

OLD STATE CAPITOL:  
Analyzing a Photograph







KentuckyHistoricalSociety

# OLD STATE CAPITOL

## ANALYZING A PHOTOGRAPH

### THE LAST LEGISLATIVE SESSION AT THE OLD STATE CAPITOL, 1908

CONTENT RECOMMENDED FOR FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

##### Politics in the Old State Capitol

Ignoring ongoing construction, the legislature convened here in 1829. For the next 80 years, it would be the center of Kentucky political history. Within its chambers, political leaders debated Kentucky's role in the Civil War and voted not to ratify the amendments to the United States Constitution that ended slavery and extended civil rights to freed slaves. Discussions on segregation, women's rights and the political scandals of the 1888 embezzlement of state funds by state treasurer James W. "Honest Dick" Tate all took place within the Capitol or on its grounds.

The building was the only pro-Union state Capitol occupied by the Confederate army during the Civil War. Plans to swear in a Confederate governor and establish a Confederate state government were ruined by the approach of the Union army just days before the Battle of Perryville in 1862.

In the aftermath of the bitterly contested gubernatorial election in 1899, the state legislature met here in 1900 to decide the winner. An assassin, hiding in an office in the Old Capitol Annex next door, shot the Democratic claimant, William Goebel, as he approached the Capitol. Armed citizens and State Guard soldiers occupied the grounds and, for a time, Kentuckians threatened to fight their own miniature Civil War. A plaque marks the site outside the building where Goebel, the only governor in United States history to be assassinated while in office, fell.

##### Last General Assembly in the House Chamber of the Old Capitol, 1908

By the early 20th century, critical unattended repairs and cramped spaces plagued the capitol building. In 1904, the legislature voted to spend \$1 million on a new capitol building to be erected on the same spot. However the design proved too large for the lot and a new location had to be found. The state purchased property in South Frankfort for the new Capitol, which was completed in 1910. In 1908, the General Assembly met for the last time in the 1830 Capitol, before moving into the new Capitol, then under construction.

#### ARTIFACT LIST

1. Last General Assembly in the House Chamber of the Old Capitol, 1908, 1987PH01, cn.vol1.117.1-2.lastsessionOSC

**THEME** | 20th Century Kentucky Legislators

**OBJECTIVE** | To analyze a photograph of the last legislative session at the Old State Capitol in order to better understand how the building was used.

**CORE CONTENT CONNECTIONS** | SS-04-5.1.1; SS-EP-5.1.1; SS-05-5.1.1; AH-04-3.4.1; AH-05-3.4.1

#### VOCABULARY

We encourage you to introduce the following vocabulary words independently or in conjunction with the pre-visit activities.

|                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| <b>Legislature</b>    | <i>an organized body having the authority to make laws for a political unit</i>  |
| <b>Capitol</b>        | <i>a building in which a state legislative body meets</i>  |
| <b>Capital</b>        | <i>a town or city that is the official seat of government in a political entity, such as a state or nation</i>         |
| <b>Law</b>            | <i>a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority</i> |
| <b>Bill</b>           | <i>a proposed law put before the legislature</i>   |
| <b>Portrait</b>       | <i>a pictorial representation of a person usually showing a face</i>   |
| <b>Pose</b>           | <i>a bodily attitude or posture</i>  |
| <b>Primary source</b> | <i>an artifact, document, recording or other source of information that was created at the time of study</i>           |

#### ACTIVITY

For this activity, have the students complete the attached worksheet to learn more about the last legislative session in the Old Capitol. Wait to tell the class about this last session until after they have completed initial observation and analysis of the photograph.

#### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY

Ask students to write a letter to their legislator, or ask students to write bills and have the class vote on whether they become laws.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[www.kyhistory.com/Kramer](http://www.kyhistory.com/Kramer), Carl E. Capitol on the Kentucky. Frankfort, Ky: Historic Frankfort, Inc., 1986.



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1. Study the photograph for two to three minutes. Note your overall impressions.

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2. Using the chart below, list the people, objects and activities you see

| PEOPLE | OBJECTS | ACTIVITIES |
|--------|---------|------------|
|        |         |            |



3. What do you think they have been working on?

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4. What do you see in the photograph that makes you think that?

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5. Do you notice any women in the room? If so where are they?

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6. Who do you think is sitting in the balcony? Why?

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7. Do you think this photograph accurately reflects how the building was used during the 20th century? Why or why not?

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