

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Louisiana State Capitol

and/or common "New" Capitol

**2. Location**

street & number Capitol Drive \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Baton Rouge \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Louisiana code county East Baton Rouge Parish code

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name State of Louisiana

street & number Division of Administration

city, town Baton Rouge \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Louisiana

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. East Baton Rouge Parish Courthouse

street & number 222 St. Louis Street

city, town Baton Rouge \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of state Louisiana

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title National Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records National Park Service

city, town Washington, D.C. 20240 \_\_\_\_\_ state

# 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

## Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Louisiana Capitol is a 34-story, 450-foot, Alabama limestone, sculptured skyscraper designed by Weiss, Dreyfous, and Seiferth of New Orleans in 1929 under the administration of Governor Huey P. Long. The building is set on a high basement which contains service spaces. The ground lobby of "Memorial Hall" is approached from the south via a grand frontal stairway with one step for each of the forty-eight states which existed when the Capitol was built. The grand stairway is flanked by a pair of monumental sculptured figure groups modeled by Lorado Taft and executed by C. M. Dodd. The east group is dominated by an armored soldier and the mourners of a warrior slain in battle. The west group depicts "men and women of vision who created a state out of hostile wilderness."

The "Memorial Hall" is entered through a massive four (4)-story rectangular opening carved in bas-relief with paneled bronze and glass doors. The Hall itself is 124 feet long and 40 feet wide. It rises to a shallow vaulted ceiling which sets upon a light entablature. The walls are articulated with pairs of stylized, fluted pilaster strips without capitals. These are executed in dark marble, which contrasts with the light marble of the walls. The end walls are decorated with murals by Jules Guerin and depict agriculture in the state. The hall is flanked by a pair of massive bronze doors which lead to the House Chamber on the east and the Senate Chamber on the west. These chambers occur in the wings, which flank the main skyscraper tower. Each chamber has a marble interior similar to the "Memorial Hall."

There is an auxiliary space to the rear of the Hall which originally had four freestanding columns; two of these columns have been removed. The columns, however, still exist and are slated to be replaced. Flanking this auxiliary space is a pair of elevator blocks which provide access to the office tower for the Governor and state officials.

The exterior is the most impressive aspect of the building. It is massed as a progression of repeating blocks which rise to a central square tower. As the tower rises, it cuts away in stages from a square plan to an octagonal plan. The transition from square to octagon is made by four massive allegorical busts which occur at corners near the top of the main shaft. The detailing is worthy of note.

The ground floor of the building is articulated with pilaster strips similar to those in the "Memorial Hall." There is also a shallow relief frieze formed of stylized figures. The upper octagonal cupola has a large pedimented window on all four sides; this area is garnished with symbolic stylized motifs. There is more carved ornamentation in this area than in any other part of the exterior building. The transition from the cupola to the beacon is by four massive flying buttresses.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates**

**Builder/Architect**

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Introduction

"Turn it over to some collector of antiques," Huey Long, the governor of Louisiana emphatically stated in 1930.<sup>1</sup> The belittled antecedent of Long's "it" was the old state capitol one of Louisiana's most venerable and architecturally important edifices. Designed by James Dakin and constructed in 1849, the capitol is one of the finest examples in the South of Gothic revival architecture. As of 1930, it was a symbol of the continuity of the political domination of Louisiana's traditional social and economic elite over the State's fortunes. Long perceived his election as governor in 1928 as a mandate to end the "hierarchy's" hold on state politics. A new capitol he thought, would symbolize the end of the old order. The edifice would say to the people of Louisiana and the rest of the United States that Louisiana had entered the modern era.

History

It is unclear when Huey Long first got the idea to include the construction of a new capitol on the agenda of the improvements he desired to bring to Louisiana. In 1924, when he first ran for governor, Long castigated then governor John M. Parker for tearing down the old buildings at Louisiana State University and moving the school to a new campus. "These are buildings," Long said, "for which we hold dear memories."<sup>2</sup> By the time of his election in 1928, Huey had apparently changed his mind about the state's older buildings. One of his first acts as governor was to propose the construction of a new governor's mansion. When his political opponents protested that the old mansion was good enough for Long's predecessors, thus it should be good enough for the upstart from Winn Parish, Long ordered convicts from the state prison to tear down the old mansion.

Long may have gotten the idea to build a new capitol as early as 1927 or it might have been in 1929. According to one account, he was one day in 1929 in New Orleans attending the dedication of a new furniture store, when he turned to the man sitting next to him and told him that he was looking for an architectural firm to design a new capitol. The man Long was talking to, as Huey probably knew, was Leon Weiss of the architectural firm of Weiss, Dreyfous, and Seiferth. The firm had a reputation of being "political," i.e. it had designed many public buildings around the state. Weiss naturally immediately answered that his firm had the capability to handle the commission.<sup>3</sup>

In January 1930, Long announced that a new capitol was a part of his program. Concurrently, he secured Board of Liquidation funds to begin design work. Since Governor Long controlled these funds, he was able to begin the building without having to place a bond issue before the voters. Once the design work was underway, the construction of a new capitol became almost impossible to stop. In May, Long said that the building would cost \$1,000,000. This figure proved much too

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property 30 acres

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

### UTM References

A 

1	5	6	7	4	6	0	0	3	3	7	0	8	4	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

1	5	6	7	4	2	0	0	3	3	7	0	3	7	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

1	5	6	7	3	9	5	0	3	3	7	0	3	5	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

1	5	6	7	3	9	3	0	3	3	7	0	7	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James W. Sheire, Historian

organization National Park Service - History Div. date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 1100 L Street, N.W., Room 4141 telephone (202) 523-5164

city or town Washington, D.C. 20240 state \_\_\_\_\_

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

\_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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The boundaries of the nomination were chosen to encompass the Capitol and the gardens, which were designed to complement it. The adjacent lake was in existence at the time the Capitol was built, but it became part of the landscape design.

The gardens were designed by Leon Weiss of the architectural firm and installed by Jungle Gardens of Avery Island. The sunken formal garden to the south of the Capitol is representative of a late 19th century English garden with strong axial design flanked by curved walks. All walks are lined with a boxwood hedge pruned into a rectangular form. Irregular masses of camellias and azaleas subordinate the formal walkways and create vistas into the garden. Many of the pittosporum shrubs are pruned into tight circular forms which contrast with the arching branches of the 200-year-old live oaks. Southern magnolias are planted throughout as the unifying element. The magnolia is the state flower.

In the center of the sunken garden is a motif design by Weiss. This was an area of concentrated annual color to be a jewel in the heart of the garden. Today, this area is a Memorial Garden where former Senator Huey P. Long is buried.

The garden to the east of the building is less formal in design and setting. The main walk is terminated by the 19th century Arsenal Museum. Directly in front of the museum is a display rose garden 115 feet long and 60 feet wide which is bordered by a pruned boxwood hedge. The main walk is randomly intersected by curving walks which lead into a finger-like peninsula which projects into the lake. This walk is lined with neatly pruned pittosporum shrubs and crepe myrtles.

To the north and rear of the Capitol is a formal area. A broad axial walk with radiating walks lead pedestrians into the rear of the Capitol from the semi-circular parking area. Along the lake edge, plantings are massed to create a natural area which is extensively used by tourists and state employees for picnicking.

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low and in November the legislature incorporated \$5,000,000 for the structure in Long's larger \$31,000,000 public works program.

As happened in all aspects of his program to bring new benefits to the people of Louisiana, such as new roads and bridges and free textbooks for the state's private and public school children, Long faced political opposition to the proposal to build a new capitol. Objectively, the old building was indeed architecturally important, but it was no longer capable of housing the functions of a modern state government. In Louisiana at the time, however, objective factors were subordinate to political considerations. This was especially true when a proposal to spend \$5,000,000 involved Huey Long. Anxious to undermine Long's prestige and authority, his opposition claimed that a new capitol would be an extravagance that the people of the state could not afford. To secure the votes of his opponents in East Baton Rouge Parish, Huey announced that the new building would be constructed on the site of the old Louisiana State University campus. This move assured favorable action by the legislature. It voted for a bond sale and in November the voters overwhelmingly approved the proposition.

In the amazingly short period of a year and a half the building was designed, constructed, and ornamented. Although Huey took an active interest in the building's construction, he did not interfere in the work of the architects or the artists working on the project. Long did, however, insist that it be finished as soon as possible. An example of Long's behind the scenes pressure for rapid completion is provided by a letter from Leon Weiss to the sculptor Lorado Taft. "The present governor will relinquish his office very shortly," Weiss wrote in February, 1931, "and has his heart set upon having the dedication of the building occur under his administration. We feel no amount of effort should be spared," Weiss continued, "to accord him the gratification of seeing the completion of this important portion of his program while yet in office as Governor of Louisiana."<sup>4</sup> It was not to be. When the new building was dedicated in May, 1932, Huey was in Washington, D.C.

The Louisiana State Capitol is impressive. Rising 450, feet above Baton Rouge, the Mississippi River, and the flat green countryside of southern Louisiana, the white sandstone structure was at the time of its construction the tallest building in the South. It contained all the features of a modern office building including one the first central air-conditioning systems in the South. Of special interest were the electronic voting machines in both houses of the legislature. The machines fed the results of roll call votes from the floor to the governor's office. Will Rogers is supposed to have said, that Huey used the machines to direct the votes of his supporters on the floor. Louisianans took immediate pride in their new capitol. So did Huey Long. The state now had a capitol as modern as any in the United States.

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The Louisiana State Capitol is of significance in the history of the United States in two areas. The first is the building's association with Huey P. Long. The second is the structure's architecture.

Association with Huey P. Long

It is now almost 47 years since a young Baton Rouge doctor assassinated Huey P. Long in a first floor back corridor of the Louisiana State Capitol. In killing Huey Long the physician brought to an end the career of a man who ranks among the most colorful, problematic, and controversial politicians of the 1930s.

Huey Pierce Long was born August 30, 1893, in Winnfield, Louisiana. He was the eighth of ten children. Although in later years Huey would often claim that he came from a very poor family background, his father in fact provided his family with a comfortable home life. Long attended Winnfield schools, but failed to graduate from high school, preferring instead to seek his fortune as a traveling salesman. Meeting with little success in this trade, Huey decided to study law at Tulane University in New Orleans and then challenge the Louisiana bar examination. In 1914, he passed the examination.

With a freshly engraved shingle Long and his wife Rose returned to Winnfield. Although Huey attracted clients in Winnfield, he realized in 1918 that, if he desired a larger practice, he would have to move to a bigger town. In that year he moved to Shreveport. Here he soon became the best workman's compensation attorney in northern Louisiana. Also in 1918, he ran for his first public office.

The office was a seat on the Railroad Commission, after 1921 the Public Service Commission, the body responsible for setting rates on utilities and the railroads. By this time Huey had formulated his political plans for the future. He would first win a state office from which he could make his name known throughout Louisiana. He would then win the governorship. Eventually, he would be elected President of the United States.

It went according to plan, save for the Presidency. As a member of the Railroad Commission, Long made his name well known throughout the state. As a railroad and then public service commissioner, Long's most celebrated venture was his battle with Cumberland Telephone and Telegraph Company. At the end of a two year struggle, Long forced the utility company to cut in half a proposed rate increase. During the course of the battle, Long demonstrated the tactics and style that would soon bring him national attention: personal invective, hyperbole, unfounded and wild accusations, and, above all, charges that the big companies and their rich cohorts wanted to rob and cheat "the little man." According to Long's principal biographer, his victory in the regulatory case put him in a position to run for the governorship in 1924.

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To his credit, Long during his time as chairman of the Public Service Commission made the institution a modern regulatory agency in the sense of broadening the commission's purview to include pipeline carriers instilling in the commission the idea that a utility with its monopoly position must serve the public interest.

Having gained a statewide reputation by 1924, Huey decided it was time to run for governor. He was 31 years old. It is doubtful that he thought he could actually win. He viewed his candidacy as a tactical move to position himself for 1928. To the surprise of Louisiana political observers, Huey finished a strong third in a three-man field. Indeed, his vote getting ability in northern Louisiana was such that the "Old Regulars," as New Orleans's powerful political machine was called, recognized that in 1928 Huey would be almost unbeatable. In 1928, Long formed an alliance with the Old Regulars. Although he did not win a plurality in New Orleans, he garnered enough votes in the city to win the governorship, easily. In this campaign, as in all his campaigns, Long lambasted corporate interests and accused his opponents of being in their service. As of 1928, he had established himself as a so-called man of the people in the tradition of American populism.

During his first two years as governor he articulated his program. It consisted of: public works such as roads, bridges, a toll free bridge across the Mississippi at New Orleans, and a new state capitol; welfare measures, especially free health care for the needy; and educational programs that included free textbooks, adult education to wipe out illiteracy, and the expansion of Louisiana State University. To finance the program, Long proposed to levy new taxes on his favorite "octopus," the Standard Oil Company of Louisiana. Long's attack on Louisiana's most powerful industrial interest, his use of state funds to purchase a law library that had potential personal use, his almost libelous attacks on the owner of a Baton Rouge newspaper, and his never ending insinuations that his political opponents were either in the employ of Standard Oil or were personally corrupt, led to his impeachment in 1929. The Louisiana House of Representatives voted a bill of impeachment, but Huey successfully thwarted a vote in the Senate by lining up fifteen senators who signed a "round robin" letter stating that no matter what the evidence, they would not vote to impeach, because the legislative session was supposedly finished.

In 1930 Huey, always, but always in a hurry, decided to move onto the national scene. He ran for the United States Senate and won easily. This election triumph established him as the "Kingfish" of Louisiana politics. In an unusual move he decided not to assume his seat, but rather to remain Governor of Louisiana until the 1932 gubernatorial election. The lieutenant governor was a political enemy whom Huey did not want to see sit in the governor's chair. When his hand picked candidate was elected, Huey in January 1932 was sworn in as Senator from Louisiana.



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In the Senate the always flamboyant and polemical "Kingfish" from Louisiana made his presence, but not necessarily his influence, immediately felt. In typical Long style he attacked his party's majority leader, Senator Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, and otherwise violated the manners of the Nation's most exclusive club. On the floor he addressed a number of issues, but by 1934 he had withdrawn from his committee assignments and confined himself to propagandizing his "share our wealth" program.

Long supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt's candidacy in 1932 and campaigned for him in several western states. Also in 1932 he demonstrated his political prowess by helping to elect Hattie Caraway to the United States Senate from Arkansas. Mrs. Caraway, who had won election to her husband's seat after his sudden death in 1931, was given little chance to win a full term. Huey liked her personally and politically and in a single week of intensive campaigning on her behalf, he helped swing the election to Caraway.

By 1934, Long had broken with Roosevelt and accused him of being a liar and a fake who could not overcome the sufferings of the Great Depression. In 1935, Long said that if Roosevelt did not change his program and accept Huey's plan to redistribute the wealth of the rich among the general population, he would run as a third party candidate in 1936. Although Roosevelt and his advisors knew that it was highly doubtful that Long could ever be elected president, his threat worried them. Huey could draw off enough Democratic votes to swing the election to a Republican. In 1934 and 1935, Huey sponsored hundreds of "share our wealth" clubs throughout the United States that were to serve as the grass roots organization for his coming campaign.

Meanwhile, back in Louisiana, Huey's power was threatened when the Old Regular machine elected its nominee mayor of New Orleans in 1934. To head off this challenge, Huey brought his control of the state legislature to bear. He personally directed the passage of a series of state laws that literally gave him control in naming almost all public employees in the state. The tactics Long's lieutenants employed to push through these laws erased any semblance of legislative procedure: No hearings were held, and there was no democratic debate. Huey had indeed become almost a dictator in Louisiana.

Louisiana politics of the period was always raucous and highly personalized. Nevertheless Long's dictatorial tactics and his inclination to destroy his political opponents brought him enemies whose animosity went beyond normal political opposition. Among his enemies was a young and highly respected Baton Rouge doctor by the name of Carl Weiss. Huey had never met Dr. Weiss, who, according to all reports, had never engaged in any political activity. Yet on September 8, 1935, Dr. Weiss shot Huey Long. To this day Weiss' motive remains a mystery. (He was immediately shot to death by Long's body guards.) There are three reasons most often advanced to explain the deed: Weiss wanted to rid Louisiana of a dictator and demagogue; he was enraged that

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Huey was about to "gerrymander" Weiss' father-in-law out of the latter's judgeship; or he feared that Long was about to revive a long discredited rumor that his father-in-law's family had black blood. Whatever the motive, Long succumbed to the effects of Weiss' bullet on September 10, 1935.

Huey Long's position in the history of American politics is difficult to assess. He is usually placed in the same category as Father Charles Coughlin and Dr. Francis E. Townsend, i.e. he is viewed as a charismatic personality who came to the fore in the 1930s with a novel but economically flawed plan to overcome a Great Depression that Roosevelt's policies and programs had not ended. Unlike Coughlin and Townsend, however, Long was an elected politician who served as governor of his state and as a United States Senator. His proclaimed ambition was to be President of the United States. The most widely held judgment of Long the politician is that he was a demagogue who displayed dictatorial tendencies that verged on being fascistic. T. Harry Williams, a widely respected historian, examines this judgment of Long and concludes that none of the standard political definitions fit him. His political style and tactics of polemical attack, personalized invective, guilt by association, and the unfounded accusation displayed a demagogic streak. His control of the Louisiana legislature and the manner in which he pushed his program verged on the dictatorial, but Huey was never able to control completely the system of democratic checks and balances. As to being a fascist, Williams points out that Huey was no "Fuehrer."

His programs were in the tradition of American populism. In Louisiana he pursued policies that brought social, cultural, and economic benefits to the majority of the people. He modernized the road system, provided free health care for the needy, and improved the quality of education at all levels. Above all he gave the "common man" the psychological feeling that he represented him and that the traditional elite no longer ran the state for its benefit. His national plan to "Share-Our-Wealth" was populist in the sense that it aimed at overcoming the disparity of income and standard of living among Depression era Americans. This goal of improving the well being of the "little guy", be he farmer, small businessman, or worker, is a traditional American ideal. There are, then, various interpretations of a politician who inspired the poet Robert Penn Warren to write a novel called All the Kings Men. Whatever the interpretation, there is general agreement that Huey P. Long was one of the important political figures of the 1930s.

There is also general agreement that the Louisiana State Capitol is importantly associated with him. He caused the building to be constructed, he was killed within it, and he is buried on its grounds. For Long the building was a symbol of his goals and a monument to his achievement. According to Williams, Long took immense pride in the structure, because it "gave the state a building worthy of Louisiana's place in the modern era."

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Indeed Long liked the building so much that he had an apartment installed on the 24th floor for his use. No doubt Huey desired to be closer to his minions on the floor. One could also reasonably conclude that he liked such a lofty location, because it allowed the "Kingfish" to survey his kingdom. In fact, the reason for locating the apartment on the 24th floor was mundane. Huey suffered from hay fever. He thought that at that height the freedom from pollen and dust enabled him to sleep better.<sup>6</sup>

Other Properties Associated With Long

Other structures in Louisiana are associated with the career of Huey Long. The properties surveyed here are among the more important, but the list is in no way meant to be definitive.

Long's boyhood homes in Winnfield are no longer extant. His residence there from 1914 to 1918 might still be extant. When Long moved to Shreveport in 1918, he lived in a modest home (possibly extant) until 1927, when he constructed a new home at 433 Forrest Avenue. This house is extant and is in excellent condition. Long's family continued to live here, after he was elected governor. In 1932 Long purchased a home at 14 Audubon Boulevard in New Orleans. He wanted a New Orleans address, he claimed, to pursue a law practice in the city. Long apparently never actually lived in this house, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Although as governor and United States Senator, Huey owned homes in Shreveport and later in New Orleans, he did not live in them. He was simply not a family man. The "Kingfish" preferred to live in hotels. In Baton Rouge he maintained a suite at the Heidelberg. Here he met with his cronies and "wheeled and dealt." In 1982 this hotel was listed in the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with Long. He also maintained a suite at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans for similar purposes. He also stayed, probably for only the brief periods when the legislature was in session, in his apartment in the capitol. In Washington, D.C., Long also lived in hotels and for a brief period in an apartment in the Broadmoor on Connecticut Avenue.

Architecture

In one of the few books if not the only book, that takes as its theme the architecture of the 50 state capitols, architectural historians Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale designate these American buildings "temples of democracy."<sup>7</sup> By temples of democracy the authors mean that our state capitols incorporate in their architectural style, and above all in their art work, symbols that are meant to inspire in the citizenry the cultural and political values of society. "Symbols,"

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they write, "have dominated every legislative building erected in the United States."<sup>8</sup>

The Louisiana State Capitol is a temple of democracy. That the new building be a symbol of the state's entrance into the modern era, and that it illustrate and commemorate the history of Louisiana and the ideals and values of her people, was exactly the idea that Huey Long wished realized when, he commissioned the architectural firm of Weiss, Dreyfous, and Seiferth to design a new Capitol.

After the firm secured the commission, the partners immediately began their search for the most modern example of a state capitol. At the time only one state capitol was under construction that broke dramatically with the traditional state capitol modeled on the United States Capitol. The building was Bertram Goodhue's not yet completed Nebraska State Capitol. It was a modern skyscraper, the first state capitol in this form in the United States. In Lee Lawrie's sculpture and ornamentation it reflected Nebraska's history and the ideals of her people. It was just the type of building the New Orleans architects were seeking and they took it as their model.

Weiss, Dreyfous, and Seifert's idea for the building was that it be a public monument that would symbolize the history, material progress, and intellectual and spiritual values of the people of Louisiana.

The base reflects the history of Louisiana from its Indian and French beginnings through the Spanish period, the Louisiana Purchase, the War of 1812, the Civil War, and into the modern era. The sculpture, friezes, murals, and other ornamentation of the base all tell a story of this history. Secondly, the base contains symbols of Louisiana's natural resources and her major economic activities such as agriculture, lumbering, and industry.

The tower, resting firmly on a base of historical consciousness and material well being, soars upward as a symbol of man's pursuit of the nobler qualities of the mind and spirit. The tower is topped by four figures that symbolize intellectual achievement: law, science, philosophy, and art. Crowning the structure is a temple decorated with celestial symbols and an aluminum lantern. The temple's symbolic meaning is that man's history, material well being, and intellectual accomplishments lead him to spiritual values that nourish his soul.

The Louisiana State Capitol is an admirable realization of its designer's ideas. But is it a nationally significant work of architecture? Louisiana art historian Vincent F. Kubly, the author of a 1977 book on the building as architecture and art, claims that it has been "little appreciated for its artistic and architecture merits."<sup>9</sup> He believes that the building's

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significance has not been sufficiently recognized. He thinks it is of major architectural significance, "because it epitomized the end of Beaux-Arts architectural tradition in America."<sup>10</sup> Kubly claims it is also significant, because the building stands at the end of architectural ornament, i.e. at the end of a period during which sculptors and mural painters worked together with the architect. This study makes no attempt to discuss the end of the Beaux-Arts tradition in the United States. Many architectural historians would not agree with Kubly that the Louisiana State Capitol is the last Beaux-Arts influenced structure. For example, William H. Jordy in his American Buildings and Their Architects thinks that the tradition is still with us today. In the course of discussing the work of Louis Kahn, he writes:

Finally--and here we leave our list of buildings momentarily in order to glance at a more literal and more prominent, but architecturally less consequential, aspect of the Beaux-Arts revival which is contemporaneous with Kahn's Jonas Salk laboratories--there is the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York with its columns and axial organization. Although these formal qualities of Lincoln Center generally characterize all classically inspired architecture, its most immediate prototypes for American architects are Beaux-Arts buildings. So Lincoln Center brings the tradition of American Beaux-Arts full circle, back to the Court of Honor at the Columbian Exposition of 1892. Or, a circle within a circle: if Rockefeller Center had marked the arc from Beaux-Arts to modern, so the later Center marks the arc from modern back to Beaux-Arts...<sup>11</sup>

In writing his book Kubly surveyed the literature on the history of American architecture. He found that the building is not included in discussions of major American buildings or in works on major American architects. In a major study of American architectural history John E. Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown in their study The Architecture of America sponsored by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) do not mention the Louisiana State Capitol. In discussing the period from 1913 to 1933 they write, "Current and choice were the Nebraska State Capitol, the Palmolive Building in Chicago, the new Bosworth complex for M.I.T., and the overcited Empire State."<sup>12</sup>

In their survey of the architecture of the state capitols, Hitchcock and Seale outline the reasons why the Nebraska State Capitol has long been recognized as a major American building. Turning to the Louisiana State Capitol the authors point to its association with Huey Long. "Louisiana's finished capitol, mirrored in its lake set in a fifty acre park," they write, "is Huey Long's monument."<sup>13</sup> They find the building's "magnificent whiteness" in relation to the surrounding city, the Mississippi, and the perpetually green countryside "singularly successful." But as architecture, in their judgement,

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the building, "paraphrased Goodhue's state house in Nebraska without comparable artistic pretension or historical tradition." The building, they write at one point, "looks like a city office building." At another, they think that its, "outdated stylishness gives it the look of a luxury hotel of its era...Like some Beaux-Arts capitols, it is best seen as it was built--in a hurry."<sup>14</sup> (Huey Long, who liked luxury hotels, might not have been displeased with this statement.)

The Louisiana State Capitol merits the well deserved pride of the citizens of the state. The building is also visited and enjoyed for its architecture and art by people from all over the country. At the present time, however, the structure has not been recognized as being a major work of American architecture.

The consensus judgment appears to be that, although its Beaux-Arts inspired architectural style is interesting, and although its art work was executed by well known artists of the period (among them Lorado Taft, Lee Lawrie, Ulric Ellerhasen, and Adolph A. Weinman), the building is, in the words of Hitchcock and Seale, a "paraphrase" of Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol.

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FOOTNOTES

1. T. Harry Williams, Huey Long, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 428.
2. Ibid., p. 199.
3. Ellen Roy Jolly and James Calhoun, The Pelican Guide to the Louisiana State Capitol, (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1980), p.17.
4. Ibid., p. 23.
5. Williams, Huey Long, p. 428.
6. Herman B. Deutsch, The Huey Long Murder Case, (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1963), p. 64.
7. Henry-Russell Hitchcock and William Seale, Temples of Democracy, (New York: Harcourt Brace Janovich, 1976).
8. Ibid., p. 4.
9. Vincent F. Kubly, The Louisiana Capitol, Its Art and Architecture, (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1977), p. 7.
10. Ibid., p. 9.
11. William H. Jordy, American Buildings and Their Architects, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1972), p. 387-8.
12. John E. Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, The Architecture of America, (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1961), p. 331.
13. Hitchcock and Seale, Temples of Democracy, p. 283.
14. Ibid., p. 282-3.



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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the intersection of North 3rd and Boyd Avenue proceed in an easterly direction following Boyd Avenue to the intersection of Boyd Avenue and North 5th thence in a northerly direction following North 5th to the intersection of North 5th and Capitol Avenue thence in an easterly direction following Capitol Avenue to the intersection of Capitol Avenue and a driveway (no name) approximately 60' beyond the intersection of Capitol Avenue and North 6th thence following this driveway in a north-easterly direction to its intersection with state highway 3045 thence in a westerly direction following 3045 to its intersection with North 3rd thence in a southerly direction following north 3rd to its intersection with Boyd Avenue, the point of beginning.

The Powder Magazine (National Register of Historic Places--1973), also called the Old Spanish Arsenal, is located on the Capitol grounds within the Louisiana State Capitol boundary. This historic resource has not been determined to be of national significance and is excluded from the National Historic Landmark nomination of the Louisiana State Capitol.

The Louisiana State Capitol.  
Diagram of the capitol showing  
location of sculptural details.

1. Stairway groups (Taft)
2. Portal (Lawrie)
3. Welfare reliefs (Weinman)
4. Historic frieze (Ellerhusen)
5. Foreign trade reliefs (Torrey)
6. Historic portraits (Gregory, Rieker, Gonzales, Lachin and Parducci)
7. Dominations of Louisiana (Lawrie)
8. Animals (Lawrie)
9. Crops, pelicans (Lawrie)
10. Corner figures: Law, Science, Art, Philosophy (Ellerhusen)
11. Spiritual temple (Lawrie)

