

Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the legislative session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All historical publications are reproduced here with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

February 20, 2013

THIS WEEK: Walnut Street Extension, Des Moines, Iowa

BACKGROUND: 55TH IOWA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Fifty-fifth Iowa General Assembly convened January 12 and adjourned April 29, 1953—a 108-day session. The Senate had 46 Republican and four Democratic members. In the House of Representatives, there were 105 Republican and seven Democratic members.

Leo Elthon was the Lieutenant Governor presiding over the Senate. William Lynes was Speaker of the House. William Beardsley was Governor. Beardsley was inaugurated for his first term at the age of 47 on January 13, 1949.

Iowa's population at the 1950 census was 2,621,073.

Walnut Street Extension, Des Moines, Iowa

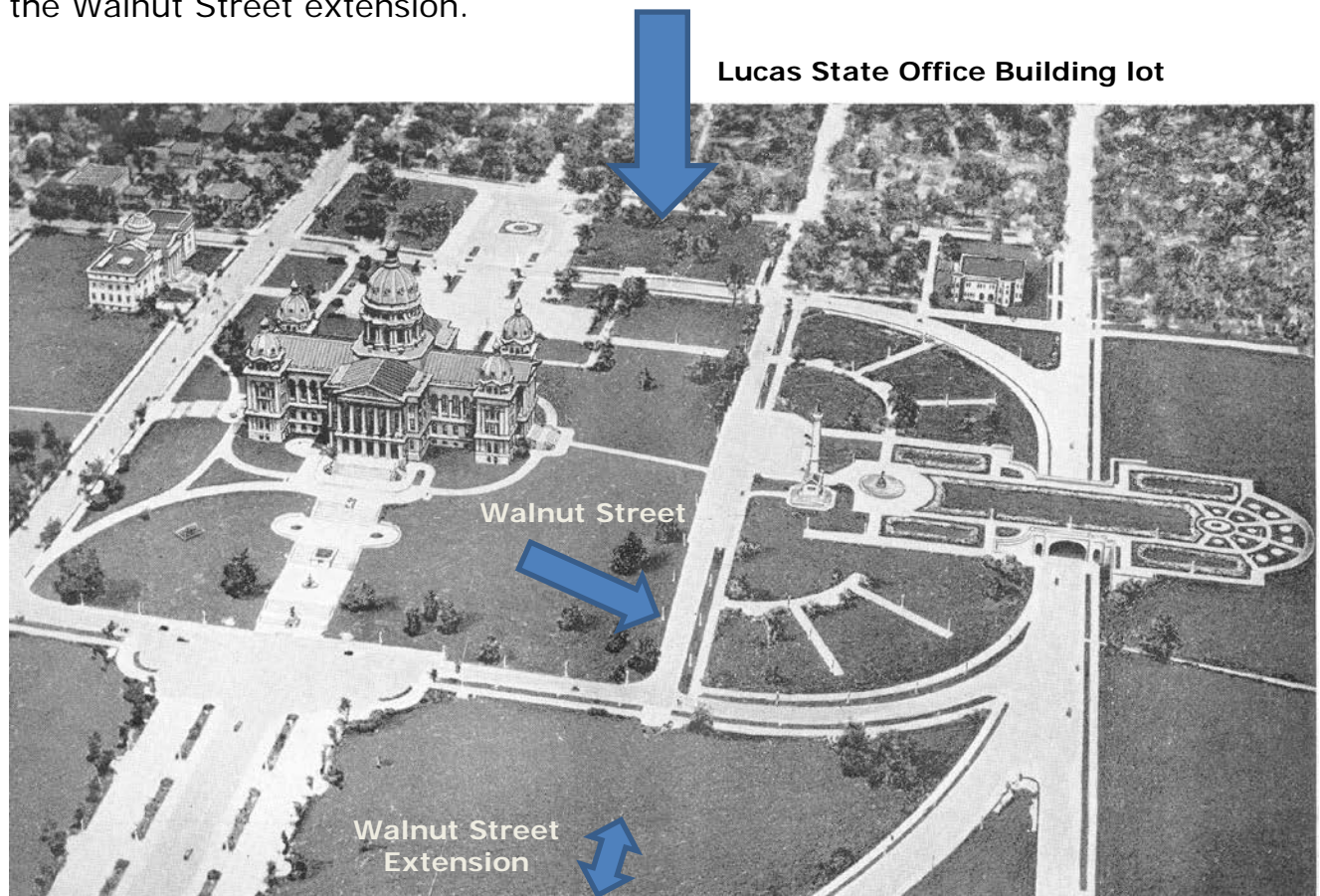
The Fifty-fifth General Assembly approved a bill to "re-open Walnut Street from Kasson to East Ninth Street."

As a result of the Capitol Grounds Extension Project, begun in 1913 and carried out over several years, the state of Iowa had purchased many acres of land surrounding the Capitol. The right-of-way for East Walnut between Kasson and East Ninth was conveyed to the state by the city of Des Moines.

This block was closed to vehicular traffic and became part of the Capitol lawn.

When the Lucas State Office Building was completed in 1952, the traffic around the Capitol increased substantially. The state felt it necessary to provide a through street from the new State Office Building to downtown Des Moines. The Legislature authorized the Executive Council to enter into contracts for the "re-opening, grading, and permanent improvement by paving, draining, and lighting" the portion of Walnut Street from Kasson to East Ninth.

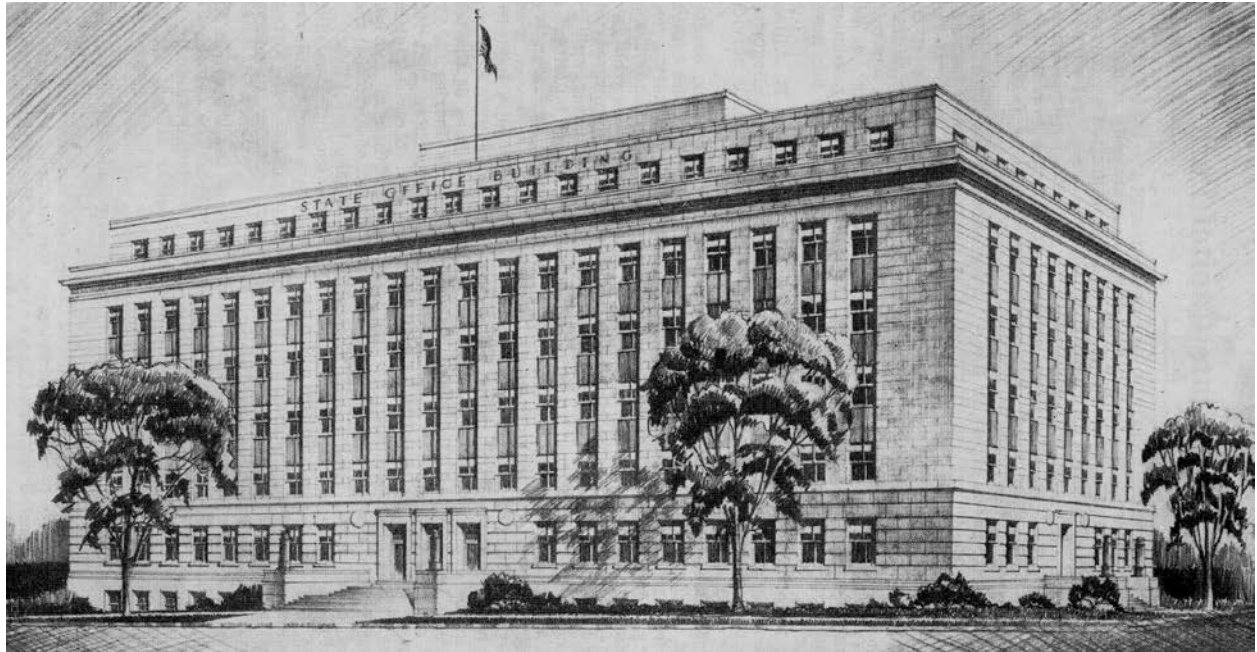
Fifteen thousand dollars was appropriated from the General Fund of Iowa for the Walnut Street extension.



The Capitol grounds, 1950

Note: The Lucas State Office Building did not get its name until 1966. From the time of its completion in 1952 until 1966, it was simply known as the "State Office Building."

It was not until the state was nearing completion on a second state office building, that it was deemed impractical for there to be two buildings named the State Office Building. Therefore, the Lucas State Office Building was named for Iowa's first territorial governor, Robert Lucas.



State Office Building, 1952
(Became Lucas State Office Building in 1966)