



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.

April 16, 2008

THIS WEEK: Proceedings at the laying of the Iowa State Capitol corner stone

BACKGROUND: Wilson, James Falconer (1828-1895) — also known as **James F. Wilson** — of Fairfield, Jefferson County, Iowa. Wilson was born in Ohio in 1828. After a brief schooling, he was apprenticed as a harness maker. In his spare time, he studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1851. He worked as a lawyer in Newark, Ohio (1851-53). Wilson, a Republican, was a delegate to the Iowa State Constitutional Convention 6th District in 1857, and a delegate to the Republican National Convention from Iowa in 1860. He worked as a lawyer in Fairfield, Iowa (1853-61). Wilson was a member of the Iowa State Legislature; U.S. Representative from Iowa 1st District, 1861-69; and U.S. Senator from Iowa, 1883-95. Under President Grant, Wilson agreed to become government director of the United Pacific Railroad. Wilson remained in Congress and served as chairman of the Committee of Mines and Mining. He died in 1895, and he is buried at Fairfield-Evergreen Cemetery, Fairfield, Iowa.

Article from: "Capitol Commissioners' Report" - 1871

Proceedings at the laying of the Corner Stone

CEREMONIES

AT THE

Laying of the Corner Stone.

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MUSIC BY MONROE CORNET BAND

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PRAYER BY REV. THOS. O. RICE, OF DES MOINES

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Introductory Remarks By James F. Wilson.

FELLOW CITIZENS- On the 18th of April, 1870, the people of Iowa, through their representatives, decided that a new Capitol should be erected, of the dimensions and character better adapted to the growth and necessities of the commonwealth. For the purpose of executing the work, Commissioners were appointed, who in due time proceeded to discharge the duties of the trust imposed upon them. Their first important duty was the adoption of a plan for the building, combining in all its details the requisite conveniences, as well as taste of architectural design, adapting it to the requirements of the age, and the legislative, executive, and judicial wants of the State.

By a prior law of the State, the beautiful and commanding eminence, overlooking the fair young city of Des Moines, and the valley of the river from which it takes its name, has been designated as the site of the edifice to be devoted to the future legislative and official uses of Iowa. About one year ago the work of excavation commenced, and on the 17th day of August, 1871, the first stone on the foundation was put in its place, on a bed of concrete masonry two feet in thickness. Today the greater portion of the foundation walls are laid, to the height of ten feet above the concrete.

We are now convened to consecrate this noble enterprise of our State with ceremonies befitting its magnitude and importance. Sixteen years ago this old Capitol, the building in which we are assembled, was erected to supply the wants of a population of less than 600,000. Since then Iowa has advanced to a population of more than a million and a quarter of souls, and it is but meet and proper that she should rear on this proud Capitol Hill an edifice which shall be the pride of her future millions, and worthy of the wise sons, and it may be, daughters, who shall enact her future laws, and control her future destinies.