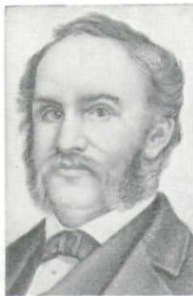


Distinctive Iowa Inaugurals

1846 — 1902



Ansel Briggs
Inaugurated 1846



James W. Grimes
Inaugurated 1854



Ralph P. Lowe
Inaugurated 1858



Samuel J. Kirkwood
Inaugurated 1860



William M. Stone
Inaugurated 1864



Buren R. Sherman
Inaugurated 1882



Horace Boies
Inaugurated 1890



Leslie M. Shaw
Inaugurated 1898



Albert B. Cummins
Inaugurated 1902

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Contrasting Iowa Inaugurals

1846 - 1902

The position of governor of an American state is an exalted one for any man. To be elected chief executive of a commonwealth like Iowa, or any other state of the Union, is a distinction worthy of its foremost and best citizens. The position is one of great responsibility, and the duties usually command the service of individuals of experience and knowledge of state affairs gained through service in some lesser capacity either in the state's official circles, or in business or a profession.

The majority of Iowa's governors had previous training in the legislature. Someone has characterized the state general assembly a training school for its public men, but those having other backgrounds have been equally successful. From legislative ranks also have come many of the state's members of congress, both in the house and the senate. However, those recruited from business and professional circles have been distinguished and capable in handling of the state's affairs entrusted to them.

From the current public records and other sources of published information during successive periods in the early history of the state of Iowa, the ANNALS has secured details of the official proceedings concerning the inaugurals of many governors from 1846 to 1902. These accounts are interesting in showing as they do remarkable contrasts in character and setting of these events.

The first governor of Iowa was Ansel Briggs, of Andrew, Jackson county, Iowa, a Vermonter transplanted in Iowa.

Although having wider experience, he might be termed a businessman, for he operated a stagecoach line in Eastern Iowa counties, which he disposed of upon his assumption of the governorship. As a Democrat he had been active in territorial politics, becoming a member of the territorial house of representatives in 1842, and subsequently was the sheriff of Jackson county.

Born February 3, 1806, Ansel Briggs received a fair education in the common schools at his boyhood home and afterward attended a term at the Academy of Norwich. About the year 1830, with his parents, he removed to Cambridge, Guernsey county, Ohio, where he engaged in establishing stagecoach lines. Removing from Ohio to Iowa in 1836, he resumed his former business, establishing stagecoach lines, driving a coach himself and entering into contracts with the U. S. post office department for carrying the United States mails weekly between Dubuque and Davenport, Dubuque and Iowa City, and other routes.

On the formation of the state government he at once became a candidate for the Democratic nomination for governor. He was nominated over two other candidates. The issue or question above all others dividing parties in Iowa in that day was that of the banks, favored by the Whigs and opposed by the Democrats. A short time before the nominating convention met in September, 1846, Briggs, at a banquet, struck a responsive chord in the hearts of Iowa people by offering the toast: "No banks, but earth, and they well tilled," which was at once caught up as a party rallying cry, and contributed much to making the author the party's candidate for governor. As an indication of his strength, the election vote may be cited, which was 7,626 for Briggs and 7,379 for Thomas McKnight, the Whig candidate, giving Briggs a majority of 247.

THE BRIGGS INAUGURAL

Governor Briggs was inaugurated December 3, 1846, more than 110 years ago. A new state was being organized. The population was small, and the assets of the

state government limited. Moreover, the citizens comprised those of the sparsely settled area who had come to the prairie country with willing hands and stout hearts, but with little worldly goods, intending to create here such substance and wealth as they might hope to enjoy.

Therefore, the ceremony of induction into office of their chief executive became a simple and inexpensive procedure. Just upon the threshold of statehood stood a man of the common people, ready and willing to direct the affairs of the commonwealth, accepting the responsibilities of a high office with confidence in his ability and knowledge of state affairs sufficient for the tasks to be performed.

There were many stern realities confronting the governor and the newly elected legislature. The membership of the council (now the senate) was only thirteen and the house of representatives twenty-six. These, with the group of state officials, made up a small company of earnest men with a great task ahead in setting up a state government, although a beginning had been accomplished by the preliminary territorial organization, which in turn had grown under the leadership of three appointed governors, Robert Lucas, John Chambers and James Clarke.

The Briggs inauguration occurred at Iowa City where the seat of government had been transferred in 1841 from Burlington. The ceremony was simple, as had been those of the territorial governors. Chief Justice Charles Mason of the state supreme court was again the personage to administer the oath. The other state officers installed were Elisha Cutler, secretary of state, Joseph T. Fales, auditor of state, and Morgan Reno, state treasurer. The great responsibility that rested upon these men as the first officers of the state of Iowa can hardly be realized and appreciated at the present time. They were taking upon themselves the task of building a new and stable empire in the midwest section of America, reaching out into only partially known portion of the

state's great area, some of which was still the wilderness being conquered by the early settlers, with whom there would be co-operation.

CLARKE MADE SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS

Territorial Governor Clarke upon his retirement had delivered a long biennial message, outlining many things which in his judgment the general assembly should do in implementing the operation of the new beginning in state government. Governor Briggs contented himself with delivering a short inaugural address, suggesting that "You will have the constitution before you, gentlemen, which points out all the subjects of immediate legislation that will be necessary to set the state government in motion; and I shall, as it may become necessary in the progress of your labors, make you further communications." In reference to admission to the Union of states, he said:

The circumstances under which you assemble are to us of a novel, interesting and important character. We have passed from a dependent Territory to an independent and sovereign State, and it is a subject of congratulation that we shall no longer be denied the blessings and privileges consequent upon this great change.

Our Constitution is one which does honor to the character and intelligence of our infant state; and we need apprehend no difficulty in the way of our full admission into the Federal Union, so soon as the simple form of its presentation in the Congress of the United States is complied with.

Having a country unsurpassed in beauty and fertility, and which is rapidly filling up with an intelligent and enterprising people, we bid fair in a very short time to take a most enviable position among our sister States. But, gentlemen, it much depends upon your action at this first session of our Legislature, whether we shall advance to that position by rapid strides, or for years be left to "draw our slow length along." If you proceed with that calmness and caution, that fervent desire for the happiness and welfare of our country, which should, and doubtless will characterize your deliberations, all will be well; but if, unhappily, from any cause, the utmost care is not taken to guard against hasty and unnecessary legislation, lasting evils may be entailed upon our institutions.

. . . In conclusion, gentlemen, permit me to assure you,

that in all your efforts which are directed to the advancement and prosperity of our State, you shall have my hearty cooperation, trusting that if we place a proper reliance on that Supreme Being who rules and governs all nations, our labors at this first and most important session of the Legislature, will redound to the honor and happiness of our fellow-citizens.

The selection of Governor Briggs had seemed to be satisfactory to the people of Iowa, for his administration was generally placid. Although avoiding controversy or excitement, and desirous of being in harmony and accord with his party, when occasion required, he exhibited an independent firmness, not being easily shaken. One perplexing controversy bequeathed by his territorial predecessors was the Missouri boundary question, which had produced much friction and disquiet, and even a resort to arms on the part of state governments of Iowa and Missouri, was handled with dignity and firmness, eventually being settled on a basis favorable to the Iowa contention. His administration ending as quietly and with the same general accord as evidenced when it began, Mr. Briggs continued his residence in Jackson county re-engaging in commercial business, but subsequently, in 1870, removed to Council Bluffs, and died at the home of his son in Omaha, May 5, 1881.

SIMPLICITY IN EARLY GOVERNMENT

It was in 1858 that the seat of Iowa government was removed to Des Moines, a new capitol structure having been erected in 1857 by the citizens there, located where the soldiers and sailors monument stands south of the present capitol. It was a simple brick building with three floors and basement, the latter being also later occupied by state offices before the building was abandoned.

Ralph Lowe, one of the pioneers of Iowa history, was the first governor to grace Des Moines with his presence, as a resident. He was inaugurated on the 12th day of January, 1858, in the old (then the new) state house.

In an address before the Pioneer's association in 1892, ex-Governor Carpenter said: "The site of the capital was

then a wooded hill, occupied by the capitol building and perhaps some twenty-five or thirty family residences, scattered here and there in the openings of the timber," a strange picture as compared with the thickly settled streets which now occupy the same territory. Des Moines then had about 3,000 inhabitants and a scattered collection of straggling buildings.

These early executives like their predecessors were plain citizens, unassuming and of economical traits. With a limited population the needs of the state government were not so extensive as in later years. Governor Lowe was afterward elected a member of the Iowa supreme court, so resided in Des Moines for a long period. As governor he lived at the "DeMoine House," the popular hostelry of that day, on the west bank of the Des Moines river at First and Walnut streets, where the Des Moines post office is now located.

So unconventional was Governor Lowe that he frequently wore no coat in hot weather when away from the capitol. One summer day when in the "DeMoine House," going about in his shirt sleeves, he was accosted by a traveling man with the request that he carry the man's small trunk up to his room. The governor assented and was about to perform the task when some bystander informed the traveling man that it was the governor of the state he was talking to, and he forthwith apologized; but Lowe said to "think nothing of it."

The way the governor and members of the legislature made their trips to and from the capital city is pretty well indicated by the following conversation between one of the lawmakers on his way to Des Moines and a stage driver of the time at a small village a few miles east of the city, then known at Apple Grove, but later as Mitchell's Tavern. The stage coach was an old one with nine passengers on the inside and four on top. Lawmaker: "How far to Des Moines and how long the drive?" Driver: "Sixteen miles, and I can make it in five hours if my horses hold out and the bottom of the road doesn't give way."

And so they came and went. For some of them it was a week's trip, and for others, at certain times of the year, it took nearly a month. But occasionally they could take advantage of high water and go down the river in a boat, as many who came the longest distance lived in the southeastern part of the state.

LOWE'S INDUCTION MORE FORMAL

Governor Lowe's inaugural was perhaps the most elaborate of any Iowa governor up to that time. He delivered an address that would be considered lengthy at the present time, filling three columns of a daily paper, set in fine type. The residents of Des Moines were greatly elated at the coming of the legislature to the city and in the evening of inauguration day an inaugural festival was given, to which the whole population of the town was invited. It was thus described by a special correspondent of the *Muscatine Daily Journal* in a letter to his paper, at the time: "An inaugural festival was given by the citizens of this place on Thursday evening last in the capitol. The halls were crowded to their utmost capacity—so much so that the pressure was realized by many whose finances were unembarrassed. A splendid supper was served in a style that would have done credit to any capital city."

Not all of the inaugurals of Iowa governors can be touched upon in one article, for more than one hundred years have gone by during which citizens have witnessed many outstanding occasions justifying description. But several others should be described.

THE WAR EXECUTIVE POPULAR

Among all of Iowa's governors there has been none more popular than her noted war governor, Samuel J. Kirkwood. A brief description of Governor Kirkwood's second inauguration on January 15, 1862, is given in a daily paper of the time. The description is in the form of dispatches and runs as follows:

At 10 o'clock the senate and house met in joint session to canvass the vote of the state at the last October election. The result was as follows: S. J. Kirkwood 60,252, W. H.

Merritt 40,187, B. M. Samuels 4,551, H. C. Dean 462. Messrs. Bowen and Duncombe were appointed a committee to inform the governor and lieutenant governor. Messrs. Woodward and Kellogg were a committee to invite the supreme judges and state officers to seats on the floor during the ceremony of inauguration. The oath was administered by Judge Baldwin.

Probably no more important inauguration has ever taken place in Iowa than the one just described, but it was exceedingly simple and unpretentious.

SHERMAN'S INAUGURAL IMPOSING

One of the most imposing and elaborate inaugural exercises ever held in Iowa occurred in 1884 when Buren R. Sherman was inducted into his second term of office, and the new capitol building was dedicated. It was an occasion long to be remembered, and will go down through history as the event of the kind to be talked and read about in years to come. In a local paper the new building was heralded as "The pride of Iowa," and the inauguration as the "Imposing dedication of the imposing new state house."

It was a beautiful day for the occasion. There was not a cloud in the sky, and although it was on the 18th day of January, it was 40 degrees above zero. But strange to say, it was Friday. Surely, there was a tempting of the unpropitious fates, but everything passed off as smoothly as if it had been Monday. Bands and military companies from all over the state were present to do honor to the event. The escort of 160 men was said to be the finest that ever did duty at an inaugural of a governor of this state or of any other. The service took place in the capitol rotunda and is briefly described as follows:

At 2:30 the band stationed at the top of the stairway leading from the rotunda played a national air and in a few minutes the governor, lieutenant governor, Hon. John A. Kasson, Chief Justice Rothrock, Bishop Hurst and others, entered and took seats upon the platform for the occasion. Seated with them were many of the distinguished men of the state, and among them three ex-governors, Carpenter, Kirkwood and Newbold. Lieutenant Governor Manning called the meeting to order and Bishop Hurst offered prayer. The oath of office was administered by Chief Justice Rothrock.

At a reception in the evening it was said that 30,000 people attended and 10,000 shook the governor's hand.

While not commonplace ever, for all such events were noteworthy, the ceremonies attending the inaugurals of succeeding governors of the Hawkeye state differed little. Those historically detailed largely depict a growing tendency to make them events much more than the simple routine official programs of the earlier years of the state held in the House Chamber.

It really remained for the inaugurals of Governors Horace Boies, Leslie M. Shaw and Albert B. Cummins around the turn of the century to outshine those held before or since. Boies, formerly a Republican, had been elected as a Democrat on the liquor issue. The Democrats of Iowa were jubilant and the wets were bent on making his accession to the executive chair a spectacular occasion. Des Moines was crowded and marching bands led celebrating party groups from various cities and counties of Iowa up and down the main streets of the capital city. Hilarity and good fellowship were evident on every hand.

DEMOCRATS PARADED FOR BOIES

The evening of February 20, 1890, the day of Boies' inauguration, a mammoth parade from downtown Des Moines to the capitol took place. Brass bands and drum corps interspersed the marching groups and political banners were carried aloft. The exaltation shown by the Democratic hosts was evident. Shouts and calls from curbs to those in the marching lines and from the latter to observers on the side lines abounded.

When the procession reached the capitol, where a formal reception was to be held, the vast concord of participants in the joyous event spread over the entire capitol hill and crowded the corridors and offices of the mammoth building. Thousands passed through the governor's receiving line to greet and congratulate him. The new state officials and their wives in the line were all but exhausted, when the dancing began in the corridors.

But it remained for Governor Shaw to be inaugurated with all the dignity that marked such ceremonies in the older eastern states. Perhaps one of the ablest of business and professional men to be elevated to Iowa's governorship, the only political office to which he had ever been previously elected was that of school director at Denison, his home town in Crawford county, where he was a leading practicing lawyer and banker. The inauguration was on January 13, 1898, and he served two terms until January 16, 1902. Shaw came to the high office of governor of Iowa with little political experience though a prominent member of the bar and a widely known public speaker. He had profound knowledge of monetary matters, frequently lecturing or speaking upon financial and other economic subjects. Possibly no other man who has served as the state's chief executive had superior intellectual endowments or was more capable in platform addresses. His political alignment was clearly established with the long-controlling faction in the Republican party. Congressman J. P. Dolliver was appointed U. S. senator by Shaw, and served as successor to Senator Gear, who had passed away during an unexpired term in that office.

THE SHAW INAUGURAL

With the accompaniment of military honors, the music of bands and the acclaim of a multitude that thronged the capitol, Leslie M. Shaw was inducted into the chief executive office of Iowa on January 13, 1898. The parade to the capitol was witnessed by the usual large crowd. Shortly after one o'clock the parade began to form at the Savery house. Companies H and A, Iowa National guard, were the first to appear, and were placed on parade rest on Fourth street. The Lincoln Hussars of Des Moines, twenty-five in number, in full dress uniform, took position next to the guardsmen and presented a fine appearance.

By this time the crowd in the vicinity of Fourth and Locust streets had assumed considerable proportions and as the carriages for the dignitaries of the occasion rolled

up Fourth street, the drivers had trouble getting their places at the east end of the Savery. The crowd was well ordered, however, and the procession started without incident shortly after two o'clock. The Carroll band of twenty pieces took the lead, followed by the guardsmen and Hussars. After them came the joint inauguration committees in carriages, and a carriage with Governor Drake and Governor-elect Shaw and wife. A long line of carriages containing the governor's staff in full uniform, the state officers, supreme court judges and friends of the outgoing and incoming governors completed the procession. It was unofficially reviewed by a long line of people running from the Savery to East Fourth street.

There was great applause as Governor Drake followed by Governor-elect Shaw and his wife entered the rotunda of the capitol, followed by the gorgeously appareled members of the Carroll band, the humblest of whom looked like a major general in the army of Emperor William; state officers; supreme judges; members of the legislative reception committees and guests of honor. The corridors leading to the rotunda were packed in every direction, and the scene from the platform was a stirring one. The gallery of the legislative floor above was fringed by a crowding, surging mass of people trying to get advantageous points of observation along the rail, and the grand staircase directly opposite the stand was packed, as Lieutenant Governor Parrott rapped the joint session to order.

Chief Justice H. E. Deemer administered the oath of office to Mr. Shaw and then to Lieutenant Governor Milliman, and Governor Shaw was at once presented to deliver his inaugural address.

Governor Shaw's address was not a half a minute begun when it had taken on the similitude of a vigorous defense of the gold standard as the greatest issue now before the country. He was followed carefully by those who could hear and applauded several times when he declared forcibly for the single standard.

After devoting a third of his time to the currency question, Governor Shaw took up the consideration of some of the broad social questions of the time — the combination of aggregated capital against individual enterprise; the necessity for development of a higher intelligence in order to fit the citizen for the duties and responsibilities of the future. Improvement of the rural schools was urged as an important work of the immediate future. The need of better normal training facilities was strongly urged in this connection.

The dairy industry of the state was discussed as one presenting magnificent possibilities for future development, as it has already accomplished wonderful results.

The needs of the historical department were forcibly presented, and the need of a special building urged. State finances and business methods occupied the closing paragraphs of the address. The governor forcibly indicated that he was not prepared to promise reductions of state taxes if they were to involve the crippling of the state departments in any way. "Taxes are too high," he said, "only when an expenditure is made which is needless or excessive. They are never too high when the affairs of a state are economically administered." And later in the consideration of the same topic Mr. Shaw was applauded when, turning to Governor Drake, he said: "Whatever may be the sequel of the next two years, it is a pleasure to succeed an administration against which no whisper of dishonesty has been heard, and one, as related to all matters of public duty, admittedly worthy of emulation."

Governor Shaw gave the state a strong administration, serving two terms, after which he was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt as secretary of the national treasury. At the close of that service, he located in Philadelphia, becoming for a time the president of a leading trust company.

CUMMINS INDUCTED IN 1902

Governor Albert B. Cummins and Lieutenant Governor John Herriott were formally inaugurated and inducted

into office before an immense audience at the Des Moines auditorium on January 16, 1902. The auditorium was crowded with people and 2,500 were unable to obtain admission. It was one of the most impressive ceremonies ever witnessed in Des Moines.

The ascendancy of Mr. Cummins to the governorship of Iowa came after hotly fought successful battles in the Republican state convention and the general election of 1901, closing a campaign memorable in Iowa political history. He became the candidate of those avowedly opposed to the long established ruling group in the Republican party. A field of candidates opposed him in the convention, following a summer-long canvass of the state with final selection of delegates to the state convention giving Cummins the majority. His preliminary training for official service was hardly more extensive than that of Mr. Shaw, having been limited to one session as representative in the Iowa General Assembly from Polk county. However, along with mention of Governors Grimes and Shaw, Cummins has been acclaimed as one of Iowa's ablest executives.

The parade preceding the ceremonies was the most spectacular inaugural parade ever organized in Iowa. A platoon of police cleared the way for it as it advanced from the state capitol to the auditorium. Five companies of the Iowa National Guard swung into line behind the band, and they were followed by the many open top carriages carrying the state officials and members of the legislature.

The doors of the city auditorium were thrown open at 1:45. In less than fifteen minutes the balcony was crowded with people and the gallery was nearly full. All of the seats on the main floor not reserved were taken in a few minutes. The ticket holders came in rapidly and soon the entire lower floor was crowded. The accommodations, though exceeding anything afforded at the state capitol building, were entirely inadequate and thousands were unable to get into the building at all. People began to collect at the doors shortly after

noon and by the time the doors were opened, several thousand people were gathered in the street in front of the auditorium, all of them struggling to get as close to the door as possible. The entire house was crowded to overflowing when the program commenced.

Those participating in the exercises and the distinguished guests present occupied seats in a semi-circle at the front of the stage. Governor-elect Albert B. Cummins and Governor Leslie M. Shaw occupied a settee on the south side of the stage. Opposite them sat Lieutenant Governor J. C. Milliman and Lieutenant Governor-elect John Herriott. Ex-Governor William Larrabee sat next to Governor Cummins and ex-Governor Frank D. Jackson sat next to Lieutenant Governor Herriott. The four central seats in the semi-circle were occupied by United States Senators William B. Allison and Jonathan P. Dolliver, Bishop Theodore N. Morrison and Dr. J. Everist Cathell.

In the rear of the semi-circle sat Supreme Court Clerk C. T. Jones, Supreme Court Reporter B. I. Salinger, Chief Justice Scott M. Ladd, Judges H. E. Deemer, Emlin McClain, H. M. Waterman, John C. Sherwin, S. W. Weaver, Secretary of State W. B. Martin, State Auditor Frank F. Merriam, State Treasurer G. S. Gilbertson, and State Superintendent R. C. Barrett.

JOINT ASSEMBLY CONVENED

Lieutenant Governor Milliman called the assemblage to order about 3:00 o'clock, announcing that the joint convention of the Twenty-ninth General Assembly of Iowa was now convened for the purpose of inaugurating the governor of the state. The Rt. Rev. Theodore N. Morrison, of Davenport, bishop of the Episcopal diocese of Iowa, pronounced the invocation. Then Chief Justice Scott M. Ladd of the supreme court of Iowa stepped forward and administered the oath of office to Governor Albert B. Cummins and to Lieutenant Governor John Herriott.

Governor Cummins was received with an outburst of applause and it was some little time before he was able

to make himself heard. His inaugural address was frequently applauded and was listened to with the closest attention by the assembled audience, its theme being the culmination of the long political campaign preceding his election the previous November and to some extent a dramatic repetition of his earnest declarations in the canvass against corporation control of public affairs.

The applause was hearty and long continued when Governor Cummins declared that a national law governing trusts and combinations was needed although it involved an amendment to the constitution. The declarations in favor of reciprocity and a reciprocity that would bring competition were also greeted with long continued applause, as was the criticism made on the methods of the professional lobbyist.

At the conclusion of the address, Governor Shaw stepped forward and congratulated his successor. Lieutenant Governor Milliman also congratulated Governor Cummins, after which he declared the joint convention recessed to reassemble in the house chamber.

15,000 AT GOVERNOR'S RECEPTION

The inaugural reception given at the capitol that evening by Governor Albert B. Cummins to the people of the state was attended by thousands of people not only from Des Moines but from all over Iowa. It was one of the most imposing functions ever given at the capitol and the attendance was the largest known up to that time. The large rotunda was so crowded with people that it was absolutely impossible to walk from one side to the other. It is probable 15,000 people visited the statehouse during the evening and the greater number passed through the executive offices and along the receiving lines.

Governor Cummins was accorded the nomination and election for a second term without opposition. However, when he became a candidate in 1905 for a third term, the political forces in his party renewed their opposition, making the contests both in the state convention and

the subsequent election bitterly fought out, resulting in his re-election.

Through the operation of the biennial election law and the necessary adjustment of state offices to meet its requirements, one year was added to his third term, thus granting him seven years total service as governor of the state of Iowa.

In the meantime, a state-wide primary election law had been enacted by the Iowa General Assembly and in its first operation Cummins became a candidate for United States senator from Iowa, opposing the renomination of Senator William B. Allison, who received the nomination but died the following August at his home in Dubuque.

A reassembling of the Thirty-second General Assembly enacted a special senatorial primary law to fill vacancies upon a senatorial ticket. In such a primary Cummins was nominated over Congressman John F. Lacey of Oskaloosa for senator of the United States and was elected to that position, serving a number of terms, during which he was named as president pro tem of the United States senate on advancement of Vice president Coolidge to the presidency upon the death of President Warren Harding.

Crowding Out the Hotels

In Iowa as also in other states the attractive and convenient motels have supplanted many hotels in popularity, and in some places hotels have actually closed by reason of declining demand for their rooms. Long ago many had closed their dining rooms.

Even in the cities the same change has taken place. Someone has checked the Des Moines area with result being there are found 22 fewer hostleries in downtown Des Moines than there were 30 years ago. The drift to the motel originally was on account of lower rates, but that no longer is the inducement, but convenience, parking facilities and modern furnishings and privacy have been influential.

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