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Capitol to mark 125 years as testament to the Lone Star spirit

Ice cream social planned May 18 to celebrate building's Quasiquicentennial

May 10, 2013 (Austin, TX) - The Texas Capitol was formally dedicated on May 16, 1888, and 125 years later, it still stands as a testament to the hard work and dedication of the people of Texas. This year marks the building's Quasiquicentennial, and the State Preservation Board invites the public to help celebrate the Lone Star spirit during a free ice cream social on the south Capitol grounds Saturday, May 18 from 1 to 3 p.m.

"I hope that visitors to the Capitol will help us celebrate the historic significance of this majestic building and enjoy some ice cream just as they did 125 years ago when the Capitol was dedicated," stated John Sneed, Executive Director of the State Preservation Board.

On Saturday, May 18, visitors will enjoy music at the Capitol's south steps provided by the Lost and Nameless Orchestra and four flavors of ice cream generously provided by Blue Bell Creameries.

The Texas Capitol is an extraordinary example of late 19th-century public architecture and is widely recognized as one of the nation's most distinguished state capitols. The 1888 Texas Capitol is one of the largest in gross square footage of all state capitols. Like several other state capitols, the 1888 Texas Capitol surpasses the National Capitol in height, rising almost 15 feet above its Washington, D.C. counterpart.

The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1970 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 1986 for its "significant contribution to American history." Throughout the rapid growth of the population of Texas, many changes to the structure, a fire and a restoration and expansion project, the Capitol continues to evolve and serve the needs of Texans while preserving its historic significance.

Initially, the building was meant to house about 350 workers. Within a century, more than 1,300 people worked in the Capitol. Major aesthetic and structural changes were necessary to accommodate central air, electrical, plumbing and public safety. Throughout the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, spaces were converted to offices to meet the needs of the building's occupants. While these changes were necessary, they were also damaging to the original structure and architectural appearance. Much of the grandeur of the 1888 Capitol was lost and it would be 40 more years before the building was restored.

In 1983, a television sparked a fatal fire in the lieutenant governor's apartment, causing one death and substantial damage to the Capitol's East Wing. Immediate repairs were needed, and a push for preserving the building as an historic landmark began. Later that year, the State Preservation Board was established to preserve, maintain and restore the Texas Capitol. The building now had a steward and a master plan for restoration. A

665,000 square-foot Capitol Extension was built to solve the over-crowding problem and to accommodate growing needs.

The restoration of the building began in 1991 and by 1993 the underground Capitol Extension was completed to the north, more than doubling the available square footage and providing improved functionality. The comprehensive interior and exterior historic Capitol restoration was completed in 1995. Finally, in 1997, the park-like grounds surrounding the building were given a major restoration. Today the Texas Capitol welcomes over one million visitors a year. For more information, please visit www.tspb.state.tx.us.

About the State Preservation Board

The State Preservation Board preserves and maintains the Texas Capitol, the Capitol Extension, the 1857 General Land Office Building, other designated buildings, their contents and their grounds; provides facilities and grounds keeping services for the Texas Governor's Mansion; and operates the Bullock Texas State History Museum. The SPB provides educational programs related to Texas history to benefit the citizens of Texas and visitors to the state.

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