

# History, Art, and Tradition: the Jewel of Kentucky

By: Andrew Sauls

The Kentucky Governor's Mansion is an important and iconic building that represents Kentucky's history, art, and tradition. It has held the image of grace and elegance in Kentucky government since its completion. It is symbolic, like the rings of a tree as we see the past and appreciate the work and effort former Kentuckians put in the Mansion. It has been the host to great balls and numerous ceremonies with past political leaders in attendance. When it was finished in 1914, it became the home of both Kentucky Governors and Kentuckians themselves.

Before the Kentucky Governor's Mansion, there was another mansion. It's now called the Old Governor's Mansion, and stands to this day in Frankfort. Governor Augustus E. Wilson thought that in order to have a truly "new" Capitol Building, it required a new Governor's Mansion. The Weber Brothers designed the building after Queen Marie Antoinette's villa, the *Petit Trianon*. The buying and plotting of the land occurred in early 1912, and on July 25<sup>th</sup> ground was broken at the future site of the Governor's Mansion with its completion in mid-January of 1914.

With so many intricate details held inside, such as the elaborate carvings of the mantles, one can only wonder how much effort and perseverance it took to finish the Mansion. It cost around ninety-five thousand dollars, and required many renovations by numerous architects and workers during its year of construction. The labor put forth in the Mansion is reason enough to keep it preserved and well-maintained, but it depicts the past history of Kentucky

History is something we cannot live without. The Mansion is a part of history, a sacred place of learning and a treasure since its construction. It's a part of our history and The National Register of Historic Places thinks so too, as the mansion was added to the register in 1972. Our ancestors crafted their world in such a way that it set up the foundations for our own. They crafted the mansion in such a way that we treasure it and take great pride in it to this day, like the architects had hoped. The Mansion tells of our history

and so, we must preserve it, for without history we have no past and we have no future.

Not only does the Mansion represent our history, it displays the artistic talent needed to produce beautiful structures like the Mansion. The architects of the Mansion designed it in the French architectural style of Beaux-Arts, the predominant style in major American architecture from the 1880s to 1920s. It was developed in France and surrounding countries over a period of two and a half centuries. Its characteristics include a flat roof, tall first floor, arched windows, and symmetry. All of these characteristics are evident in the Kentucky Mansion. Along with the genius of its architects, the style made the Mansion so much more elegant and royal than its predecessor. If not for the history, we must preserve the Mansion so future generations can treasure its beauty and marvel at the intricate details carved into its fine stone. When citizens and international dignitaries visit the Governor's Mansion, Kentuckians take immense pride in showing the Mansion's beauty.

Like art and history, tradition is steeped in the Governor's Mansion. At the inaugural dinner, baked ham, beaten biscuits, and white cake are served as a tradition, which is said to have started when a first lady left these foods for the family of the new governor. It was a message of welcome and care from one Governor's family to the next. Another famous tradition is the Kentucky Derby Gala, which is held at the Governor's Mansion on the eve the Kentucky Derby. Delicious food and thirst-quenching refreshments are served to those in attendance. However, a tradition not practiced currently is that of bringing the new Governor and their family a platter of foods soon after they move in. Citizens of Frankfort are said to have done this in the past at the Governor's Mansion. It was a sign of welcome that should be reinstated and carried on to this day.

The Kentucky Governor's Mansion has lasted a century, and deserves to last another. The caretakers of the Mansion and those who fund its renovations and up-keep are supporting the jewel of Kentucky. As a state, we the citizens realize the innate value of the Governor's Mansion. It faced hardships as a feeble idea, even before the first stone was laid, but the perseverance of Kentucky architects prevailed and the Mansion we see today stands strong. It holds the rich history of our great state, the magnificent beauty of it, and the sacred traditions of it. May it forever stand.

## Resources

<http://governorsmansion.ky.gov/facts/Pages/construction.aspx>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaux-Arts\\_architecture#Characteristics](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beaux-Arts_architecture#Characteristics)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_governors%27\\_residences\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_governors%27_residences_in_the_United_States)

<http://www.kyforward.com/our-government/2011/12/12/from-inaugural-ball-to-white-cake-biscuits-kentucky-inauguration-steeped-in-tradition/>

<http://governorsmansion.ky.gov/facts/Pages/default.aspx>

The People's House: Governor's Mansions of Kentucky by Thomas Dionysius Clark and Margaret A. Lane

<http://www.state-journal.com/local%20news/2011/05/08/governor-s-gala-showcases-kentucky-s-best>