

When Iowa's Capital Was Moved

By ISAAC BRANDT*

The location of a state capital in any new territory or new state or the removal to some other location always created quite a commotion, and Iowa was no exception to this rule.

The first session of the legislature in the territory of Iowa was convened in Burlington, Nov. 12, 1838, in accordance with a proclamation of Gov. Robert Lucas. A session had been held in Burlington in 1837, when Iowa was a part of the Wisconsin territory. A second session was convened in Burlington, November 4, 1839, and the third session convened in the same city November 2, 1840.

By an act of the territorial legislature passed January 21, 1839, provision was made for the location of a permanent seat of government at the most eligible point in Johnson county. The commissioners were Chauncey Swan, John Ronalds and Robert Ralston, to make the selection, and on the 4th of May, 1839, Iowa City was selected.

The fourth territorial legislature convened December 6, 1841, at Iowa City, where the seat of government was maintained until November 6, 1857, at which time it was removed to Des Moines.

By an act of the state legislature passed January 25, 1855, commissioners were appointed to relocate the seat of government within two miles of the junction of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers in Polk county. A subsequent provision in the law fixing the seat of government at Des Moines was incorporated in the new constitution of 1857, and was ratified by the people in August, 1857, by a vote of forty thousand three hundred and eleven for its adoption to thirty-eight thousand six hundred and eighty-one against.

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The commissioners appointed to make the selection of the new seat of government were the Hon. J. H. D. Street, Hon. Stewart Goodrell, Hon. Benjamin P. Pe-gram, Hon. Guy Wells and Hon. J. A. L. Crookham. This commission located the ground for the new capitol in Des Moines on the 21st day of April, 1856.

Thomas K. Brooks, W. A. Scott, James A. Williamson, Joseph M. Griffith, Harry H. Griffith, Alexander Shaw, J. D. Cavenor, Thos. A. Walker and other public spirited citizens of Des Moines organized themselves into a building committee, purchased lots 11 and 12 in block 6, Scott's addition to Des Moines, and during the years 1856 and 1857 erected thereon a three-story brick building 60x100 feet, suitable for the state of Iowa at that early date for a state capitol. They donated it to the state of Iowa. Lots 11 and 12, Scott's addition, is where the soldiers' monument now stands. On July 4, 1857, the building was so nearly completed that a Fourth of July celebration was held in the hall of the house of representatives, speeches being made by Dr. T. K. Brooks, Col. T. A. Walker and others. Wm. Lawry, one of the master mechanics, hoisted the Stars and Stripes on the flag pole on the dome, it being the first flag raised on the new capital.

CONVEYANCE OF LANDS TO STATE

In addition to lots 11 and 12 in block 6 in Scott's addition to the city of Des Moines, conveyed to the state of Iowa, there were three other very important conveyances made.

One was conveyed to the state of Iowa by Harrison Lyon and another by Wilson A. Scott on the 28th day of April, 1856, and recorded in book 1, page 86, of the Polk county Record. This whole tract of land is known as Capitol square, upon which the capitol building now stands.

The third is bounded on the west by Thirteenth street, on the east by C. street, on the north by Walker street and on the south by Maple street. It has upon it several stately old oaks, and it is surrounded on all sides

by neat and pleasant cottages and known upon our city map as the State square.

On October 20 E. H. Talbot, clerk in the office of Maturin L. Fisher, was sent to Des Moines to receive the furniture and archives of the state and place them in their proper offices.

Governor James W. Grimes issued a proclamation on September 3, 1857, proclaiming Des Moines the seat of government of the state of Iowa. The state officers, however, did not vacate the state building at Iowa City until November 6, 1857.

REMOVAL OF THE ARCHIVES

The removal of the state offices and the archives belonging to the state was a matter of no ordinary undertaking. There were no railroads in the state, and the public highways were but dimly outlined in our wide-extended prairies. Skunk river had to be crossed to reach Des Moines. This stream had a bad reputation that extended from Maine to California as to its habit of spreading itself. Several of the small streams had no bridges. Therefore, teamsters and contractors were not anxious to undertake the job of removal. The citizens and teamsters of Des Moines, however, solved the problem by sending men and teams from Des Moines to assist in the removal. Among the men was the Rev. Ezra Rathburn, one of Des Moines' pioneer ministers.

The removal of the four safes, consisting of one each for the secretary of state, treasurer of state, auditor of state and superintendent of public instruction, was let to Dr. Jesse Bowen of Iowa City, who delivered them safely in the new capitol after many days of hard and tedious work. The treasurer of state's safe was much the largest and very heavy. During the journey it was left on the open prairie for four days and nights, until the storm abated and the ground became frozen sufficiently so that it could be hauled on a large bob-sled. When it arrived in Des Moines, it was drawn by ten yoke of oxen. Its arrival was hailed with great delight, not only by citizens of Des Moines, but by the state officers and

their deputies, for in it was the gold and silver coin that was to pay them their last month's salary. Jesse Bowen, Jr., nephew of Dr. Jesse Bowen, was one of the young men that had charge of the teams, and drove one himself. Afterward he became a doorkeeper in the senate of the Twenty-eighth general assembly. The packing of the archives in the secretary of state's office was done under direction of John M. Davis, then deputy secretary of state and now an honored member of our Pioneer Lawmakers' association.

Two very important events occurred during the year 1857; one was the adoption of the new constitution in August, and the other was the state election of governor and lieutenant governor in October, to take their respective positions in January, 1858. The office of lieutenant governor was created under the new constitution.

The vote of the several counties had to be sent to the secretary of state to be held and safely kept until the convening of the legislature in January, 1858, then to be turned over to the speaker of the house of representatives. They were all received from the several counties while the office was still at Iowa City. Mr. John M. Davis, the deputy, was much concerned about the safety of these important documents, and he therefore had them securely and carefully packed and placed them in his own trunk with his clothing and personal effects, and brought them safely through to Des Moines and placed them in the vault of the new state building. Some of his companions in their journey through to Des Moines said that Mr. Davis always sat upon his trunk whenever an opportunity offered.

REMOVAL OF OFFICIALS

The transportation of the state officers was provided free of charge by Col. E. F. Hooker, superintendent of the Great Western Stage company. The officers left Iowa City on the morning of November 6, 1857, in one of the best of the Great Western Stage company's coaches, drawn by four first-class roadsters and driven by Joseph Baggs, one of the noted stage drivers of Iowa

City. Every ten or fifteen miles, at each stage station, fresh horses were supplied, and on Friday, November 7, at noon, the state officers were safely landed in Des Moines at the Des Moines house, one of our best hotels, situated on West Walnut and First street, where they partook of a first class meal which was in waiting for them.

NO TRANSPORTATION FOR DEPUTIES

The deputy state officers were not so fortunate as to have free transportation tendered them by the stage company, but Martin L. Morris, treasurer of state, was a generous-hearted man. He chartered a hack of Mr. Aylesworth, one of the leading liverymen of Iowa City, to take the deputies to Des Moines at his expense. John M. Davis, George Mathews, Daniel S. Warren, David M. Sells, Thomas Kinsey and Wm. A. Kinsey, with a driver, left Iowa City in a first class hack Friday morning, November 6. It was a beautiful morning, clear, cool and with but little frost. The young men were in a happy, jolly mood, and left the old state house and friends with a pleasant good-bye. The first day's journey was one of pleasure. The first night out they stopped at Brooklyn. The morning of the second day gave signs of a storm, and by noon it was sleeting and raining; by sun-down it was snowing and blowing. They stopped the second night at a Mr. Piper's, in Jasper county, twenty-five miles east of Des Moines. Sunday morning, the 8th, the snow was from twelve to sixteen inches deep, and the driver of the hack refused to go any further. He said he did not know the road to Fort Des Moines, and all the signs of the road were covered with snow. The deputies were in a bad dilemma. However, they employed a farmer with a lumber wagon, who said he knew the road to Fort Des Moines. They placed their trunks in his wagon for seats and started on their journey and were safely landed at a house, just across the street from the new state capitol, about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, where they had a splendid dinner and were made warm and comfortable.

On Monday, November 10, the state officers and their deputies took charge of their respective offices in the new capitol building, and on January 11, 1858, the Seventh general assembly convened at the new state house and the state government was fully established in the city of Des Moines, within two miles of the junction of the Des Moines and Raccoon rivers, in accordance with a resolution passed January 25, 1855, by the Fifth general assembly.

October

I kissed her, calmly, boldly kissed my love;
 The leaves at this rash act, all colors turned;
 The ripening corn in sun-kissed fields was shocked;
 The Sumach's cheek with hectic color burned!

I kissed my love; her lips by grape-juice stained;
 She raised her smokey veil for my caress—
 About her neck were hawthorn apples strung,
 And coral berries fringed her Autumn dress!

We meet but once a year, my love and I,
 Our trysting place, the forest; time, the fall—
 To love and lose October once a year
 Is better than to have never loved at all!

—Tac Hussey

Iowa Legislator Reached 104 Years

Another Iowa centenarian legislator has been revealed in the person of George Andrew Gordon, who represented Montgomery county in the Iowa house in the Ninth and the Ninth extra sessions, during the Civil war period, his home being at Red Oak Junction. The ANNALS is indebted to Hon. Claus L. Anderson, of Stanton, for this information, who was a member of the Thirty-fifth and Thirty-sixth General assemblies. He referred the ANNALS editor to the journal of proceedings of the Fortieth General Assembly, which disclosed that in 1923 Mr. Gordon had sent greetings from his home at Eureka, Kansas, where he spent his last years, to members of the Iowa house in session, and was 102 years of age at that time. He had attained 104 years upon his death there in 1925.

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