



Eng. by J. C. Butler Co. N.Y.

Emily Gauss
Peter A. Deep

ANNALS OF IOWA.

VOL. VII, No. 2.

DES MOINES, IOWA, JULY, 1905.

3D SERIES.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE OLD CAPITOL AND THE NEW.

BY HON. PETER A. DEY.

In the spring of 1853 I was employed by parties interested in the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company to make a survey from Davenport by way of Iowa City and Fort Des Moines to the Missouri river. My principal assistant was General Grenville M. Dodge, who afterwards acquired a national reputation in the civil war and later as chief engineer of the Union Pacific railroad. We reached Iowa City on the first day of June. The town had about thirteen hundred people at that time. Fort Des Moines, as it was then named, had about half this number. The business houses in both places were mainly wooden shanties placarded with signs in large letters, "LAND WARRANTS". The land offices for a large part of the State were located in these towns, the general government still owning a majority of the lands within the State. At Iowa City I was especially impressed with the capitol, a building in the severest style of the Doric order, alone in the center of a ten-acre inclosure, and gaining in character by contrast with its surroundings. Its walls were massive and its design a model. For fifty years I have passed it, often daily, and I never look at it without satisfaction. My first impressions, which have never changed, were endorsed in a letter received from Frederick Dielman, president of the Academy of Design in New York, who was preparing a mosaic for one of the recesses of the capitol at Des Moines. In representing higher education he proposed to

introduce as a center this building, saying that from casual observation he regarded it as a fine specimen of classic architecture.

The country west of Iowa City was unsettled. Robert Manatt and his sons lived east of where Brooklyn now is. On one of the most traveled thoroughfares in the State, from Manatt's to Latimer's, a distance of eighteen miles, there was no house or cultivation of any kind. When our survey reached Grinnell, the highest elevation attained between the Mississippi and Des Moines rivers, we looked over a vast extent of prairie and saw nothing to indicate that the foot of the white man had ever pressed the ground. The change can be better appreciated from the standpoint of the past.

During the year 1854 I spent considerable time in and about Iowa City, and knew many of the prominent men of the State. Judge Joseph Williams, Chief Justice, was a man who would be remembered. On the bench he was dignified and self-respecting, but when the restraints were loosened he was full of humor, had a fund of stories that was inexhaustible, and a remarkable fondness for music, which was his recreation. He was especially fond of the violin. He told me that at one time he held court in a barn at Tipton and sentenced a man for horse stealing, telling him that he had given him the limit of punishment the law permitted and only regretted that he could not make the term longer, as his crime prevented the cultivation of the farm from which the family acquired its living. In the evening the young people gathered in the barn and the judge furnished the music for a dance. He observed one man on the floor who, from his movements, seemed to especially enjoy the occasion; his appearance seemed familiar, and the judge, on inquiry, was told that this was the man he had sentenced in the morning for horse stealing. The sheriff wanted to attend the dance, and as he had no place in which to confine his prisoner, he brought him on the floor where he could watch

him. It is needless to say the music and dance abruptly ended.

Judge J. C. Hall was said to be a profound lawyer, and it was claimed that his opinions were logical and the results of reasoning on principles rather than following precedent. Judge George Greene after retiring from the bench devoted himself to railroad building and was successful. Judge George G. Wright was chosen by the legislature Chief Justice in 1855. Added to legal acquirements which have been universally acknowledged as of a high order, he had the faculty of impressing himself upon the men with whom he came in contact. In the day when prejudices were stronger than they now are, many a pioneer who differed with him in politics, in religion and almost everything else, felt that the judge was personally interested in him and his special friend. I never have met a man who had this faculty to so great a degree.

James W. Grimes was elected governor in the fall of 1854. He was both an astute politician and a statesman. He at that time kept up a regular correspondence with some influential man in almost every county in the State, asked his views and incidentally outlined his own, so that practically he dictated the platforms of his party, and often the persons elected to state offices. As a statesman his views were far reaching. The constitutional convention of 1857, through the influence exerted by him, limited to five per cent. on its valuation all state, county, city and township indebtedness. In a period when Iowa might have been involved in all kinds of schemes for internal improvements and the public was ready to adopt them, the State was saved from the load of debt that has been so burdensome to surrounding states. The man who introduced this provision probably went to his grave in the firm conviction that this wise constitutional restriction was his own measure. Governor Grimes labored for results, not personal distinction. His career in the United States senate was a fitting sequel to that in the State of Iowa. In

the session of 1856-57, Governor Grimes and Senator Wm. F. Coolbaugh, who were at the time the acknowledged leaders of the two political parties, occupied jointly the same rooms in the Clinton House at Iowa City, and consulted freely on all matters of state policy, while at the same time their views on the subjects that divided national politics were radically different. They both felt that the State was young and the time to develop a correct policy for the future was then, and they united on measures that have since demonstrated their wisdom. Their personal friendship lasted until the death of the former, and in his later years Mr. Coolbaugh spoke of Governor Grimes as the statesman of Iowa, and as the man who was true to his convictions when fully conscious that this fidelity meant political suicide. It is nearly thirty years since the death of the latter, and both have been forgotten by the generations now on the stage. It may not have been amiss to recall them to public attention.

The convention that framed the constitution in 1857 must have been an able body. That the constitution has remained so long practically unchanged speaks emphatically in favor of the wisdom of its provisions. Hon. Francis Springer was President, and William Penn Clarke, Judge J. C. Hall, and George Gillespie were among its members.

While Iowa City was the capital, immigrants were coming into the State rapidly. Two classes of men met with very different antecedents and ideas, one from New England, New York and Pennsylvania; the other from what President Roosevelt denominates the "Middle West". The New Englander felt (perhaps justifiably) a superiority on account of education, of the economies practised at home, of the systematized charities of the east, and claimed a higher civilization for his region. He talked of Beecher and Wendell Phillips and the influences of Harvard and Yale. The Middle West man was self-reliant and prided himself on the fact that he belonged to what Mr. Lincoln styled the "plain people". He often quoted the saying of Stephen A. Douglas, "if you wish to

fool anybody do not begin with a man who signs his name with an x". Their collisions were earnest, often amusing. Both belonged to the higher type of men. The civil war developed the patriotism of both, and before its close they merged into the most intense lovers of their country and forgot the idiosyncrasies of the past. Our standpoint is nearer that of the New Englander, developed by liberal surroundings, than of the other, yet there was merit in the logic of the man grown in the Middle West. Judge Douglas, one of the most influential stump speakers of his day, repeatedly stated that he never attempted to lower his standard or dilute his arguments to meet the capacity of the unlearned. Governor Kirkwood, a product of the Middle West and in his day the most successful man on the stump, in the State, realized the truth of this, and always stated his positions so clearly and sustained them by arguments so convincing that his hearers carried away with them some ideas that they never forgot. He once told me that the Hon. Thomas Corwin one afternoon made a speech at Mansfield, Ohio, which with its humor and his own peculiar characteristics of gesture and grimace convulsed the crowds in attendance. Everyone went wild over the great stump orator. In the evening with some young lawyers he called on Mr. Corwin at the hotel. Unexpectedly they found him, instead of in flowing spirits, deeply depressed, from which state it was difficult to arouse him. Finally, however, he said, "Young gentlemen, learn a lesson. I believe there is enough in me to rank with the statesmen of this country. Unfortunately, I have successfully adopted the methods of the humorist and will be remembered as Tom Corwin the clown, not the statesman. Always address your audiences from the highest plane you can reach and furnish them argument, not amusement". Governor Kirkwood evidently profited by the advice.

In the session of 1854-55 a law was passed removing the capital to Des Moines, and under the provisions of a law of Congress the old capitol and grounds became the property

of the State for the purpose of a university to which Congress had already granted for its endowment 40,000 acres of land.

Prominent among the men who secured the legislation for the removal of the capital was General James A. Williamson. When asked by an investigating committee what influences he used (to secure the removal) his answer was, "bivalve and sardinian appliances". The State from an early day was warmly enlisted in the cause of temperance, and its tendency has always been in that direction.

At a special session of the legislature an act was passed, approved July 14, 1856, for the purpose of accepting the grant of land to the State by an act of Congress approved May 15, 1856, for the purpose of constructing a railroad from Burlington to the mouth of the Platte river; from Davenport *via* Iowa City and Fort Des Moines to Council Bluffs; from Lyons City as nearly as practicable on the forty-second parallel of latitude to the Missouri river; from Dubuque to the Missouri river at a point as near as practicable to Sioux City. This grant conveying nearly four millions of acres of land to the railway companies, in the day of small things when men were comparatively poor, occupied the attention of the general assembly less than ten days, and so far as known no member pecuniarily profited or attempted to profit by its action. The land at present values is probably worth forty dollars per acre, or the immense sum of \$160,000,000.

This speaks well for the integrity of the early lawmaker. It may be questioned whether in proportion to the wealth of the State the enlarged present value is greater than was the value of the four million acres at that time, and whether this could now be transferred to corporations without some attempt to secure incidental pecuniary benefit therefrom. The people in those days were honest, they are honest now, but it would be hardly politic to submit a modern general assembly to the same test.

The last judicial occupancy of the old capitol was by the United States District Court presided over by Judge James M. Love. Of his judicial career lasting more than thirty years it is only necessary to say that, to the best of my knowledge, every attorney who practiced in his court had full confidence in his innate integrity and in his ability to correctly expound the law. I never heard his name mentioned but with profound respect.

The capital with all papers, records and other belongings was removed to Des Moines in the fall of 1858. A building had been erected by certain citizens of Des Moines and deeded to the State for a nominal consideration. It was occupied from that time and answered the purpose for a number of years. During the session of 1868, the census board (corresponding as I understand to what is now known as the executive council) was directed to advertise for plans for a new capitol, these to be submitted to the following general assembly. During the session of 1870, an act to provide for a new capitol, was passed and approved April 14. It established a board of commissioners consisting of the governor who was *ex officio* president and six other commissioners chosen by the legislature in joint convention, whose term of office should be two years. In addition the act named General G. M. Dodge and Hon. James F. Wilson as commissioners for the State at large. They were required to give bonds for \$50,000.00 each for the faithful performance of their duties. They were to select from the plans submitted to the census board, with the advice of a competent architect, a plan on which to build, but were authorized to modify it by combining with it the desirable features from other plans. The building was to be constructed of the best material, made fire-proof, warmed and ventilated in the most approved manner; it must provide suitable legislative halls, rooms for the judiciary, executive offices, library and committees; for the archives of the State agricultural society and for all purposes of the state government. It must be erected

on the ground held by the State for that purpose, and its cost was limited to one million, five hundred thousand dollars. The board was required to give preference to contractors living in the State and to material found in the State, for construction, if as good and at the same price as could be furnished elsewhere. The commission was unusually large for the purpose. While the act does not so state, they were selected from each of the then existing congressional districts, and the two commissioners at large were supposed to represent the United States senators, making a commission of nine in number, all republicans. It was an unwieldy body and, as the event proved, by no means harmonious. What relation members of congress or United States senators had to the construction of a state capitol is not evident. They first examined the quarries of the State, made chemical and physical tests, apparently the most complete ever made in the west, and possibly in the country, up to that time. After satisfying themselves as to quality and durability they decided to use for the foundation stone from the Orford quarry on the Iowa river in Tama county, an oolite limestone, which, the reports show, has stood the tests better than any other except the boulder granite, which was out of the question with the limit of cost fixed in the law. The quarry was not fully developed, and although the stone was adopted, there seems to have been in the minds of some of the members of the board a doubt whether enough could be furnished from that locality. One of the editors in the eastern part of the State, from information that he supposed to be reliable, attacked the stone, claiming that it was a failure and liable to disintegration; his brethren joined him and public sentiment condemned the commissioners. The democrats feeling that they had been unjustly treated in not being allowed representation on the board, joined heartily in the condemnation. The commissioners without further investigation, lacking the nerve to defend themselves, abandoned the oolite stone and adopted a limestone found in a hill west of Des

Moines, without investigation as to its extent or any test of its durability. Popular clamor at once subsided and nothing further was heard on the subject until the stone used in the foundation actually failed. In a short time the new quarry failed to furnish stone of suitable dimensions and was abandoned. It, however, became necessary to do something, and the board decided upon a stone from Rock Creek in Van Buren county. This in appearance resembled the stone in the foundation of the Illinois capitol, which had been submitted to chemical and physical tests. The work was pushed rapidly during the summer and fall of 1871, and on the 23d day of November, the corner-stone was laid with appropriate ceremony. Three-fifths of the cellar was then completed. The corner-stone had the names of the commissioners and the architects carved upon the western face, and on the south end "A. D., 1871". Hon. James F. Wilson made an introductory address which was followed by a historical paper by Governor Samuel Merrill on the portion of the Louisiana Purchase represented by Iowa; a poem was read by Hon. J. B. Grinnell, and an address made by Hon. John A. Kasson on the presentation to Governor Merrill of a silver trowel from the architects and a silver mallet from the superintendent. Everything looked bright. Whatever may have been the merits of the Rock Creek stone, unfortunately they were quarried late in the fall, put in the wall full of moisture, or as is termed by the stone-men, "quarry sap", and soon severely cold weather cracked a considerable number of them. The public, again influenced by the press, condemned the commissioners, and when the legislature met there was an investigation which ended in a report stating that the interior face of the wall showed many stone that were affected by frost, recommending "that the persons to whom may be committed the continuance of the work, be required to cause a thorough investigation to be made into each and every part of the wall by competent and disinterested persons, and direct that all the worthless material be taken out and reject-

ed, regardless of the consequent loss to the State". The commissioners closed their report with a review of what they had done in the two years, and advised that they be empowered to make contracts for the stone in the superstructure of the building. They asked for an appropriation of not less than three hundred thousand dollars. They gave it as their opinion that the board of commissioners should consist of not more than three members in which each political party should be represented, and that they should be appointed for the time occupied in building the capitol, and that they should be paid a salary that would justify them in giving their whole time to the discharge of their duties during the continuance of the work.

The 14th general assembly passed an act approved April 10, 1872, which amended the act of 1870, and established a board of commissioners which consisted of the governor, who was *ex officio* president and four other members, viz.: John G. Foote of Des Moines county, Maturin L. Fisher of Clayton county, R. S. Finkbine and Peter A. Dey of Johnson county. Each political party was represented by two members whose term of office extended to the completion of the building. It was made the duty of the commission to inspect the foundations already in, with reference to the material and character of the work and to reject any part thereof that did not conform to the proper standard. The value of such rejected work was not to be considered in determining the amount authorized to be expended in the construction of the building. The act appropriated \$100,000.00 for the prosecution of the work for 1872, and \$125,000.00 annually thereafter until the amount reached \$1,380,000.00, or was an appropriation of \$1,480,000.00, the time when available being fixed. The commissioners were to direct their action with a view of the completion of the building for the sum of \$1,500,000.

The first duty of the new commission was to determine what repairs were needed on the foundation walls which on their interior or exposed face showed the effect of frost, and to set-

tle the problem of how much of these massive walls must be removed. A committee of the board, Messrs Finkbine and Dey, was directed to examine and report. They were selected because one of them was a builder of long experience; the other, an engineer. After very careful and mature consideration they gave as their conclusion that the entire walls above the concrete foundation must come out, giving as a reason that the expenditure of \$50,000 would soon be forgotten, but that a failure in the foundation could never afterward be remedied and would ever remain a source of regret. The board considered the report radical and directed the wall to be taken down in places where signs of disintegration appeared. Opening up the walls fortunately showed a condition even worse than the committee anticipated, and resulted in the removal of every stone above the concrete except three. The cost of removing the defective stone and rebuilding the walls, leaving the work as it was when repairs began, was \$52,343.76.

When the commissioners found it necessary to take down the cellar walls built by their predecessors they boxed the corner-stone and put it in one of the storage sheds about the building, intending to reset it exactly as it was when taken down, as soon as the walls reached that point. The 14th general assembly by joint resolution approved March 20, 1873, directed that all inscriptions of names, dates and figures be erased from the corner-stone and only the name "Iowa" and the date "1873" be inscribed, which resolution was strictly complied with. I have stated this for the purpose of correcting an impression at one time prevalent that this action was voluntary and met the approval of the commissioners.

The next thing to determine was what changes could be made to bring the cost of the building within the \$1,480,000 appropriated.

The former board, among the perplexities encountered, very soon discovered that the building could not be completed upon the plans decided upon, for the cost to which they were

limited, and they called to their assistance Edward Clark, architect of the capitol extension at Washington. He advised leaving out the basement story and the domes, making the capitals of the columns and the cornices of cast-iron and dispensing with all ornamental work. The new commission adopted Mr. Clark's views but with this difference: They reported against leaving out the basement story, realizing that the room it furnished was absolutely necessary for the future needs of the State. They decided to adhere to the plans adopted by their predecessors as far as practicable, and to put in cheap work wherever it could be replaced. Fortunately the legislature came to their relief and appropriated in 1874, \$125,000, and in 1876, \$250,000, in addition to the \$1,480,000 previously appropriated, making a total of \$1,855,000. This seemed to indicate that the policy was becoming more liberal and the intent was that the building should be made suitable for the purposes for which it was designed. From that time forward the capitol began to attract attention; it seemed to be popular, and every expenditure that would add to its usefulness or elegance was sanctioned by public sentiment, a change due to general prosperity and a conviction that the State was getting an equivalent for the expenditure. From the first the board asked for larger appropriations. The policy of the State was not to increase the tax levy and the capitol was given what remained after the state institutions were supplied.

The commissioners appealed again and again for larger appropriations. One argument they advanced was that the cost of supervision could not well be less than ten thousand dollars per year, which on an expenditure of five hundred thousand dollars was not large; on one hundred and twenty-five thousand it was. Governor Larrabee had been for many years a member of the senate. As chairman of the committee on appropriations his word was law. After listening to an appeal on one occasion he answered the argument on percentage by stating that he was satisfied that the commis-



Maturen L. Fisher

MATUREN L. FISHER.

A graduate of Yale College; a pioneer settler of Clayton County, Iowa;
Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1857-58; one of the
Commissioners in charge of the erection of
the new capitol of Iowa, 1872-79.

sioners were employing the best of skilled labor and supervision and exercising reasonable economy in their expenditures, but when the building was completed and furnished the array of janitors that would demand and get employment would "cost the State more than all your skilled labor and high-priced supervision". The answer was so characteristic of the man and showed so clearly his insight into conditions that were sure to come, that I feel justified in introducing it.

Messrs. Cochrane and Piquenard were the original architects and furnished the plans. The board followed their predecessors and have no claim to any merit in the selection, but always regarded the plans, in respect to the size of the building and the purposes for which it was designed as practically the most perfect of any they had seen. Early in 1872 Mr. Cochrane resigned and Mr. Piquenard became the sole architect. The board never knew to which of these men the credit of the plans belonged. Mr. Piquenard died in November, 1876. He was a Frenchman and was compelled to leave Paris at the time of the *coup d'etat* of Louis Napoleon. He belonged to an association of young republicans who were hostile to this movement. From the first the board were favorably impressed with Mr. Piquenard, and the intercourse of four years led them to regard him as a man of ability and among the foremost in his profession. Messrs. Bell & Hackney, his assistants, took charge of the building and it was completed under their supervision.

On February 5, 1879, Maturin L. Fisher, a member of the board from 1872, died at his residence in Clayton county. In 1854 he was President of the Senate and later State Superintendent of Public Instruction. He was a member of the boards of commissioners for the construction of the hospitals for the insane at Mount Pleasant and Independence during the construction of both buildings. He had a thorough knowledge of architecture and building material, which made him a valuable member of the board and his death was a great loss to his associates. The following quotation from

one of the reports written by him on the plans suggested to reduce the cost of the building shows his devotion to the rules and proprieties of architecture. He says:

Change the cut stone cornice to galvanized iron; the cut stone capitals to cast-iron; the grand staircase from marble to iron; to put hardwood floors in the halls and corridors instead of marble; to leave out the committee rooms over the library and in the upper story of the east wing; to change the glass from French plate to French cylinder, double thick or English crystal. By making these changes, which is considered preferable to reducing the size of the building, the cost may be brought within the limit fixed by the law; but it should be distinctly understood that these changes are not made in accordance with the taste of the commissioners. They are made from necessity not from choice. The conceptions of the great architects of ancient times, embodied in the orders of architecture and displayed in the capital of the column, and in the architrave, the frieze and the cornice of the entablature, were designed to be executed in stone; a cornice of galvanized iron or a capital of cast-iron is an imitation and a counterfeit. The rooms over the library and in the upper story of the east wing can be constructed at a more convenient season hereafter; marble can be substituted at some future time for iron in the grand staircase and in the halls and corridors for wooden floors, and inferior glass can be exchanged for that of a superior quality, but the iron cornice and the iron capitals can never be replaced by stone, but must remain disfigured by rust, to mar forever the beauty of the building and exhibit to future ages the depraved taste of the present generation.

At the close of the year 1879 the commissioners reported to the governor that the exterior of the building was well advanced and the dome walls carried to the level of the senate ceiling. They had before that time changed from the original plan of an iron dome and decided to cary it up with stone to the lantern, having strengthened the substructure from the foundation to enable it to support the additional weight.

They asked that hereafter all appropriations be made for the building, not specifically for any part. They said: "the building has reached a point where the construction must be carried on systematically and on some general plan. We know of no method of securing this so advantageously to the State as to leave the appropriations untrammled. The commissioners who for eight years have devoted time, thought

and study to the subject should be better qualified than anyone else to conduct the finish of the building and decide upon the order in which each of the parts should be finished". There was something of self-assertion or at least of self-respect in the above, and it seems from the action taken to have been appreciated by the legislative body.

A committee consisting of Messrs. Finkbine and Dey, Gen. Ed Wright, the secretary, and Mr. Bell, the architect, was appointed to consider the subject of warming the building by steam, and the plumbing. They visited the large public buildings of Michigan, Boston, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, and employed Levi R. Green of Boston to prepare plans and specifications. His plans were very satisfactory and successful and were adopted, except that the use of coils in the ventilators was substituted in place of the use of fans, thus leaving (at all times when steam was used) the building in the state of *vacuum* rather than *plenum*, the effect of which was to bring in a strong current of air whenever a door was opened or there was any place where air could get in. This was done by the action of the board against Mr. Green's protest and the writer assumes his full share of the responsibility. The ventilation of the House of Representatives in the capitol at Washington was on the fan system and the operation far from satisfactory; this probably influenced the commission.

While visiting the capitol at Lansing the members of the committee were much pleased with the library which was carried to the top of the building, and on their recommendation the board ordered the ceiling of the library in the new capitol which was in, to be taken out; thus its height was increased from 29 to 45 feet. Visitors to this room can well appreciate the benefit of the change.

The plans for the main dome and necessarily, for uniformity, the smaller domes, had never been satisfactory to the commissioners. They reasoned that the architects of the *Renaissance* period had derived the idea as well as the form

of the dome from their conceptions of the arch of the heavens. In this respect they say: "The conviction of the commissioners is that changes should be made in the dome to make it conform to those structures that have for centuries demanded the admiration of artists, architects, and the world generally, as models of beauty and elegance. It is possible that in the anxiety to attain great height many of the modern architects have lost sight of the idea of the dome and trenched upon the steeple". The dome adopted was a copy of that of the *Hotel des Invalides* in Paris, built by Mansard in about 1690, who, according to an eminent critic, "gave to this imposing edifice a complement worthy of itself. It was he who raised the dome, admirable alike for its proportions, for the excellent distribution of its ornaments and for its gilded lantern that rises 344 feet above the ground." Of about the same height is the dome on the Iowa State capitol, although the former is a few feet larger.

Governor Merrill was much interested in the capitol and attended all meetings of the board; Governor Carpenter sometimes met with the commissioners; the later governors gave it no attention unless called upon by special request. After the plans of the present dome were adopted there was marked difference in the taste of the commissioners. Messrs. Foreman and Dey insisted on gilding it; Messrs. Finkbine and Foote were decidedly opposed to gilding, assigning as a reason that gilding was an outcrop of the luxurious life and depraved taste of the period of the Grand Monarch Louis XIV. Governor Gear, near the close of his second term, was called upon to give the casting vote. He favored gilding. For some reason that I do not recall the question was again raised and Governor Sherman also voted for the gilding.

In the year 1882 after the library was finished and occupied Charles Aldrich came to the commissioners with a request that they furnish him two cases to be placed in the library in which he could put his collection of autographs and other curios that he had for many years been getting



John G. Foote

JOHN G. FOOTE.

State Senator, 1862-64; one of the Commissioners entrusted with the erection of the new Capitol of Iowa, by act of the Legislature, approved, April 10, 1872.

together, and which he intended should eventually become the property of the State. He had no place safe or suitable for their preservation or accessible to the public. His request was complied with, and from this modest beginning has grown the Historical Department of Iowa; its home is a fine building and the long felt want of a place for treasures of this nature has been supplied. Mr. Aldrich certainly has a claim upon the people of the State for the persistent energy and self-sacrifices with which he has devoted his life to this object.

In a paper prepared some years since for the "ANNALS OF IOWA" entitled "Robert S. Finkbine and his Associates",* I gave my estimate of each of the commissioners, of their part in the work, and of their special abilities. I have no reason to change this and will not repeat.

Section 2, chapter 100 of the acts of the 21st general assembly reads as follows:

That the Governor of the State is hereby empowered on behalf of the State to make a full settlement with the said board of commissioners, charged with the execution of the provisions of the law in respect to the erection of the capitol, and each member of said board, covering the period of time from the organization of said board up to and including the thirtieth day of June, 1886, and he is hereby authorized to make a full examination and investigation as to all appropriations of money made under the acts of the general assembly for the erection of said capitol, or subject to be drawn upon by said board of commissioners and the expenditures of the same, whether honestly and faithfully made under the law and the discretion vested by the law in said board of commissioners and also to examine and investigate as to all moneys and property belonging to the State coming into the hands of said board of commissioners in any manner or from any source, and as to the expenditure and disposition of the same.

In compliance with the provisions of the above statute, Governor Larrabee selected Delos Arnold, a former member of the State senate, to make the settlement with the commissioners. Mr. Arnold associated with him Frank L. Williams as accountant and Miss Julia Gowdy as clerk. With a determination to be thorough they spent a great deal of time,

* Annals, 3d ser., vol. 5, pp. 209-218.

examined 3,735 vouchers and bills, carried out and verified all the labor pay rolls of sixteen years, compared the prices of labor and material with those that were being paid at corresponding periods and compared these bills and accounts with the warrants drawn by the Auditor. They found errors in thirty-one of these vouchers, sixteen were against the commissioners amounting to \$37.73, and fifteen in their favor, amounting to \$33.96, leaving a balance of \$3.77 against the commissioners.

Mr. Arnold concludes his report with the following:

In the course of the examination of the accounts of the board of capitol commissioners it was found that every dollar of the funds that had come into their hands had been duly accounted for by vouchers furnished, and in the performance of the duties imposed upon them by law the commissioners have been governed by honest motives, have exercised wise discretion and have faithfully executed the trust assigned to them.

In conclusion it may be said that it ought to be a source of gratification to the people of Iowa that they have such a magnificent capitol building, pronounced by eminent architects and builders to be the finest structure on the continent for the money it cost, and it should be a source of still greater satisfaction and pride that it was constructed by a board of commissioners, citizens of the State, upon whose official honor and integrity no breath of suspicion rests.

In 1900, I was a member of the commission appointed by Governor Leslie M. Shaw to estimate the cost of repairs to the building and determine the character and cost of interior mural decorations required to bring it to the standard that those who planned it had raised. Considerable of the work outlined was under way when the fire occurred. As the building was supposed to be fire-proof some explanation should be given in justice to those in charge of the repairs as well as the original builders. It is supposed that the fire started in an air shaft which communicated with the ceiling of the house of representatives. From the floor of this chamber to the ceiling was fifty-six feet. The roof of the building was a steel truss supporting ribs that were filled between with porous terra-cotta (a fire-proof material). Suspended to the lower chord of this truss were steel girders arched

between with brick so that from this ceiling to the slate roof there was no material that could burn. A cornice was attached to this ceiling about five feet in depth made of wood, lathed and plastered. When this was put up there was some discussion in the board as to the propriety of introducing that amount of woodwork there. The answer was that this was hermetically sealed and absolutely protected from fire by brick and iron above, that the floors of the chamber were fifty feet below any wood to be put in, and that the entire furniture and wood in the house chamber might be burned but would create no heat in the ceiling that could possibly be dangerous. A chance resulting from causes that never were contemplated by the builders upset their calculations. The cornices were cut into for the purpose of concealing electric wires, and it is generally understood that a candle left burning in an air flue set a fire that with the draft made by the openings destroyed the ceiling and communicated to parts of the north wing. The scagliola columns around the windows were also injured. Scagliola is very popular for interior finish in public building in France and Italy, and latterly is being introduced in this country. The columns were cylinders of wood surrounded by woven wire, on this is put a preparation of plaster-of-Paris mixed with glue water; into this mixture are pressed broken crystals of the stone to be imitated and the surface polished as marble or granite. Often very beautiful effects are produced by this process. These columns in the house chamber have, I understand, been so injured that they must be replaced.

In replacing the work destroyed no material should be used that is combustible; the ceilings should be of iron or other fire-proof construction; the columns about the windows, Speaker's desk and elsewhere should be of honest marble even if necessary to build from the foundation to support them, and nothing should hereafter be used in the building that is not what it purports to be. It is true that scagliola is used in many of the finest buildings in Europe and America,

and a more remarkable instance of the use of material subject to be destroyed by fire is found in the exterior dome of St. Paul's in London, which was built by the great architect, Sir Christopher Wren, in about 1685. This dome is wood, the exterior covering of lead. The dome of the Iowa capitol is a frame, the ribs of iron arched between with brick and covered with copper. The State of Iowa has reached a point where in the future it can afford no shams.

In their final report the commissioners say in conclusion:

It may not be amiss to say a few words of themselves and their relations to the State, the public and each other during the fourteen years they have acted together. The Governor was made by law presiding officer of the board, and six different governors have met with them, otherwise there has been but one change in the membership of the board since its organization and that by the death of Mr. Fisher. The commissioners were selected from each political party and came together comparatively strangers. During that long period they have differed in many matters, these differences have never degenerated into personal feeling or diminished in any degree the profound respect inspired by the consciousness that each was honestly and to the best of his ability endeavoring to promote the best interests of the work in their charge and they will carry away with them none but the most pleasant recollections.

While there may have been mistakes made they think they can safely challenge in every particular any building in the country for a comparison in cost, in workmanship, in material, or its adaptation to the purposes for which it was intended.

In a period in which the builders of almost every important work have been severely censured and their actions impugned, the public has dealt kindly with the commissioners. No criticism from any source has been made upon their management. The public has awarded them all they could have asked, its confidence.

It is now more than eighteen years since the commissioners surrendered the building to the State authorities. The foremen of the different branches of the work (whom we knew intimately), every architect who held any relation to the building, all the commissioners except the one who is writing this article as a record for the future, are gone. Standing on the verge of life and looking back through the long vista of thirty years upon, and fully measuring, the men themselves, knowing the motives that governed them and

their fidelity to the trust committed to their charge, it is a source of satisfaction to me to remember that I was one of them and entitled to some share of the commendation they have received.

IOWA CITY, April, 1905.

NOTE.—Hon. Peter A. Dey, author of the foregoing paper, was born in the town of Romulus, Seneca county, N. Y., January 27, 1825. His ancestors came from Holland near the beginning of the 17th century, settling in New Jersey. Some of the Dey family served with distinguished credit in the revolutionary war. It was in the old Dey homestead, when Col. Theunis Dey was its occupant, that Gen. Washington had his headquarters in 1780. The mansion was built in 1720 and is in a good state of preservation. The rooms occupied by Washington are still pointed out to the visitor. Mr. Dey graduated from Geneva College in 1844. Among his classmates was a son of Cooper, the illustrious American novelist. He read law for a time with D. C. Bloomer, who was in after years a noted resident of Council Bluffs, but did not seek admission to the bar. His tastes led him in the direction of engineering. His first engagement was with the N. Y. and Erie Railroad. From that time forward he followed his profession as a civil engineer for many years. He was employed on the Cayuga and Seneca Canal, the Erie canal enlargement, the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern, the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific, the Union Pacific and several other railroads. Mr. Dey made the map upon the showing of which Mr. Lincoln designated the congressional section upon which Omaha was located as the initial point on the Union Pacific road. Mr. Dey's opposition to the action of the Credit Mobilier led to his severing his connection with the Union Pacific company. In 1878 Governor Gear appointed him one of the Board of Iowa Railroad Commissioners under the law of that year. He held the position sixteen years. The only democrat who ever served on that Board, he was appointed three times by governors, twice elected, and once defeated. In 1872 he was elected by the legislature one of the commissioners in charge of the erection of the new capitol. He continued in this work until the completion of the edifice in 1886. This was perhaps his most distinguished service. The commissioners expended three millions of dollars, erecting one of the most beautiful capitols in the United States, receiving universal praise, and incurring no hostile criticism. In 1895 he was designated by the Supreme Court of the United States as one of the commissioners to settle the boundary line in dispute between Iowa and Missouri. This was his last official service. In his later years Mr. Dey has been President of the First National Bank of Iowa City.

AN OFFER.—Mrs. L. H. Sigourney, the American poetess, has taken a deep interest in the town in Keokuk county which bears her name. She has made an offer to furnish free of charge, such schools in that township as will use them, two of her publications of school books. They are entitled "The Boy's Book" and "The Girl's Book". In addition she will give to the girl and boy, who are the best readers in the school, each a premium.—*The Iowa Citizen (Des Moines)* March 4, 1858.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.