



Architect's Drawing of New Iowa State Office Building  
CORNERSTONE LAYING CEREMONIES HELD APRIL 25, 1950

# *Annals Addenda . . .*

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## IOWA'S NEW STATE OFFICE BUILDING

### LAYING OF THE CORNERSTONE

The formal ceremonies attendant the laying of the cornerstone of the new Iowa State Office Building on the capitol grounds in Des Moines, April 25, 1950, unfortunately were marred by inclement weather. The date had been set for late in the month, believing that normal spring weather would be afforded suitable for holding an outdoor program in comfort. But the day was bleak, the skies drab, and a cold, biting wind swept the north exposure of the new building, which had been partially hooded with temporary covering to protect the speakers and distinguished guests.

The steel work on the new seven-story structure had been completed two months previous, substantial progress made on construction of floors and cement backing for the outer walls on the first and second floors, and a portion of the Bedford stone-work on the first floor was in place. The excavation for the building started last spring, but the construction work was held up in the summer by reason of strikes in the city. However, work had progressed almost continuously through the winter.

The building is 120x246 feet on the ground, located one block east of the capitol's east entrance, and faces north on the mall between East Twelfth and Thirteenth streets, occupying the greater portion of the block to the south. The beautiful five-million-dollar edifice will be impressive and commodious when completed and occupied.

The ceremonies in the setting of the immense stone in a layer of cement, consisted in dedicating and lowering the 1,100-pound, two by five-foot block of Bedford limestone to its resting place. They were in charge of the Legislative Advisory committee, with Sen. Stanley L.

Hart, of Keokuk, the chairman, as master of ceremonies, the ritualistic Masonic ceremonial being led by Don Carpenter, of Council Bluffs, grand master of Iowa Masons.

Two hundred and more officials and citizens made up the audience in attendance, headed by Gov. Wm. S. Beardsley, with other state officers, judges of the supreme court, members of boards and commissions and state employees. A detail of the Iowa National Guard bore the colors, and music was furnished by the East High school singers. Architect-in-chief Burdette Higgins and Mrs. W. F. Kucharo, of Kucharo and Associates, the principal contractor, also were present and introduced, Mr. Kucharo having died during the period since the beginning of the construction work. The Rt. Rev. Msgr. P. N. McDermott, of Atlantic, gave the invocation.

Governor Beardsley spoke on behalf of the state of Iowa and its citizens, mentioning the need of the accommodations of the building, and in significant manner pledging that its erection should be for a service agency and "not become a step toward bigger state government." He said in part:

Today the citizens of Iowa join formally in setting the stone to mark the construction of a new building in the service of our people. Elected representatives of the people participating in a series of legislative sessions determined that this building must be created in order to give us more efficient state government. Before, our people have been scattered, supervision has been difficult, and coordination expensive.

In making this move, the state government of Iowa pledges that the building will be a service agency to the people of the state of Iowa; that it will not become a step toward bigger state government. Rather, our duty requires us in the interests of the citizens whom we serve to be alert to devise those means and methods by which state government may become efficient without major increases in personnel, equipment and buildings for their use.

#### MATERIAL PLACED IN CORNERSTONE

The massive stone bore the inscription "1950," and preliminary to its lowering a sealed copper chest was

placed within it, containing twenty-six items, as follows:

- 1 Governor Beardsley's Inaugural Address—1949.
- 2 Treasurer of State—Biennial Report and Cash Financial Statement, as of December 31, 1949.
- 3 Year Book of Agriculture—1948.
- 4 Iowa Official Register—1949-1950.
- 5 Twenty-seventh Biennial Report of Attorney General—1948.
- 6 Report of Soil Conservation Committee—1947.
- 7 The Capitol of Iowa—Custodian's Report.
- 8 Twenty-five Years of Iowa Agriculture—1948.
- 9 Iowa Welcomes You—1948, Executive Office.
- 10 Why Iowa is Great—State Department of Agriculture.
- 11 Highlights of Iowa History—Iowa Department of History and Archives—1950.
- 12 Looking Backward on Hawkeye Land—Iowa Centennial Committee—1946.
- 13 Centennial Half Dollar—1946—Iowa Department of History and Archives.
- 14 List of Employees of the State of Iowa—June 30, 1949.
- 15 Iowa, The Hawkeye State—Iowa Department of History and Archives.
- 16 Index of bound newspapers—1947—Iowa Department of History and Archives.
- 17 Natural History Slides—Iowa Department of History and Archives.
- 18 Annals of Iowa—July 1949—Iowa Department of History and Archives.
- 19 Iowa Highway Road Map—1950—Iowa State Highway Commission.
- 20 State Board of Engineering Examiners—Annual Report—1949.
- 21 Annual Report of State Car Dispatcher—June 30, 1949.
- 22 History of State Legislative Office Building Advisory Committee—1941-50.
- 23 Sealed letter from State Comptroller—1950.
- 24 Program of "Laying of the Cornerstone—State Office Building—April 25, 1950."
- 25 Copies of The *Des Moines Register* and the *Des Moines Tribune*—April 24, 1950.
- 26 Copy of *Des Moines Plain Talk*—March 23, 1950.

Rabbi Eugene Manheimer, of Des Moines, pronounced the benediction at the close of the exercises.

#### BUILDING NEEDED FOR YEARS

This formal event marks the culmination of efforts of two decades to provide a permanent housing of state

departments and boards, which long have been occupying rented quarters since overflowing from the state-house. The growth of official operations of the state government, together with new departments created by legislative action, long ago outran provisions for adequate state-owned occupancy. While several attempts had been made to obtain legislative authority to that end, it was in 1939 that a beginning was made upon appropriation of funds now being used, later augmented by additional substantial amounts sufficient to justify the making of contracts for erection of the structure, which provide for completion of the building by February 15, 1951.

Final allocation of space on the several floors has not been closed, but assignment of areas for departments and offices now outside of the capitol has been made. Some departments and offices will occupy space in the four-story building adjacent the capitol Extension grounds at the south-west on Court avenue, purchased of the International Harvester Company. Many that will move into the new structure have been located for some years in office buildings in the business section of Des Moines. They include the insurance department, state tax commission, safety department, health department, employment security commission, board of social welfare, industrial commissioner, board of education, and a group of smaller-sized commissions and boards.

The state building last previously erected upon the capitol extension grounds was that of the State Historical department, the cornerstone of the first wing built being set on May 17, 1899. Gov. Leslie M. Shaw handled the trowel in the ceremonial program, and former Ambassador John A. Kasson delivered the main address. Former U. S. Sen. James Harlan and Theodore S. Parvin also spoke. Guests who were to take part in the program, and other distinguished Iowans in attendance, formed a parade from the Savery hotel to the site of the new Historical building, under direction of Adj. Gen.

M. H. Byers. The line included ten carriages, escorted by troop A, Iowa National Guard, commanded by Capt. Harry H. Polk. A rain cut short Governor Shaw's remarks and the remainder of the exercises, including addresses, were held in the corridor of the capitol building.

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### THE NOBLEST OF SOCIAL DOCUMENTS

The United States was the first modern nation to found its government on a written constitution. It is hard to realize what an act of courage it was to seek to embrace in a formula the whole principle of rule which should bind a people as yet ununified, and to attempt to anticipate the exigencies of a darkly uncertain future.

Perhaps there has been too much emphasis on the debates of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and on the method of compromise by which the document was finally drafted in terms not wholly unacceptable to the majority of the delegates assembled in Philadelphia during a long sweltering summer. Certainly some aspects of the principle of judicial review, and its practical applications in some eras of the history of the supreme court have cast doubt upon the enduring validity of the work of the founding fathers. The fates of idealistic amendments, one of which proved insupportable by the people, have worked further to undermine confidence in what was intended to be the charter of American liberties.

Yet, whatever abuses have been committed in its name, and whatever failures to follow its guidance have occurred in our national history, the constitution of the United States is probably the noblest of social documents.

In this time of unrest, doubt, and dismay, we need to go back to the constitution, to seek there the basic principles on which our nation was founded, and to strive to apply those principles, in no merely legalistic fashion, to the problems which bedevil the fifth generation of American nationhood.

Let us read the Preamble once again:

We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America.

It would be a dull and earthy spirit that these ringing clauses failed to rouse and thrill. But if the response of the American reader is merely an emotional one, the failure of his perception is deplorable and of ill omen to the state. For in this sounding Augustan rhetoric is embodied a concept of human government in which the clearest experience and the loftiest thought of the ages are united.

There were conflicting interests among the delegates to the constitution convention, and honest differences of opinion as to the ends and means of government stubbornly maintained. These men were not above the normal human stature; though too much probably has been made of the private and sectional interests which they represented, they were not altogether removed from natural selfishness and prejudice. Nevertheless, all the evidence points conclusively to the fact that they were capable of sinking their differences in seeking sincerely and strenuously the means that would "promote the general welfare," rather than the special welfare of a class or of a section. In this great end we find a complete accord between Federalist and Anti-Federalist, between the delegate from New Jersey and the delegate from Virginia.

It has not been the mere existence of the constitution that has carried the United States to the heights of national greatness. The most carefully drawn legal document is liable, and even peculiarly liable, to misinterpretation and evasion. That the spirit of the constitution has nonetheless prevailed has been due to the fact that the ideal which possessed those who framed it has never been submerged.—*Emory University Quarterly.*

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