



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.

January 12, 2011

THIS WEEK: Fourth Iowa General Assembly

BACKGROUND: The Fourth General Assembly convened at the old Capitol in Iowa City on December 6, 1852. The session lasted 50 days. Legislators adjourned on January 24, 1853. The Senate had 31 members and the House of Representatives had 63 members. The Whigs were in the minority in both chambers. Iowa's governor was Stephen P. Hempstead from Dubuque. Hempstead was Iowa's second governor and served one four-year term. He was also a delegate to the constitutional convention in 1844. He was 38 years old at his inaugural in 1850. The Speaker of the House was James Grant and the President of the Senate was W.E. Leffingwell.



Old Capitol in Iowa City



Governor Stephen P. Hempstead

(b. October 1, 1812, New London, Connecticut – d. February 16, 1883, Dubuque, Iowa)

FOURTH IOWA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The House Journal includes discussions on setting a hunting season for deer. Additionally, there was an act to remove the seat of government from Iowa City to "Fort Desmoines." The Superintendent of Public Instruction was instructed to report "the quantity, condition, location, and value of saline lands in the State." The sergeant-at-arms of the House was ordered to "procure a lamp and fix the same, at or near, the steps at the front door of the Capitol and have the same lighted when necessary." It was also noted that the 1850 United States census reported Iowa's population at 192,214.

The Senate Journal includes discussions concerning land grants to "aid in the construction of a railroad from Davenport via Muscatine to Council Bluffs" and a railroad from "Burlington to the Missouri River." Also introduced was an act "to encourage the destruction of wolves." Senator Johnson of Pottawattamie County, introduced a bill for an act to amend "an act to re-apportion the state and define boundaries of senatorial and representatives districts therein." Senator Preston representing Linn, Benton, and Tama counties introduced a bill to change the boundaries of Warren County. The Senator from Henry County, Archibald McKinney, called for the suppression of drinking houses and tippling shops.