

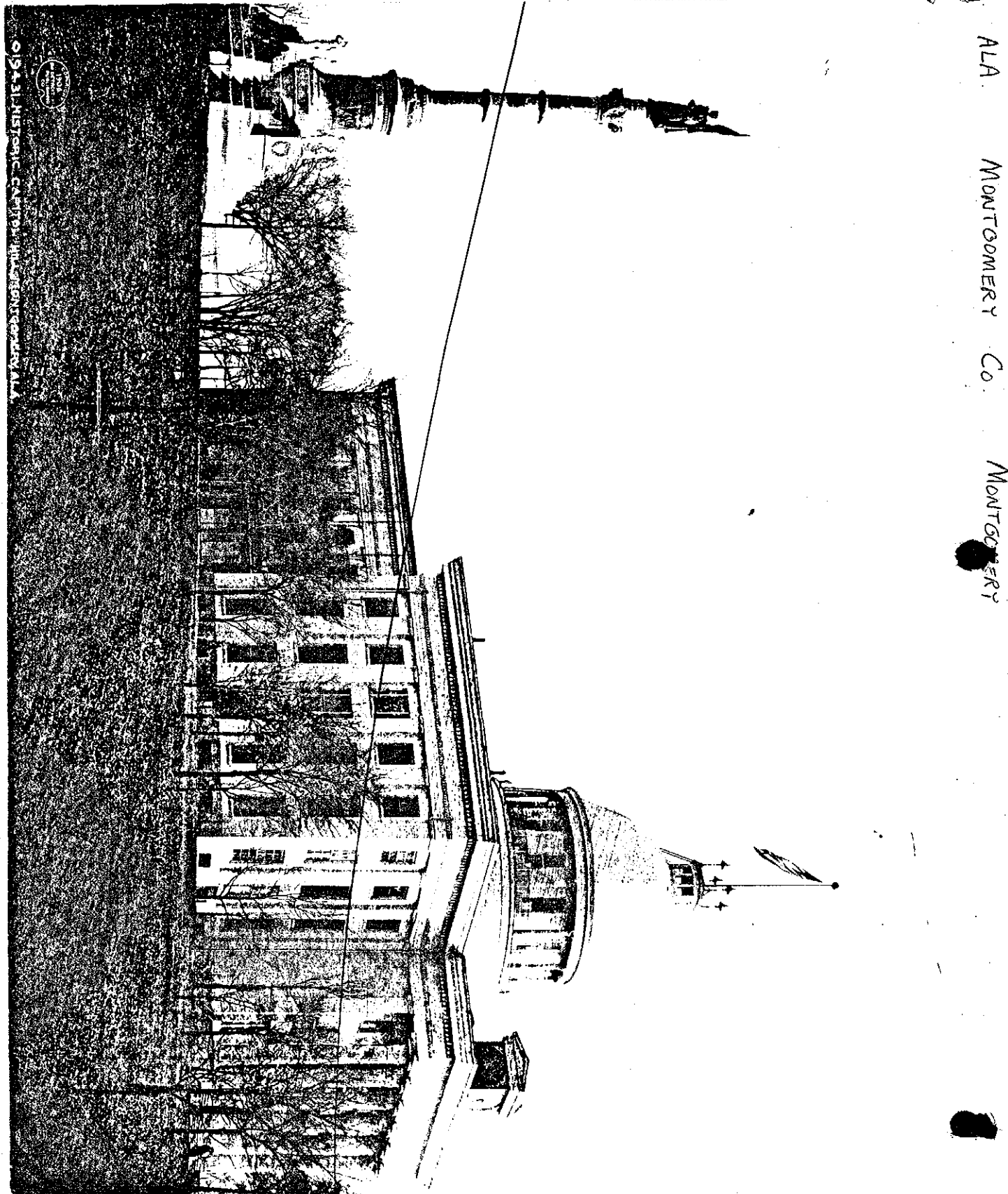
The State Capitol  
End of Dexter Ave.,  
Montgomery, Ala.  
Montgomery Co.

HABS No. 16-601.  
HABS  
ALA  
51-MONG  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District No. 16

Historic American Buildings Survey  
E. Walter Burkhardt, District Officer  
Ala. Polytechnic Inst., Auburn, Ala.

ALA. MONTGOMERY Co. MONTGOMERY



1943 HISTORIC CAPITAL MONTGOMERY ALA.



Project #16-601  
STATE CAPITOL OF ALABAMA  
Head of Dexter Avenue  
Montgomery, Alabama

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HISTORICAL DATA:

Built in 1851.

Architect: Nimrod E. Benson and Justus Wyman supervised the construction of this building.

Ownership:

The City of Montgomery deeded the land, upon which the original part of the building was put in 1847, to the State of Alabama, November 5, 1847.

Since then, additional land has been purchased to add to the grounds, and additional parts have been added as wings to the original building.

CAPITALS OF ALABAMA:

The Territorial Capital of Alabama was at St. Stephens, in Washington County, on the Tombigbee, 1818.

The Constitutional Convention, which framed the State Constitution, met at Huntsville in Madison County. Thus Huntsville was for a short time, 1819 and part of 1820, the temporary capital of Alabama.

Cahaba, in Dallas County, on the Alabama River, was the next seat of the State Government, from 1820 to 1826.

Due to floods at Cahaba, the capital was moved to Tuscaloosa in 1826.

The Legislature of 1844-45 voted to submit to the people of Alabama a new amendment of the Constitution, providing for the moving of the capital from Tuscaloosa to a place to be chosen by the Legislature. This amendment was submitted to the people in the fall of 1845 and passed. In 1846, the Legislature chose Montgomery, provided the people of Montgomery paid all the expenses for the removal of the Government records and also for the building of a capitol.

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### First Building:

A building committee was appointed, the City Council of Montgomery voted \$75,000 in bonds, a site was chosen and the land was presented by the City Council of Montgomery to the State of Alabama.

The location for the building was, and still is, the top of Goat Hill. This elevation is at the head of Dexter Avenue, Montgomery's main business street, and overlooks this whole section of the town.

The year 1847 saw the construction of this first building (predecessor of the present Capitol). During the latter part of the year, the Secretary of State returned to Tuscaloosa for the State records. These were placed in 113 boxes and loaded on 13 wagons which set out for Montgomery in charge of James H. Owen, door keeper of the House of Representatives. These records weighed 26,704 pounds and cost \$1,325 to bring to Montgomery.

The first biennial session of the Legislature and the first Legislature to meet in Montgomery, convened December 6, 1847. There was a great celebration. And, as is most unusual today, most of the members of the two houses were present. Reuben Chapman was inaugurated Governor in the hall of the House of Representatives, December 16, 1847. The Reverend Basil Manly acted as chaplain.

Two years later, while the second biennial Legislature was in session, a fire destroyed almost the entire building. Only the masonry foundations and part of the walls were left. This occurred, December 14, 1849.

### Building of the Present Capitol:

On February 11, 1850, provision was made by the Legislature for the erection of a new building. The appropriation for this purpose was \$60,000. The building was to be placed on the same site, but the plan was somewhat changed. In 1852, an additional sum of \$2,527 was appropriated for extra work.

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The building was erected in 1851 under the supervision of Nimrod B. Benson and Justus Wyman. They employed contractors in the city of Montgomery, the carpentry work being done by a different builder than the one who erected the stairs. The Corinthian columns were capped with metal casts at Janney's Foundry. As the clock was to be also the town clock for the city of Montgomery, by a joint resolution of both Houses of the Legislature, approved February 9, 1852, the City was authorized to place this clock on the Capitol building.

#### Additions since 1852:

The Supreme Court extension, East Wing, was built 1885-1886, by Figh and Williams Contractors, during the administration of Edward A. O'Neal, Governor.

Under Governor W. D. Jelks, the North and South Wings were added. Charles F. McKim of McKim, Mead, and White, New York; and Frank Lockwood of Montgomery were the architects. Mr. McKim advised not to destroy the old building, but to erect north and south additions, of two stories instead of three, so as not to overshadow the main (old) part of the building. The South Wing, costing \$150,000 was provided for by an act of February 17, 1903, after the purchase of an additional lot for \$65,000. The North Wing, costing \$100,000, was provided for by an act of April 13, 1911.

The entire building was renovated with CWA aid in 1934.

#### The Birth of a New Nation:

On February 24, 1860, the Legislature of Alabama passed a resolution authorizing the Governor, on the event of the election in November of a Republican as President of the United States, to call a convention of delegates to see what action Alabama should take. Abraham Lincoln was elected in November 1860. Governor A. B. Moore issued a call, December 6, 1860, for one hundred delegates.

This Convention held its meetings in the hall of the House of Representatives, and was known of as the convention that had all members present.

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William M. Brooks, representing the secessionists, was chosen as president of the Convention, by a vote of 53 to 45, the two nominees for the office not voting.

William Lowndes Yancey was made chairman of the committee to draft the Ordinance of Secession. On January 11, 1861, the ordinance passed.

The Confederate Congress met in the hall of the House of Representatives of this building, February 4, 1861. Before adjourning, the Convention had issued an invitation to the Southern States to send delegates to meet in Montgomery and form a provisional government. South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Florida were represented. Howell Cobb of Georgia was made chairman, Johnson J. Hooper of Montgomery became the secretary.

On February 8, 1861, the Constitution of the United States, with some changes, was adopted as the organic law by the provisional government. The next day, February 9, Mr. Cobb was sworn in as president of this Confederate Congress, under the new Constitution. At noon of the same day, the doors of the House were thrown open, and in the midst of the greatest excitement and enthusiasm, the announcement was made, Jefferson Davis of Mississippi had been chosen as provisional president of a new nation, and Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, the vice-president.

The following day, February 10, Mr. Stephens appeared before the Provisional Congress, and after making a speech accepting the vice-presidency, was sworn in by Mr. Cobb, the President of Congress.

Mr. Davis, who was at his home in Brierfield, Mississippi, at the time of his election, reached Montgomery on Saturday, February 16, 1861. His inauguration was one of the grandest pageants ever witnessed in the City of Montgomery. The President-elect rode in a carriage drawn by four large grey horses. Seated with him were the Vice-President, the Reverend Basil Manly, chaplain for the day, Captain George Jones of the First Alabama Cavalry and personal military escort of the President-elect. This carriage was followed by those containing the members of the Confederate Congress, the visiting Governors, and other distinguished citizens. Then came the military.

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When the procession reached the foot of the Capitol grounds, the military drew up in two lines. Then the President-elect and distinguished visitors passed between them to the porch of the Capitol. It is said that the soldiers had a dreadful time pushing back the wildly cheering crowds.

A large platform had been built to the front and left side of the portico. Here were seated the members of the Confederate Congress and the members of the Alabama State Legislature.

"The invocation was by Rev. Basil Manly and after it Mr. Davis took his position, facing the people, immediately in front of the door between the two columns, Mr. Cobb being to his left, while Mr. Stephens, the Vice-President, occupied a chair to his right, but a little in the rear. Mr. Davis delivered a short address to the people which was received with outbursts of applause and at the conclusion turned to Mr. Cobb, saying, 'I am now ready to take the oath of office.'"

The oath was then administered by Mr. Cobb, and the fact announced by the booming of cannon. The whistles of the foundaries, shops and steamboats gave shrill blasts, "announcing the birth of a new nation."

A new flag was raised to the top of the Capitol. Congress went to the Senate Chamber with Mr. Davis. Here, the President held a short executive session. Then they adjourned for the day, having indeed founded a new nation.

Today a bronze star marks the exact spot on the porch, between the columns, where Jefferson Davis stood while taking the oath of office which made him the President of the Confederate States of America. The bible used upon that occasion is now in the treasurer's office. In the Supreme Court Library is a picture of the scene of the inauguration.

On May 22, 1861, the capital of the Confederacy was moved to Richmond, and the greatest period of this old Capitol's history was ended.

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Source of Material:

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Peter Brannon, Curator of the Department of  
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sity Publishing Company, New York and New Orleans,  
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Reviewed 1936 by H.C.F.



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STATE CAPITOL OF ALABAMA  
Head of Dexter Avenue  
Montgomery, Alabama

ARCHITECTURAL MERIT AND DATA:

This State Capitol, which for a time served as the Capitol of the Confederacy, was built in 1851 to replace the Capitol of 1847 which was destroyed by fire soon after its completion. While an appointed committee of two men looked after the construction of this building, no doubt, the capitol which previously burned, and which was designed by Mr. Nichols, an Englishman, then of Philadelphia, had a strong influence in both plan and elevation of the present building.

The mass of the Confederate Capitol is very well proportioned and suited to the hill upon which it was constructed. The original plan of the building, as shown in the drawings, is rather simple and direct. The Senate and the House, today still occupy the same rooms as originally intended with slight alterations. The Superior Court Room, however, has been moved further back to an extension of the same wing.

The most marked features of the plan, however, are the main stair hall and the rotunda. In the main stair hall we find one of the few existing double circular stairs of ambitious public character. The rotunda, while not large, is very well proportioned to the size of the building, and to the Senate and House chambers.

The elevation is of exquisite design, having a very interesting dome and a dome drum of distinction. The capitals of the portico columns are of unique design.

Source of Material:

E. Walter Burkhardt, District Administrator, HABS,  
Alabama Polytechnic Institute, Auburn, Alabama.

*Reviewed 1936 by H.C.F.*

THE STATE CAPITOL  
Montgomery, Montgomery County, Alabama.

Ownership:

Present Owner: State of Alabama

Previous Owners: State of Alabama.

Date of Erection: 1851.

Architect: Unknown.

Builder: Unknown.

Present Condition: The present condition of the capitol is excellent. In 1934 the entire building was renovated. In 1885, an appropriation was made to erect the Eastern or Supreme Court Wing. In 1903 the legislature directed the construction of the South wing which was finished in 1907, and in 1911 the legislature appropriated funds for the erection of the North wing. The building is now constructed to carry out the original architectural design.

Number of Stories: Two and a basement.

Materials of Construction: The exterior walls are stucco over brick. The interior walls are of sand finished plaster. The basement floors are of concrete slabs. The hall floors are of marble, the office floors are of pine. The capitol is surmounted by a metal dome which is painted white. The Governor's office is paneled in Grotch mahogany.

Other Existing Records: Picture in the program of the forty-first Confederate Veteran Reunion from a sketch taken on the spot on the day that the Ordinance of Secession was passed, January 7, 1861.

There is an actual photograph of the capitol taken February 18, 1861, the day on which Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederate States of America. The negative of this picture is owned by Tressler, a local photographer.

On the cover of Simpson's Sketch of the Capitol is a photograph which shows a northern view of the capitol, including a view of the Confederate Monument.

Other Existing Records: (cont'd)

In the program of the forty-first United Confederate Veterans Reunion there is a photograph of the full front view of the Confederate Monument.

These pictures can be found in the State Department of - Archives and History.

See: Birmingham News, for December 23, 1935.

" MONTGOMERY IS RICH IN INTEREST."  
By Varian Feare, (Mrs. E. Walter Burkhardt)

Sub-title

"HISTORIC CAPITOL IS MOST BEAUTIFUL OF ITS TYPE"

See: Birmingham News, for January 27, 1935.  
Rotogravure section.

Pictures showing completed south wing, portion of MacKenzie murals, while at left above may be seen dome as it appears to visitor on the second floor.

Additional Date: I quote Mr. Peter Brannon from a monthly bulletin issued by the Department of Archives and History.

"During the existence of Alabama as territory and State, we have had capitols at St. Stephens in Washington County, Cahaba in Dallas County, Tuscaloosa in Tuscaloosa County, and Montgomery in Montgomery County. In addition, the Constitutional Convention which framed the instrument that enabled the State to enter the American Union, sat in Huntsville, and the temporary capitol was being erected at Cahaba, was at that place."

"Immediately after the removal of the capitol to Montgomery, that city issued bonds for \$75,000.00 for the erection of a building and furnished the lot on which the state house was to be erected. By a provision of the will of Andrew Dexter, who originally founded the city of Montgomery, it was reserved that the hill, commonly referred to as Goat Hill, in the eastern section of what was New Philadelphia and at the head of old Market Street, should be reserved for the seat of government of the State. He having as early as 1820 foreseen that eventually the capitol must come to Montgomery. Hardly had the building been finished before it caught fire on the afternoon of December 14, 1849, thirty years to the day after the States admission to the Union, and the loss was total. The source of this fire is thought to have been from the ignition of a timber inserted into a flue.

Additional Data: (cont'd)

Immediately after the burning of the Statehouse an agitation for the removal of the capitol was begun, but for the second time Montgomery was selected. That city having furnished the funds for the erection of the original building, the legislature made an outright appropriation of \$60,000.00 for the reconstruction of the capitol. Accordingly the central section of the present section was finished in 1851. In 1885, an appropriation was made to erect the eastern or Supreme Court wing. In 1903 the legislature directed the construction of the south wing, which was finished about 1907, and in 1911 the legislature appropriated funds for the erection of the north wing. This building is now so constructed as to carry out the original architectural design. The columns on the front portico are of the fluted Corinthian order having acanthus leaf capitals and those on the north and south portico are fluted columns with Ionic capitals.

The grounds of the present State Capitol building are bounded on the west by Bainbridge Street, on the south by Washington Avenue, on the east by Union Street, and on the north by Monroe Avenue. According to the city engineer, there are five and one tenth acres in the plot. On the grounds as constituted at the present time are several items of historic interest. One of the guns from old Fort Barancas at Pensacola, captured by the state troops in 1861, shortly after the state's secession from the Union, is mounted and faces Dexter Avenue. Solid shot for use in this piece form a marker in proximity to the cannon. A flag pole made of two of the masts of Spanish cruiser's sunk at Santiago is to the west front of the building and a steel pole 97 feet above the ground with a seven foot foundation in concrete is to the south front. This latter pole is made of Birmingham steel and was erected through contributions made to the Montgomery Advertiser in 1918, largely in amounts of 10¢ and under, by the children of the State. It was put into place by the Engineer Corps of Ohio troops then encamped in Montgomery, a few weeks prior to its departure for France. On the west portico of the building is a brass six-pointed star which marks the spot on which Jefferson Davis stood when he took the oath of office as President of the Confederate States of America. This star was placed by the Sophia Bibb Chapter, U. D. C., within the building, in the House of Representatives is a marble shield, a marker commemorating the fact that here on January 11, 1861, the state seceded from The American Union.

Additional Data: (cont'd)

The grounds surrounding the building are beautified by shrubbery and trees, some of which have rare botanical, and many have historical associations. Two magnolias of the grandiflora variety are at the southern corners of the building, these were brought from Mt. Vernon Military Reservation by Col. Sam Will John, for many years a Legislator, a member of the Board of Trustees of the State University and of Montevallo, and Trustee of the Department of Archives and History. They were secured from the site of Fort Stoddert, erected in 1880, by Dr. H. G. McCafferty, Supt., of the State Insane Hospital at Mt. Vernon. Among other trees on the grounds are, a sycamore from the battle field of - Chicamauga and trees from Gettysburg, Shiloh and other points in the Confederate lines, as well as oaks from Belgium and various trees from France, the latter having World War - associations.

Source of Material:

- Mr. Peter Brannon  
Department of Archives and History  
Montgomery, Alabama.
- Mr. Merriam Delahay  
313 Catoma Street  
Montgomery, Alabama.
- Mr. Walter L. Harrison  
313 Catoma Street  
Montgomery, Alabama.

Compiled by:

Katherine Floyd.  
Auburn, Alabama.  
Mr. Daniel Troy.  
Montgomery, Alabama.

Approved:

E. Walter Burkhardt, District Officer, HABS.

Date:

9-5-1936.