



The Mississippi Department of Archives and History

The Mudcat

The Mississippi History Newsletter for Students

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The Old Capitol: Mississippi's Greatest Treasure



"Building the Old Capitol." Image courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

In the Old Capitol's 175 year history, many important events have taken place within its walls. The building witnessed the gathering of state conventions, the passage of notable laws, and speeches by influential politicians. But this history almost didn't happen in the building.

Jackson became the state's capital city in 1822, providing a new location for state government. Initially, officials met in a two-story brick building, which quickly became too

small to house a growing government. In 1833, the state legislature passed a law to build a new state house and work began a year later.

Troubles began soon afterward. Finding enough money to construct the building hampered the project from the beginning. The architect hired to design and oversee the building's construction was fired two years into the job for poor workmanship. Another major problem was

getting adequate building materials such as bricks. Many brick suppliers were fired because they could not produce enough quality bricks. Finally, there was a shortage of skilled craftsmen in the area to construct the building and all of its elaborate interiors. It took a native of England to save the day.

William Nichols, born in Bath, England, became state architect in late 1835. Nichols had experience designing state capitol buildings in

Alabama, North Carolina, and Louisiana. He drafted new plans and tore down the work begun by the previous architect. He chose the Greek Revival style for the statehouse, a design resembling temples and other buildings constructed in ancient Greece. He hired skilled workers and monitored them closely to ensure quality work. Slaves were also used in the construction of the building. The task was difficult, but after more than three years of construction, Mississippi finally had a magnificent building in which its leaders could conduct the state's work. On January 7, 1839, legislators met there for the first time and described it as "noble... in its outline, correct in its proportions, beautiful in finish..."

For the next sixty years, Nichols' masterpiece provided the venue for state leaders to make decisions that have decided the course of Mississippi history. Thankfully, the Old Capitol is still with us today, a reminder of our state's early history.

Andrew Jackson

The Old Capitol calls the city of Jackson its home. Named after Andrew Jackson, the city was established in 1822. Andrew Jackson first gained fame serving as general in the War of 1812 fighting the British. He also negotiated a treaty with the Choctaw Indians to gain territory in central Mississippi, providing land for a capital to be established. He later became this nation's seventh president, serving two terms (eight years) from 1829-1837.

In 1840, he visited his namesake city at the invitation of the city's leaders. He was sched-



Portrait of Andrew Jackson. Image courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

uled to make a speech at the newly-built statehouse, but at age 73, his voice was too weak to be heard. His nephew read it to the large crowd in attendance.

FAST FACT! Three presidents have spoken at the Old Capitol in Jackson including Andrew Jackson in 1840 and Confederate president Jefferson Davis in 1862. The third did so in 1992 during his presidential campaign. Can you name him? Answer below!

Piece of the Past



Civil War-era shirt. Image courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

Jackson was captured several times during the Civil War by the Union army. During one of those invasions, a Union soldier removed one of the curtains from the statehouse (Old Capitol) and had it made into a shirt. The soldier's descendants returned the shirt to the Old Capitol in 1979. A copy of the shirt is now on display in the museum and was the design inspiration for the museum's new reproduction draperies.

Meet the Dummy Mummy



The Dummy Mummy. Image courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

One of the most unusual visitors to the Old Capitol Museum is the famous Dummy Mummy. Originally thought to be the remains of an Egyptian princess, the mummy was a favorite exhibit among visitors for many years. In 1969, a student from the University of Mississippi Medical Center x-rayed the mummy and discovered she had "a heart full of nails" and her foot contained pieces of an old German newspaper. Despite being a fake, the mummy remains a popular attraction and she visits the museum every October.

FAST FACT! Two state constitutions were written at the Old Capitol. The first constitution, written in 1868, granted black men the right to vote. The second constitution, written in 1890, is still used by the state of Mississippi today.

Investigate More

There are many of ways to learn more about the history of the Old Capitol and Mississippi's politics and government!

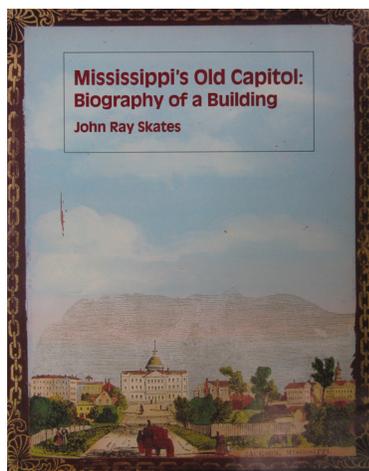


Visit Jackson and compare the “Old” and the “New” State Capitols firsthand! Start at <http://www.mdah.ms.gov/oldcap/>, the official website of the Old Capitol Museum, to begin learning about Mississippi's political past. Then drop by the Old Capitol any day except Monday to see where history happened. Finally, walk a few blocks west to the State Capitol, where you can tour the building and see real legislators in action!

EAST FACT!

The Old Capitol's architect, William Nichols, also built the Governor's Mansion and the Lyceum at Ole Miss.

Read *Mississippi's Old Capitol: Biography of a Building* by John Ray Skates. Published by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History in 1990, it tells the amazing story of all the ups and downs experienced by this important historical site!



While in Jackson, visit the Governor's Mansion, the home of Mississippi's first family. The residence is the second-oldest governor's mansion still in use. Located at 300 East Capitol Street in downtown, it's open for tours Tuesday through Friday. Call 601-359-6421 in advance to make a reservation.

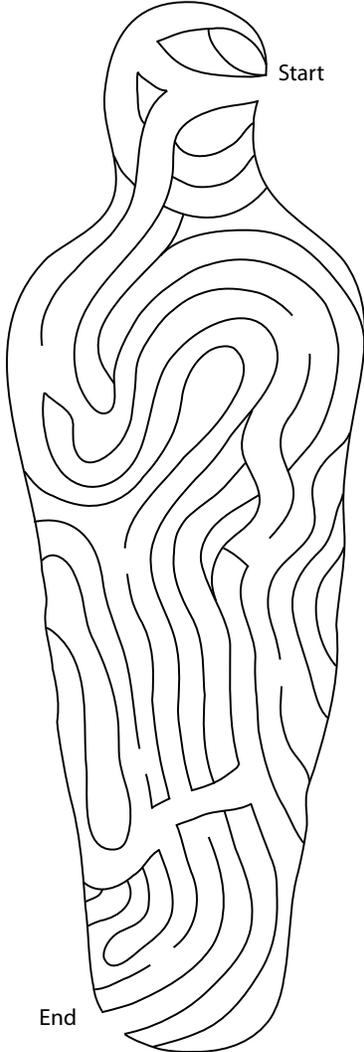


EAST FACT! The Old Capitol was captured three times during the Civil War. The first time, on May 14, 1863, Frederick Grant, son of Ulysses S. Grant, found the pipe of Governor John Pettus in the governor's office. It was still lit!

Show What You Know!

An Amazing Mummy Maze!

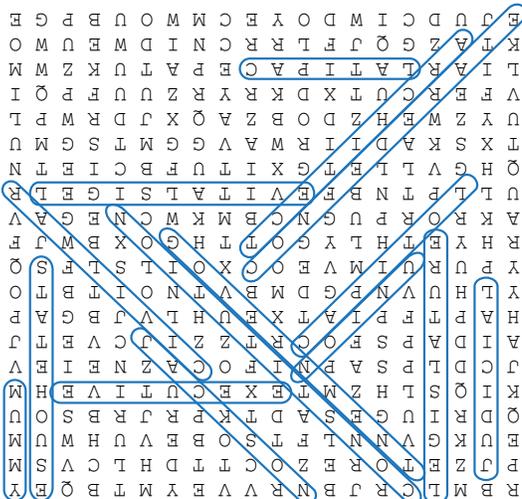
Examine the mummy below to see if it is real by "unwrapping" the bandages. Find your way from start to end!



Capitol Word Search

R B M L C R J B N R V V E Y M T B Q E Y
 P J Z E T O R E Z O C T T D H L C V S M
 E U K G V N N L F T S O B E V U H W U M
 Q D R I U G E S A D T K P R J R B S O U
 K I Q S L H Z M T E X E C U T I V E H M
 J C D L P S A P N I F O C A Z N E I E V
 A I D A P S F O C R T Z Z I J C V E T J
 H A P T F P I A T X E U H L V J B G A P
 Y L H U V N P G D M B V T N O I T B T O
 Y P U R U I M V E O C X O I L S L F S Q
 R H Y E T H L Y G O T T H G O X B W J F
 A K R O R P U G N C B M K W C N E G A V
 U L L P T N B F E V I T A L S I G E L R
 Q H G V L L E T G X I T U F B C I E T N
 T X S K A D I I R W A V G G M T S G M U
 U Y Z W E H Z D O B Z A Q X J D R W P L
 V F E R C U T X D K R Y R Z U U F P Q I
 L I A R L A T I P A C E P A T U K Z W M
 K T A Z G Q J F L R R C N I D W E U W O
 E J U D C I W D O Y E C M W O U B P G E

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| ARCHITECT | CONSTITUTION | LEGISLATIVE |
| CAPITAL | EXECUTIVE | LEGISLATURE |
| CAPITOL | GOVERNMENT | MUMMY |
| CIVIL WAR | JACKSON | STATEHOUSE |
| CONFEDERATE | JUDICIAL | UNION |



Solution

Create a Catfish Competition

How would you like to see a catfish of your own creation on the cover of the *Mudcat*? If you're an artist – or even if you're not – craft a cool catfish graphic, send it in to the *Mudcat*, and **YOUR** catfish could win a coveted spot on the cover of the next issue! Send all entries via mail or email to:

Outreach Programs Coordinator
 Museum Division, MDAH
 P.O. Box 571
 Jackson, MS 39205-0571

Phone: 601-576-6997 Email: outreachprograms@mdah.ms.gov

**Congrats to Lauren G. of Southaven
 for her winning Mudcat!**