

# Iowa's Capitol



The First General Assembly, which met in 1846, authorized a commission to locate the permanent capital nearer the center of the state, but the place selected in Jasper county was not satisfactory, and the Fifth General Assembly in 1855 directed that the capital should be within two miles of the Raccoon forks of the Des Moines river. The present site was chosen, a temporary capitol was erected and the seat of government removed thereto in 1857.

The temporary capitol was built by Des Moines citizens and later bought by the state. It was in use more than 30 years, and was destroyed by fire. It stood near where the Iowa monument to soldiers and sailors is now.

The construction of a permanent Iowa capitol was authorized by the Twelfth General Assembly in 1868. A commission headed by the governor and with one member from each of the eight congressional districts, under an appropriation in 1870, adopted a plan based on the designs of A. H. Piquenard and John C. Cochrane, modified to reduce cost to a million and a half dollars, as directed by the legislators.

The corner stone cut from an Iowa granite boulder was laid by Gov. Samuel Merrill, Nov. 23, 1871, and was filled

with historical documents, coins and newspapers. Senator James F. Wilson presided at the elaborate ceremonies. John A. Kasson presented the silver mallet and trowel, a poem by Prof. A. S. Hardy was read by J. B. Grinnell, and Adjutant General N. B. Baker directed a great military and civic parade.

The legislature having limited the cost and use of materials, the foundation walls crumbled under a hard winter, and it was deemed advisable to take out nearly all the stone and commence over.

Under an act of the Thirteenth General Assembly, April 13, 1870, a new capitol commission was organized consisting of John G. Foote, Maurin L. Fisher, R. S. Finkbine and Peter A. Dey. Later, Cyrus Foreman took the place of Mr. Fisher, deceased, and Mr. Finkbine was made superintendent of construction, with Gen. Ed Wright, secretary. Mr. Cochrane, architect and superintendent, resigned; Mr. Piquenard died; M. E. Bell and W. F. Hackney became directing architects; Mr. Bell resigned to become supervising architect of the U. S. treasury; Mr. Hackney remained to complete the work. The governors were ex-officio members of the commission.

The defective material having been removed and a new foundation secured,

IOWA STATE TRAVELING LIBRARY

DES MOINES, IOWA 50319





the corner stone was re-laid Sept. 29, 1873, with only the name Iowa and the date 1873 on its face. Appropriations were made by 12 separate Assemblies. The capitol commission closed its work July 4, 1886, but much finishing was left to be done later. A fire in the north wing, Jan. 4, 1904, necessitated much expense for repair and redecoration by a third capitol commission consisting of Senator A. B. Funk, Charles F. Cumming and E. P. Shoentgen, making the total cost after restoration, of \$3,296,256.00.

Dedication of the capitol was in January, 1884, when the General Assembly met, the address by John A. Kasson. The supreme court room was dedicated in June, 1886, with an address by Justice Samuel F. Miller of the United States supreme court, a former Iowan.

The capitol architecture is of modified Romanesque, with stately columns, and the finest gold dome of any public building in America. Dimensions: Length, 363 feet, 8 inches; width, 246 ft., 11 in.;

north and south fronts, 175 ft.; east and west fronts, 118 ft., 8 in.; height to top of cornice, 92 ft., 8 in.; rotunda, 66 ft., 8 in.; house chamber, 74 by 91 ft., 4 in. and 47 ft., 9 in. to ceiling; senate chamber, 58 by 91 ft., 4 in., and 41 ft., 9 in. to the ceiling; to top of finial on dome is 275 feet; number of steps from sidewalk to lantern over dome, 398; height to ceiling of first story, 23 ft., 9 in.; height above sea level, 1,151 ft.; area covered in square feet, 54,850.

Stone for basement was quarried in Johnson county, Iowa; granite course above basement is of Iowa boulders; stone of main structure is from St. Genevieve and Carroll counties, Mo.; steps, columns and other parts from Anamosa, Iowa, Cleveland, Ohio, Sauk Rapids, Minn., Lemont and Joliet, Ill.; imported and domestic marble of 29 kinds used in the interior; wood used nearly all Iowa walnut, cherry, catalpa, butternut, oak.

The dome of the capitol is covered with 22 carat gold leaf; cost \$16,500.

### Decorations—Mosaics—Paintings

The House and north wing, the main corridors and rotunda were redecored after the fire of Jan. 4, 1904. The original decorations are still in the Senate.

Twelve statues, high within the rotunda, beginning north of the library door, represent History, Science, Law, Fame, Art, Industry, Peace, Commerce, Agriculture, Victory, Truth and Justice.

Eight lunettes, or half-moon-shaped paintings surrounding the rotunda are the work of Kenyon Cox, a famous American artist, who was paid \$8,000 for them. They are entitled: Hunting, Herding, Agriculture, the Forge, Commerce, Education, Science, Art. They are allegorical and indicate the progress of civilization.

Over the main stairway is the large painting "Westward," fully described elsewhere.

Above the large picture are six mosaics, designed by Frederick Dielman of New York and made in Venice of very small pieces of colored stone, permanent in color. The subjects represented are Defense, Charities, the Executive, the Legislative, the Judiciary and Education. These cost the state \$10,000 and are among the finest and largest in America.

A picture of the 168th Infantry, upon its return from France in 1919, hangs in the south corridor. Taken by W. T. Showers, the picture is 26 feet long and 6 feet high. It is one of the largest reproduction photographs in the world.

Battle flags of Iowa regiments in the Civil, Spanish-American and World War I are preserved in the rotunda of the capitol.





### Description of Painting "Westward"

The great painting entitled "Westward" is an idealized representation of the coming of the people who made Iowa. Edwin H. Blashfield, the artist, wrote of it:

"The main idea of the picture is a symbolical presentation of the Pioneers led by the spirits of Civilization and Enlightenment to the conquest by cultivation of the Great West. Considered pictorially the canvas shows a Prairie Schooner drawn by oxen across the prairie. The family ride upon the wagon or walk at its side. Behind them and seen through the growth of stalks at the right come crowding the other pioneers and later men. In the air and before the wagon are floating four female figures; one holds the shield with the arms of the State of Iowa upon it; one holds a book symbolizing Enlightenment; two others carry a basket and scatter the seeds which are symbolical of the change from wilderness to plowed fields and gardens that shall

come over the prairie. Behind the wagon and also floating in the air, two female figures hold respectively a model of a stationary steam engine and of an electric dynamo to suggest the forces which come with the later men.

"In the right hand corner of the picture melons, pumpkins, etc., among which stand a farmer and a girl, suggest that here is the fringe of cultivation and the beginning of the prairie. At the left a buffalo skull further emphasizes this suggestion."

Many competent critics have pronounced the picture one of the great American murals. The artist was paid \$10,000 for his work.

At the top of the staircase on the south wall is a painting of a basket of corn by Floyd V. Brackney. He was paid \$1,000. This picture was the center of the Iowa exhibit at the Panama-Pacific exposition at San Francisco, 1915.

### Quotations on the Walls

Around the rotunda Abraham Lincoln's—"That government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Above the grand stairway, on the south side, by Patrick Henry—"No free Government or the blessings of Liberty can be preserved to any people but by a firm adherence to Justice, Moderation, Temperance, Frugality and Virtue and by a frequent recurrence to fundamental

principles."

On the north, by G. W. Curtis—"Courageous confidence in the intelligence of the community is the sure sign of leadership and success."

Underneath, by Solon—"The ideal state—that in which an injury done to the least of its citizens is an injury done to all

Above the door of the law library appears William Pitt's famous saying, "Where Law ends Tyranny begins."

### Grounds and Monuments

The original site for the capitol was given the state and covered about four blocks. In 1913 the legislature authorized a tax to pay for additional grounds and the park around the Capitol has been enlarged to 85.4 acres (or 93¾ including streets), by the purchase of several hundred lots and residences and business houses and is conceded to be the largest and most beautiful setting for a state capitol in the world.

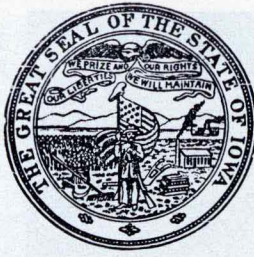
The Soldiers and Sailors Monument erected in 1889-90 is 145 feet high and cost \$150,000. It was designed by Harriet A. Ketcham of Mt. Pleasant.

The Allison Memorial, nearby, was constructed in honor of the late Senator Wm. B. Allison of Dubuque.

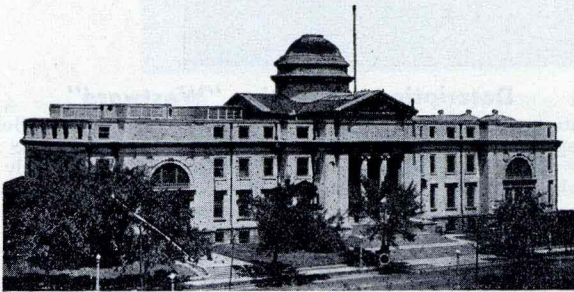
The monument west of the capitol represents "The Pioneers," cast in bronze.

Old guns located on the grounds were used in Civil and Spanish-American wars.





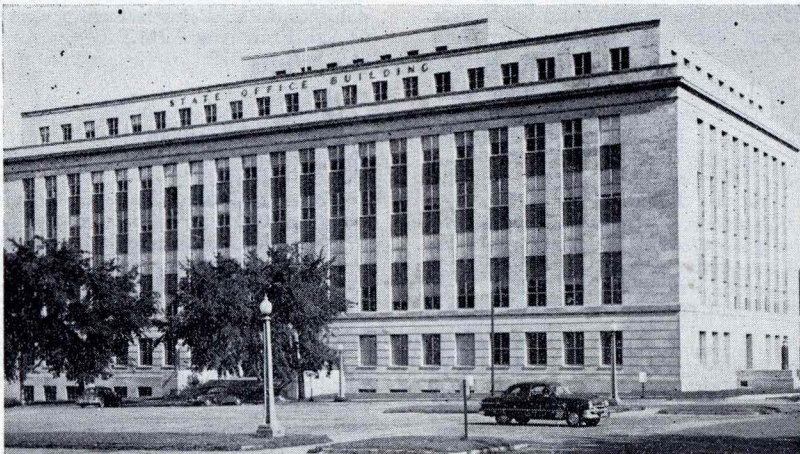
**The Great Seal of the State of Iowa**  
Adopted 1847 by the First General Assembly.



### **Historical Building and Library**

The Historical Memorial and Art Building is 260 by 110 feet in size and was begun in 1896, at first as a home for the Aldrich collection of historical matter. It is occupied by the Historical De-

partment, the State Traveling Library, the State Medical Library and offices of the Library trustees. (The State Law Library is located on the second floor, west wing, of the capitol.)



### **New State Office Building**

Occupied in September, 1951. Total cost of building and furnishings, \$4,935,892.45.  
New tunnel connects with capitol. Cost \$92,841.71.