

Kentucky

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

EDUCATOR PACKET

PHOTO ANALYSIS

LAST LEGISLATIVE SESSION
AT THE OLD STATE CAPITOL, 1908

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Old State Capitol

When the Kentucky state legislature appointed a commission to choose an appropriate location for the state capital, Frankfort was one of three cities in the running. In order to persuade the commission to choose Frankfort over Louisville or Lexington, local residents offered the commissioners several incentives, including boxes of glass, pounds of nails, hinges and locks and a sum of \$3,000.

After fire destroyed the first two capitol buildings, the General Assembly enacted legislation in 1827 that authorized the construction of yet another capitol. A committee convened to request designs, offering \$150 premium for the best submission. Gideon Shyrock, a 25 year old architect from Lexington, presented the winning design.

Echoing architectural styles of the day, he designed the building to resemble a Greek temple, a nod to the democratic ideals of ancient Greece. Shyrock added interesting details that compel visitors to take a closer look. A domed lantern in the center of the building brings light into an otherwise dark interior. A circular stone staircase, held in place by a large keystone on the second-floor landing, adds drama to the interior.

Replaced by the new Capitol in South Frankfort early in the 20th century, the building now serves as a museum on the history campus of the Kentucky Historical Society. The subject of extensive restoration work since the early 1970s, the Old State Capitol looks today much as it did in the 1850s.

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.

The building was the only pro-Union state Capitol building 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

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.

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

[Last Legislative Session at the Old State Capitol, 1908 \(SC1970\)](#)

VOCABULARY

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

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PHOTO OBSERVATION

Use the table below to help analyze the photograph. Consider listing things such as the location and people pictured or make a guess at why it was taken. What do you wonder about the photograph?

I See...	I Think...	I Wonder...

PHOTO INTERPRETATION

Answer the following questions in 3-5 sentences.

Do you think this photograph accurately reflects how the building was used during the 19th and 20th century? Why or why not?

What do you know about Kentucky's legislature today? Using a teacher approved resource, research and compare and contrast Kentucky's legislature in 1908 to today.

If you were a Kentucky legislator, what law would you pass and why?



Last Legislative Session at the Old State Capitol, 1908 (SC1907)