



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 16, 2011

THIS WEEK: Fifty-fourth Iowa General Assembly

BACKGROUND: The Fifty-fourth Iowa General Assembly convened on January 8 and adjourned on April 17, 1951—a 100-day session. There were 158 members in the legislature. The Senate and House had a Republican majority with 41 Republican members in the Senate and 93 Republican members in the House of Representatives. There were 9 Democrats in the Senate and 15 Democratic members in the House of Representatives. William H. Nicholas was the Lieutenant Governor and presiding officer in the Senate. The Speaker of the House was William B. Lynes. William S. Beardsley was serving his second term as governor. Beardsley had his first inaugural on January 13, 1949. He was 47 years old. Governor Beardsley grew up in Birmingham, Iowa, but called New Virginia his home as an adult. Beardsley was the first governor to live in the Governor's mansion at 2900 Grand Avenue in Des Moines. The property had been purchased by the state for that purpose. Earlier governors had needed to find their own housing while in office. William Beardsley is also the only Iowa governor to die in office. He was serving his third term when he died as a result of injuries he sustained during an automobile accident. His car ran into a stopped truck on a highway north of Des Moines. He died on November 21, 1954. The 1950 United States Census showed Iowa's population had grown to 2,621,073.



Governor William S. Beardsley
(b. May 13, 1901 – d. November 21, 1954)



The Governor's mansion at 2900 Grand Avenue in Des Moines, Iowa



Governor Beardsley's body lies in state in the Iowa State Capitol Rotunda.

(From the Senate and House Journals)

The Journal of the Senate

On page 380, the presentation of the Senate Queen was announced. Dorothy Elthon, the daughter of Senator Elthon, was selected as Queen. Pat Carlson and Ruth McGhee were attendants. Dorothy was presented a corsage. A concurrent resolution was adopted authorizing the World War I Bonus Board to accept the application of George Dewey Ellis for a World War I bonus. Ellis had been unable to file prior to the expiration date through "no fault of his own." The announcement from the Governor stating he had called out the National Guard to aid in a flood emergency in Muscatine was received on April 20, 1951. House Concurrent Resolution 28 instructed the custodian to crate the chairs occupied by the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate and ship them to their homes.

The Journal of the House of Representatives

Representative Fred Schwengel offered remarks on the anniversary of President George Washington's birthday. Senate concurrent resolution 5

"That when adjournment is had on Thursday, January 11, 1951, it be to reconvene on Tuesday, January 16, 1951, at two o'clock p.m." was adopted. The House Chamber Improvement Committee offered their report calling for new lighting and improving the windows. The ventilation in both chambers was studied, and it was recommended to install a new system. The committee also asked engineers to study installing an elevator behind the House chambers. The committee recommended reconstructing and reupholstering the seats in the balconies of the House Chamber. The recommendation of the installation of an electric bill number indicator was deferred because an attractive and suitable design could not be secured. "Representative Brookings of Pottawattamie presented to the House Edward Arnold, well-known Hollywood actor, who addressed the House."



Famed motion picture actor Edward Arnold
(b. February 18, 1890 – d. April 26, 1956)