

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 23, 2012

THIS WEEK:

FRANK F. MERRIUM

BACKGROUND:

In 1896 the 26th Iowa General Assembly convened January 13 and adjourned April 11—a 90-day session. There were 150 legislators. Republicans had the majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Francis Drake was governor having been inaugurated January 16, 1896. Governor Drake was 65 years old at the time of his inaugural. The 1890 census showed Iowa's population at 1,912,297.

**Frank Finley Merriam:
Editor, Legislator, Auditor, and Governor**

Frank Finley Merriam was born December 22, 1865. Merriam was born in Hopkinton, Iowa, and spent nearly half his life in Iowa. He attended Lenox College. Two years after graduating, he was the principal at Hopkinton schools.

Three years later, Merriam became the principal at Hesper, Iowa, and his last position in the public school system was as superintendent of schools at Postville, Iowa.

As a writer, he purchased the *Hopkinton Leader*, a local newspaper, in 1893. He married Elnora Hitchcock July 10, 1889. They had one surviving son, Frank Howard Merrium.

Merrium was elected to the Iowa House of Representatives in 1896 and again in 1898. He was 30 years old at his first election and listed his occupation as editor. He served as State Auditor in Iowa from 1899 to 1903. He married Nellie E. Bronson-Day in 1901. He moved to Long Beach, California, in 1910. He was elected to the California State Assembly in 1916. He served in the California State Assembly for six terms, serving as the Speaker for two terms.

Merrium was elected to the California Senate in 1928. He was the last assembly speaker to become a state senator.

Merrium was Lieutenant Governor of California from 1932 to 1934. He assumed the office of Governor on June 2, 1934, following the death of Governor James Rolph. In November of 1934, he was elected Governor of California having run against Socialist Party member Upton Sinclair and a third-party candidate, Raymond L. Haight.

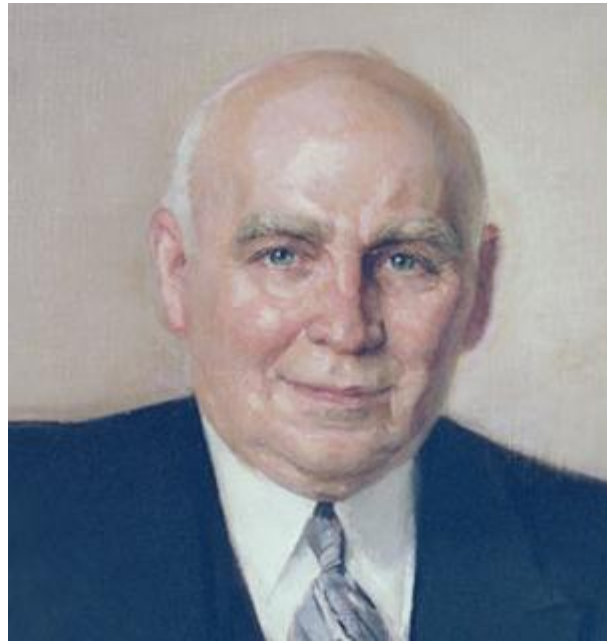
During his time as governor, Alcatraz became a federal prison, and the Golden Gate Bridge opened. Merrium married Jessie Steward Lipsey while Governor and was the first California Governor to marry while in office. Governor Merrium served one term, leaving the office in 1939.



Frank Merrium

(Iowa State Representative – 1896-1900)

(b. December 22, 1865 – d. April 25, 1955)



Frank Merriam

Frank Merriam became California Governor at age 68 and was the oldest person to become governor until Jerry Brown, at age 72, was elected in 2010.



Hopkinton, Iowa, birthplace of Frank Merriam