarter inch in diameter.

The floors of the second and third stories will be laid with dressed one and a quarter inch yellow pine planks laid in narrow courses and blind nailed.

The ceiling of the upper story of the main building will be lathed and plastered in three coats hard-finished and neatly finished around the sky-light.

There will be a best patent hoist wheel with all the necessary fixtures over each hoist way, and the hoist ways will be guarded by strong shifting railings.

There will be a rack fixed along the plank walls of the second story for guns and intakes, and wooden pins in the third story to hang accoutrements to. In the first story there will be wooden pins and hooks fixed along the walls to hang the harnesses and the implements belonging to the artillery.

There will be a flight of stairs from the second to the third story as shown by the aforesaid plans, built in every respect suitable for the purposes of the building, with strong railings

and balusters of wood. There will be a proper step ladder and ample scuttle to the roof and well fastened inside with hooks and chains.

The front door on St. Peter Street will be made four inches thick in double thickness and the outside lined with iron or zinc, and the whole bolted together with strong iron bolts with neat fancy cast heads of two inch projection, and hung in two folds with six trap hinges three feet six inches long, each end fastened on the inside with a strong iron bar and face bolts in the most substantial manner.

The front windows will be made as represented by the elevation with sashes one and three quarters inches thick, hung in boxed frames with lines and weights and glazed with long cylinder glass. There will be an iron screen or guard in front of each window, as represented by the drawings with frames or margins three inches wide by three quarters inch thick, filled with net work or diagonal bars one and a quarter by three eights inches rabated together at every intersection, and the whole secured to the wall or front of the sash frame in the most substantial manner. The small . . . of the center window will be made of wood, and the lintel between the door and the window of bricks.

The attic or frieze windows will be made with glazed sashes hung to swing on the inside of the wall, properly fastened, and the front of the openings will be filled with such ornaments as are shown by the drawings, neatly carved in wood.

In the centre tablet above the cornice will be placed the arms of the State of Louisiana, made of cements, or some other

suitable and durable material in the most tasty manner and style.

All the other ornaments of the front and the . . . and entablature and blocking or attic above the cornices will be rough formed with bricks and stone work and finished with cement in imitation of white marble.

The base of the front four feet high and the door and two long window sills of the front and the door and window sills of the first story in the rear of the main building, and the door and window sills of the first story of the small buildings on Orleans Street will be of granite, likewise the door lintels and sills of all the openings of the front of the small building on Orleans Street.

The front of the small building will be faced up with bricks common and cemented to imitate marble, and the jamb of the door three feet high will be cased with granite or cast iron fixed firmly into the brick work.

The rear windows of the main building will be made with arched heads, and the centre window with transoms and mullions, and glazed with strong cylinder glass in one and three quarters' inch sashes hung with lines and weights, and all the openings of the windows secured with iron bars outside of the window frames.

The doors will be made with arched heads and transom lights secured by iron bars outside, and three inches thick in two thicknesses, well nailed together, and lined on the outside with sheet iron or zinc and fastened inside with flat iron bars except one of the small doors, which will be fastened with a strong French look of the best kind.

The timbers of the rear building on Orleans Street will be three by ten inches, nine by seven inches for the second and third floors and the tie-beams of the roof rafters three by six inches, and the gallery timbers three by nine inches and ten inches, and all placed at proper distances apart. The floors above the first one will be laid with one and one quarter inch dressed yellow pine; the second story will be lathed, plastered and hard finished in three coats, and also the ceiling of the upper story. The second and third stories will be finished with wooden chimney pieces and iron grates to the fire places; the inside doors will be made and finished in a plain, neat style, and fastened with zinc locks, as also the outside doors of the front next the yard. The first story windows on the Orleans Street front will be finished with strong iron or zinc lined shutters. The door to the passage will be made in two folds three inches thick and the outside lined with zinc or iron, and fastened with a fourteen inch French lock and hung with strap hinges; the first story windows on Orleans Street will be protected by iron bars outside. The outside doors next the yard and passages will be made in two thicknesses, hung with strap hinges and fastened with French locks. The second and third story windows will be finished with green Venetian blinds and the sashes made with twelve by eighteen inch glass. The inside doors and windows will be trimmed with six inches moulded architraves and a suitable base fixed to the second story. There will be a case of common but durable stairs at one end of the yard, as shown by the drawings, with round rails and square balusters. There will be a gallery to the third story across the yard front of the small buildings,

and one across the end of the yard on the second story, with square rails and balusters and c. as shown by the plans. The stairs will be covered with a roof. A step ladder will be built to communicate with the roof of the small building. There will be a privy built under the stairs, with two seats. All proper woodwork will have three coats of best English white lead paint; the iron work will be painted green, as also the wooden rails of the stairs, and the shutters of the outside doors. All the brick walls inside and next to the yard that are not plastered will be neatly white washed.

The whole of the hereinbefore described works is to be done and completed in the best substantial workmanlike manner in every respect, and under the supervision of the Adjutant General of the State of Louisiana, within the term of five months from the date of this contract.

The whole of the abovementioned works is to be made and well finished for and in consideration of the sum of Nineteen Thousand, five hundred dollars, which the said Dakin and Dakin will be entitled to when the armory aforesaid shall have been entirely finished and completed, and when the above mentioned works shall have been received and certified to in conformity with the plans thereof, and the hereinbefore written specifications by the Adjutant General of the State of Louisiana, upon whose certificate the Governor shall deliver unto the said James Harrison Dakin warrants on the Treasurer of the State for the payment of said sum of Nineteen thousand, five hundred dollars.

And whereas the said firm of Dakin and Dakin have a claim against the State of Louisiana for the sum of Five hundred

dollars due them for the drawing of all the plans and sketches relative to said buildings, for the estimate of the above mentioned works and for the professional services rendered by them previous to this contract, His Excellency, the said Governor, shall likewise upon due presentation made to him by said James Harrison Dakin of a certificate from the said Adjutant General of this State, authorize the payment of said claim, deliver unto said James Harrison Dakin warrants on said Treasurer of this State for that sum of Five Hundred Dollars above mentioned.

To these presents came and intervened Benedic Baggott, of this City, who, asfter having taken cognizance of the foregoing building contract, declared and said that he does hereby bind and obligate himself, his heirs and assigns jointly and in solido with the said James Harrison Dakin, acting as aforesaid, to have the above mentioned workds done and finished in the said term of five months from the date hereof, in conformity with the hereinbefore recited four plans or drawings, and in accordance with the hereinbefore written specifications. The said Benedict Baggett hereby renouncing all benefit of divisions and disoussion granted to him as security by the laws of the State of Louisiana.

Thus has the whole been agreed upon and contracted by and between the parties hereto.

Done and passed in my office, at the City of New Orleans aforesaid on the day, month and year frist before written, in the presence of Messrs. Jacques Anatole Courtin and Pierre Amedee Bernard,

both competent witnesses hereto required, who have signed these presents with the parties and me, notary, after reading the whole.

(Signed) J. Courtin
P. A. Bernard

(Signed) A. W. Norman

Jas. H. Dakin
for
Dakin & Dakin

B. Baggett

F. Grima - Notary

Transcribed by Edward M. Bezou

June 27, 1935

Edward M. Bezou

Renewed Oct. 19. 1936 - [Signature]