



# Louisiana State History ~ In a Nutshell ~

Written & designed by  
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Louisiana State History In a Nutshell  
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[www.KnowledgeBoxCentral.com](http://www.KnowledgeBoxCentral.com)

ISBN

Ebook: 978-1-61625-772-9

Publisher: Knowledge Box Central  
<http://www.knowledgeboxcentral.com>

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### **What is the "In a Nutshell" series?**

This is a series of concise, easy to understand information on many popular topics. You will find that many of products in this series can also be found as part of larger publications and/or curriculum on the publisher's website. At the end of each book, you will find a list of questions that may be used to help you review the material.

# Louisiana State History

## Lapbook Journal

### Study Guide



The Great Seal of Louisiana

Welcome to Louisiana! The celebration of Mardi Gras symbolizes the intensity of spirit of Louisiana. When the French brought Mardi Gras to Louisiana, it was a simple carnival event, celebrated just before the beginning of Lent. But New Orleans transformed the simple celebration into an extravagant festival, with parades, music, parties, street dances, and costumes. Although New Orleans is world-renowned for its Mardi Gras extravaganza, other towns and cities throughout the state host their own Mardi Gras celebrations.

It's not just the Carnival that creates excitement. With her rich heritage of Creole, Cajun, and French, Louisiana life is spiced up with foods like gumbo, andouille, etouffees, sauce piquantes, cayenne pepper, Tabasco, and crawfish. And the senses tingle and feet keep tapping with the sounds of jazz and blues and zydeco.

Louisiana is another state, along with Illinois, that bears the mark of Robert Cavelier Sieur de La Salle. The first European to descend the Mississippi River to the delta, this French explorer named the area La Louisianne after Louis XIV of France in 1682.

People who live in or come from Louisiana are called Louisianians or Louisianans.



Map of Louisiana – Capital, Major Cities, Lakes and Rivers

## STATEHOOD

On April 30, 1812, Louisiana was admitted to the Union as the 18<sup>th</sup> state.

## STATE CONSTITUTION

The Constitution of the State of Louisiana is the cornerstone of Louisiana state law ensuring the rights of individuals, describing the distribution and power of state officials and local government, establishes the state and city civil service systems, creates and defines the operation of a state lottery, and the manner of revising the constitution.

It was adopted by Constitutional Convention in 1974, ratified by the voters of the state on April 20, 1974 and became effective on January 1, 1975.

Louisiana's constitution, the eleventh in the state's history, dates back to 1974 and has been amended numerous times.

**PREAMBLE:** *We, the people of Louisiana, grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political, economic, and religious liberties we enjoy, and desiring to protect individual rights to life, liberty, and property; afford opportunity for the fullest development of the individual; assure equality of rights; promote the health, safety, education, and welfare of the people; maintain a representative and orderly government; ensure domestic tranquility; provide for the common defense; and secure the blessings of freedom and justice to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this constitution."*

## STATE GOVERNMENT

The Louisiana state government is modeled after the federal government and is made up of three separate branches of state government – Executive, Legislative, and Judicial.

The Executive branch of Louisiana government includes the Governor's Office, the Lieutenant Governor, the Governor's Cabinet, and the Office of Civil Service. The executive branch is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the constitution and laws passed by the legislative branch.

The governor is the chief executive officer of the state, although the governor shares control of the state's executive branch with a large number of other elected officials. The executive officer administers the programs and operations of state government, and therefore most directly serves the people. The governor is elected for a four-year term and may serve only two consecutive terms. However, a governor who has served two terms is eligible to serve again after being out of office for one term. Serving more than half of a partial term is considered a full term.

The Legislative branch is called the legislature and is referred to as bicameral because it is made up of two parts. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives has a limit of 105 members and the Senate has a limit of 39 members. Legislators are elected for four-year terms. A 1995 constitutional amendment limits the number

of consecutive terms so that anyone who has served more than two and one-half terms in three consecutive terms may not be elected to the succeeding term in the same house.

The legislature convenes in Baton Rouge at the Louisiana State Capitol for regular annual sessions and may convene for extraordinary or special sessions and for veto sessions. Regular annual sessions in even-numbered years are generally limited to 60 legislative days within 85 calendar days. Regular annual sessions in odd-numbered years are limited to specified fiscal-related subjects and certain other legislation and to 45 legislative days within 60 calendar days. The legislature is responsible for determining policy through the enactment of laws, subject to federal and state constitutional restrictions. The appropriation of funds to finance programs and functions of state government is a power vested solely in the legislature. Another major legislative power is oversight of implementation and administration of state programs by executive branch agencies. Legislative rules continue to be effective even when the legislature is not in session and standing committees of the legislature have authority to conduct studies and hearings during the interim between sessions.

The distribution of representation in both houses is based on population in accordance with state constitutional mandate and U.S. Supreme Court decisions. The constitution requires single-member legislative districts; that is, each of the 39 senators and each of the 105 members of the House of Representatives represents a separate district. The legislature is required to reapportion the representation in each house by the end of the year following the year in which the state's population is reported based on the decennial federal census.

The Judicial branch is responsible for administering the laws of the state and resolving legal conflicts. It includes the court system, comprising of Family and Juvenile Courts, the Clerk of Court, District Courts, District Attorneys, the Sheriff's office, coroners, Circuit Courts, Courts of Appeal, and the Louisiana Supreme Court.

## **U.S. CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION**

The legislative branch of the United States government makes laws for our nation and raises and distributes money to run the United States government. The most evident part of the legislative branch is the United States Congress. Congress is divided into two parts, called houses. The two parts are the Senate and the House of Representatives. Congress is referred to as a bicameral body because it is made up of two houses. The Latin roots of the word bicameral, "bi" and "cameral," mean two chambers or rooms.

Members of the Senate are called Senators and members of the House of Representatives are called Representatives. Senators and representatives serving in these two bodies are sometimes referred to as congressmen, or women, and sometimes as legislators because their business is to legislate or make laws. The role of the legislative branch is defined in the United States Constitution.

Each state elects people to represent them in the United States Congress in Washington, DC. The citizens of each state elect two senators to represent them in the Senate. They also elect representatives to represent them in the House of Representatives. The number of representatives each state sends to the House of Representatives is not a specific number like the Senate, but is

based on the population of the state. The people, that are elected to represent the state's citizens in the United States Congress, are referred to as the congressional delegation.

There are 100 senators in the U.S. Senate. Each is elected to a term, in the Senate, of six years. There are 435 representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives. Each is elected to a term, in the "House," of two years.

The citizens of Louisiana elect two people, like every other state, to represent them in the Senate and 7 people, based on Louisiana's current population in the most recent federal census, to represent them in the House of Representatives.

## STATE SEAL

The official state seal of Louisiana was adopted in 1902. It features a pelican tending its three young chicks in their nest. The story is that the pelican is actually tearing some of its own flesh to feed the chicks, which apparently a pelican will do rather than allow its young to starve.

This seal has changed over the years, and at one point there were a dozen chicks in the nest. Since pelicans normally do not have large numbers of chicks at one time, the present version is more realistic. It also makes you feel a bit better knowing that the pelican doesn't have to pull itself apart for more than three of the young. The Louisiana motto "Union, justice, confidence" surrounds the birds on the present seal.



## STATE CAPITAL (Baton Rouge)

Louisiana State Capitol, Baton Rouge



*The Louisiana State Capitol, a National Historic Landmark, is located at N. 3rd St. on State Capitol Dr., Baton Rouge.*

The Louisiana State Capitol forever be entwined with the political career of Huey Pierce Long. It was Long's idea for the state to construct a new building for the statehouse in 1928 when he was running for Governor of the State of Louisiana. The construction of the building was part of his political platform, as well as the notion to place the state capitol on the site, which was once Louisiana State

University and formerly a military post known as the Pentagon Barracks. Included was a strip of land on which the Arsenal Museum was located. Long had contracted with a New Orleans architectural firm, Weiss, Dreyfous and Seiferth, to design the building. Next, Governor Long

had pushed through an amendment which financed the new capitol by the end of the 1930 Legislative Session. Within 36 days of the completion of the final design, actual construction by the George A. Fuller Company of Washington, D.C. had begun. The construction work took 29 months to complete and the dedication was coordinated with the inauguration of Oscar K. Allen as Governor on May 16, 1932. Ironically, Long was not present because he had been elected to the U.S. Senate and was in Washington, D.C.

The Louisiana Capitol, a 34-story, 450-foot Alabama limestone-clad skyscraper, is an excellent example of a greatly simplified classicism with Art Deco details that were in vogue for monumental buildings in the late 1920s. Only two other state capitols had been built with this design and its 34-story frame is to date unrivaled by any other building in Louisiana. The tower is decorated with important groups of sculpture representing the history of the State. Long was assassinated in the Capitol Building, the building for which he fought to be constructed and used as the state's government seat, and died on September 10, 1935. However, he was fittingly buried in the center of the public Capitol Gardens on the State Capitol's grounds. His memorial, a statue showing him holding a model of his monument, stands proudly in the English Garden in the shadow of the skyscraper that was part of his political platform for governor.

#### Facts:

- A broad flight of 48 granite steps, one for each state of the union, leads up to 50-foot high bronze doors ornamented with bas-reliefs by Lee Lawrie.
- The exterior is faced with Alabama limestone. Over 30 varieties of marble and stone were used in the interior.
- The pelican - a symbol of Louisiana - decorates many parts of the building including the stairway and grillwork.
- Tallest state capitol in the United States.
- The capitol is surrounded by a fifty-acre park with ten miles of walks and drives. The grave of governor Huey P. Long, the driving force behind this building, is also found here.
- Tallest building in Louisiana 1932 - 1969; surpassed by Plaza Tower in New Orleans.
- A public observation deck is on the 27th floor.
- The corners at the 22nd floor are guarded by winged figures representing Law, Science, Philosophy, and Art.
- A carved frieze around the base illustrates scenes from early Louisiana history. Inside the entrance is the huge Memorial Hall, featuring several artworks including a bronze relief map of Louisiana showing several of the state's products.
- Leading up to the main entrance are 48 steps representing each of the 48 states that were a part of the union upon the completion of the capitol in 1932. Alaska and Hawaii had their names engraved in the top landing adjacent to the main entrance upon their admittance into the union in 1959.
- Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

Old Louisiana State Capitol, Baton Rouge



*The Old Louisiana State Capitol, a National Historic Landmark, is located in downtown Baton Rouge, next to the Mississippi River at 100 North Blvd.*

Restored in the 1990s, the former Capitol Building is now a museum.

September 21, 1847, was the historic day that the City of Baton Rouge donated to the state of Louisiana a \$20,000 parcel of land for a state capitol building, taking the seat of the capitol away from the City of New Orleans. The land donated by the city for the capitol building stands high atop a Baton Rouge bluff facing the Mississippi River, a site that some believe was once marked by the red pole, or "le baton rouge," which French explorers claimed designated a Native American council meeting site.

The state house itself is one of the most distinguished examples of Gothic Revival architecture in the United States. Designed by architect James Harrison Dakin, its floorplan, towers, exterior stained glass windows and gables give it the appearance of a 15th-century Gothic Cathedral. Dakin referred to his design as "Castellated Gothic" due to its decoration with cast-iron, which was both cheaper and more durable than other building materials used at the time. The building design was so unusual and distinctive that its romantic, medieval appearance earned the Old Statehouse ridicule from the timelessly famous author, Mark Twain.

In 1862, during the Civil War, Union Admiral David Farragut captured New Orleans and the seat of government retreated from Baton Rouge. The Union troops first used the "old gray castle," as it was once described, as a prison and then as a garrison for African-American troops under General Culver Grover. While used as a garrison the Old Louisiana State Capitol caught fire twice. This, in turn, transformed the building into an empty, gutted shell abandoned by the Union troops.

By 1882 the state house was totally reconstructed by architect and engineer William A. Freret, who is credited with the installation of the spiral staircase and stained glass dome, which are the focal points of the interior. The refurbished state house remained in use until 1932, when it was abandoned for the New State Capitol building. The Old State Capitol Building has since been used to house the Old State Capitol Center for Political and Governmental History, which contains several state of the art exhibits. Stored in the 1990s, the former Capitol Building is now a museum.

## **STATE MOTTO**

*"Union, Justice, Confidence"*

Adopted on April 30, 1902

## STATE FLAG

The Louisiana flag originated from an 1800 design, but was officially adopted by the Louisiana State Legislature on July 1, 1912. It displays the state bird, the Eastern Brown Pelican, from the state seal, in white and gold, on a field of blue.

Louisiana's motto, "UNION, JUSTICE & CONFIDENCE" is printed in blue letters on a white and gold banner below the pelicans.



The pelican has been a symbol of Louisiana since the 1800's and, in fact, one of the state's nicknames is "The Pelican State." Early settlers in the area found pelicans to be generous and nurturing birds, and it was believed that, when food was scarce, pelicans would tear at their breasts with their beaks to feed some of their blood to their young.

## PLEDGE TO STATE FLAG

Louisiana officially recognized a state pledge in 1981:

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the state of Louisiana  
and to the motto for which it stands:  
A state, under God, united in purpose and ideals,  
confident that justice shall prevail  
for all of those abiding here.

## STATE NICKNAMES

### *The Pelican State*

Because of the abundance of Brown Pelicans found along the coast of Louisiana, the state is commonly referred to as "The Pelican State." This bird has been a symbol of Louisiana since the arrival of early European settlers who were impressed with the pelican's generous and nurturing attitude toward their young. The pelican is Louisiana's official state bird and appears on the Louisiana state flag and the great seal.

Disaster struck Louisiana in the 1960s when the use of pesticides caused the brown pelican, native to the area, to stop nesting along the Gulf coast. By 1966, the bird had completely disappeared in Louisiana. In 1968, Louisiana began importing fledglings from Florida in an attempt to repopulate the coastline and, in 1970, the Federal Government declared the brown pelican an endangered species. This is a story with a happy ending. Protection of the brown pelican's habitat along with repopulation efforts resulted in the Federal Government's declaration, in 1995, that the bird had "recovered" in Louisiana.

### *The Bayou State*

A bayou is a small secondary river that feeds into larger bodies of water. It is often marshy and slow moving. Because of the many slow, sluggish small streams that meander through the lowlands and marshes of the southern section of the state, Louisiana is often referred to as "The Bayou State." This nickname appeared on the Louisiana state license plates for a while beginning in 1974. It was later replaced by a World's Fair plate and, later, the Sportsman's Paradise plate.

### *The Sugar State*

In addition to cotton, rice, and sweet potatoes, Louisiana produces a large sugar cane crop. This nickname is in reference to the sugar cane grown in the state and the sugar refineries of Louisiana.

### *The Child of the Mississippi*

This nickname comes from the build up of silt deposited by the Mississippi River that contributes to the land mass of Louisiana.

### *The Creole State*

This nickname refers to the people of Louisiana of French and Spanish descent and also to the culture they have preserved.

### *Sportsman's Paradise*

This nickname pays tribute to the wildlife and the hunting, trapping and fishing resources of the state as well as other outdoor recreational and sporting activity within the state. Football, ice hockey, horse racing, golf, baseball and college sports round out the "sporting" experience of "The Sportsman's Paradise." This nickname appears on the Louisiana license plate.

### *Fisherman's Paradise*

Similar to the above, this nickname touts the wide variety of excellent fishing available in the state.

### *The Holland of America*

This surprising nickname came about because of Louisiana's waterways and its trucking industry.

## STATE BIRD



The brown pelican was designated the state bird of Louisiana in 1966. Early European settlers were impressed with the pelican's generous and nurturing attitude toward their young, and the brown pelican has been a symbol of Louisiana since that time.

Louisiana's official nickname is "The Pelican State" and the brown pelican appears on Louisiana's state flag, state seal, the official state painting (along with many other symbols and icons of Louisiana), and is one of three Louisiana symbols displayed on the U.S. mint's bicentennial quarter.

The state bird of Louisiana is unique among the world's seven species of pelicans. The brown pelican is found along the ocean shores and not on inland lakes. It is the only dark pelican, and also the only one that plunges from the air into the water to catch its food.

Pesticide use caused Pelicans to stop nesting along the Louisiana coast in 1961, and they completely disappeared by 1966. Louisiana began attempting to re-populate its coastline by transporting Florida fledglings into the state. The US Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Brown Pelican as an endangered species in 1970, but the Federal Government declared the Brown Pelican "recovered" in Louisiana in 1995 . About 40,000 Brown Pelicans call "The Pelican State" their home today.

## STATE FLOWER

The flower of the magnolia tree was approved by the Louisiana General Assembly as the state flower of Louisiana on July 12, 1900.

Though Act No. 156 of the Louisiana Legislature did not specify a variety of magnolia, George Earle Shankle identifies the intended species as

*(Magnolia foetida or Magnolia grandiflora)* .



In 1941, the Mary Swords DeBaillon Louisiana Native Iris Society was formed by a group of Louisiana iris enthusiasts. In 1948, the group changed its name to the Society for Louisiana Irises. The Society, its membership having grown to about 185 members, proposed legislation in

**Below, you will find 15 general questions to help review what you have learned. Use the following page(s) for documenting your answers. Older students may choose to write a State Report as well.**

**Review Questions:**

1. List the states and/or bodies of water that border this state.
2. What was the date of statehood?
3. What is the state capital?
4. What is the state motto?
5. Name at least one state nickname.
6. Describe the state flag.
7. What is the state bird?
8. What is the state flower?
9. List at least 5 other state symbols.
10. Describe this state's government.
11. Name the major imports and exports for this state.
12. Describe the weather and climate in this state.
13. List at least 5 famous people from this state.
14. Describe at least 5 significant events in this state's history.
15. What other interesting information have you learned about this state?

## **Answers to Review Questions:**

