



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 27, 2013

THIS WEEK: 1973 Iowa Spring Snow Storm Hits the First Quarter of the Year; the U.S. Energy Crisis Hits the Last Quarter of the Year

BACKGROUND: 65TH IOWA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Sixty-fifth General Assembly was the third General Assembly to meet annually. Prior to the Sixty-third General Assembly, the Iowa Legislature met biennially.

The first year of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly convened January 8 and adjourned June 24, 1973—a 168-day session. The second year of the Sixty-fifth General Assembly convened January 14 and adjourned May 4, 1974—a 111-day session.

There were 22 Democratic members in the Senate and 44 Democratic members in the House of Representatives. There were 28 Republican members in the Senate and 56 Republican members in the House—a total of 150 legislators.

Lieutenant Governor Arthur Neu was presiding in the Senate and Andrew Varley was the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

Robert Ray was Iowa's Governor, having been inaugurated for his first term January 16, 1969, at the age of 40.

The 1970 federal census showed Iowa's population at 2,825,368.

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1973 Iowa Spring Snow Storm

The journals for both the Senate and the House of Representatives for April 10, 1973, listed similar entries. Due to inclement weather on Monday, April 9, neither the Senate nor House had convened. Both convened on Tuesday, April 10, but the Senate and House of Representatives did not have a quorum, so both adjourned until Wednesday, April 11, 1973.

Storm Data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Environmental Data Service for April 1973 summarizes the snowstorm as follows:

"Snow began in Iowa on the 8th. High winds, 40-50 mph with gusts to 65 mph, began late the 8th, continued the 9th, and diminished the 10th. Snow drifted as deep as 16 feet. Highways were closed, travel was suspended, properties were damaged or destroyed, livestock and poultry suffocated, high lines were downed, and normal farm activities were even further delayed. Livestock and turkey losses approximated 20 million dollars, of which some 11 million was in cattle and calf losses. Record all-time snowfalls were reported in several localities. Belle Plaine reported 20.3 inches of snow, Dubuque 19.2 inches, and Grundy Center 19.0 inches of snow."



Ames, Iowa, April 1973

Highways were impassable and most outside activities came to a halt during the snowstorm. Fourteen storm-related deaths were reported. Snowfall varied from 5-20 inches over all but the northwest, extreme west, and a few southeastern counties. The previous record for snowfall was 6.0 inches in 1893.

The U.S. Energy Crisis

From the journal of the Senate and the House of Representatives for January 22, 1974, there was a Joint Convention to hear the special message on energy and transportation given by Governor Robert Ray.



1974

The following are a few of the Governor's comments:

The theme of this message today revolves around the two words that have taken on more importance to our people in the last year than many ever thought possible.

They are "energy" and "transportation."

Especially energy. Seldom is the word used alone. Usually it is a phrase such as energy shortage, or energy situation, or energy dislocation, or—most familiar of all—energy crisis.

Whatever terminology you choose . . . it still describes the same fact: a complex new problem for our people and for our government.

It cannot be ignored. You will not wish it away. You will not debate it out of existence. It is real. It is here. It is serious. And it is going to be with us for some time. . .

Some argue the crisis will soon be over as we develop new energy sources. They shouldn't. Many pin their hopes on the Alaskan pipeline. Even if all goes well, construction will take five years. And proven reserves of oil in the northern slopes could only satisfy America's total petroleum appetite for 19 months.

Some look to the day when we will harness the sun and the tides, draw power from nuclear breeder reactors, or from the heat deep in the earth.

No doubt all of this may take place—years from now. These are long-range answers. . .



Iowa Governor Robert D. Ray