

# The Iowa State Capitol Fire

# 1904

STATEHOUSE CATCHES FIRE! LOSS IS NEARLY HALF A MILLION

All the News  
and  
Accurately Told.

## The Register and Leader.

THE WEATHER.

Snow Tuesday, warmer; Wednesday, fair in west, snow in east portion.

PRICE TWO CENTS.

DES MOINES, IOWA, TUESDAY MORNING, JANUARY 5, 1904.—TEN PAGES

110. 554.

### IOWA STATE HOUSE ON FIRE YESTERDAY; THE LOSS WAS BETWEEN \$300,000 AND \$500,000

*Interior of the House Legislative Chamber and the Adjacent Committee Rooms Are Eaten Out by the Flames.*

*Senate Chamber, Library and the First or Main Floor Offices Were Not Reached by the Spreading Fire.*

*Legislature Will Meet Monday, but Will Have to Provide Quarters for the House to Hold Its Winter Sessions.*

*Origin of the Fire Somewhat Mysterious, but an Investigation Will be Set on Foot at Once by Executive Council.*

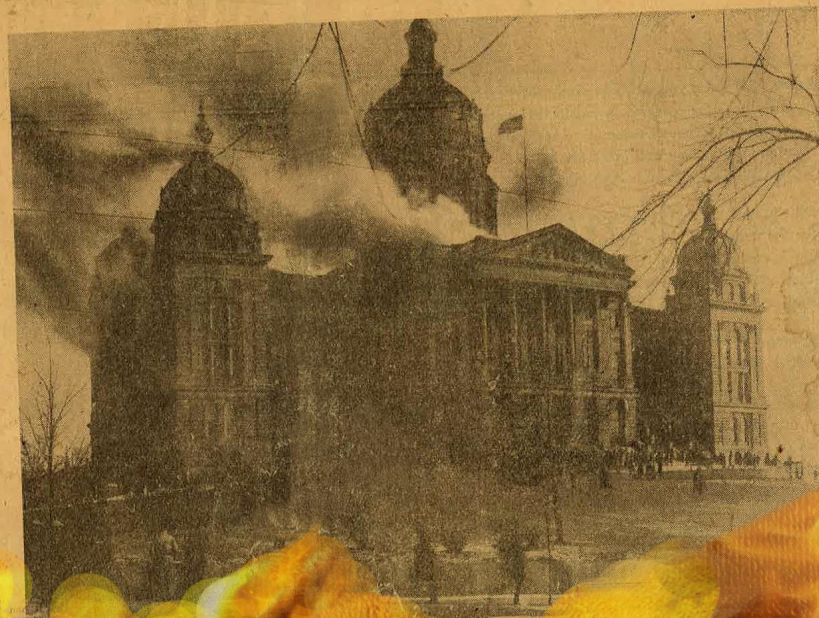
Within a week of the opening of the legislature, the beautiful state capitol yesterday furnished material for the flames. The chamber of the house of representatives, which the capitol commission had labored so hard to put in shape and render safe to look upon, is a mass of charred and smouldering ruins.

The galleries, precipitated to the floor below, fell crashing above and the expensive handiwork are all reduced to one inextricable mass, over which water poured in buckets and which was being hauled away by the fire department. The loss is estimated at between \$300,000 and \$500,000.

staircase of the building, he was met by blinding clouds of smoke. The flames quickly spread to the ceiling of the senate chamber. They forced their way about the frame work of the gallery and the combustible material of the ceiling ignited the fire.

Buckets of water were poured on the blaze, but without effect, before the arrival of the fire department. Chief Burnett soon had his entire department on hand, but the fire was a hopeless one and the loss was as insufficient.

The fire department was called out at 10:15 p.m. and the fire was not extinguished until 1:30 a.m. The fire department was called out at 10:15 p.m. and the fire was not extinguished until 1:30 a.m.



### ORDER CLOSING OF ALL HALLS

Public Meeting in Chicago  
Practically Impossible at  
Present

### OWNERS OBJECT IN VAIN

Authorities Have Determined  
That Fire Traps Shall  
Be Routed Out

CHICAGO, Jan. 4.—After long and fruitless efforts to hold a public meeting of any kind in Chicago, the city authorities have decided to close all public halls, dance halls, taverns, etc., and all similar places of public assembly until an inspection is made to show that they are complying with all provisions of the building code. As there are upwards of twenty such places in Chicago, ranging in size from the small hall to the large one, the order will affect possibly as many persons as the theater closing. The order was issued by the city commission, which is the governing body in the city. The order is not expected to be obeyed by the owners of the halls, but it is hoped that it will force them to comply with the code. The order is a result of the fire in the state capitol, which has shown that the halls are a fire trap. The order is expected to be a temporary one, but it is hoped that it will lead to a permanent improvement in the safety of the halls.

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**The Iowa State Capitol Fire**  
**January 4, 1904**



*Introduction*

# **The Iowa State Capitol Fire: 1904**



*Introduction***The Iowa State Capitol Fire: 1904**

The twenty-first century Iowa State Capitol contains state-of-the-art fire protection. Sprinklers and smoke detectors are located in every room and all public hallways are equipped with nearby hydrants. The Des Moines Fire Department is able to fight fires at nearly any height. However, on Monday morning, January 4, 1904, the circumstances were much different.

By the beginning of 1904, the Capitol Improvement Commission had been working in the Capitol for about two years. The commissioners were in charge of decorating the public areas of the building, installing the artwork in the public areas, installing a new copper roof, re-gilding the dome, replacing windows, and connecting electrical lines throughout.

Electrician H. Frazer had been working that morning in Committee Room Number Five behind the House Chamber, drilling into the walls to run electrical wires and using a candle to light his way. The investigating committee determined that Frazer had left his work area and had neglected to extinguish his candle.

The initial fire alarm sounded at approximately 10 a.m. Many citizen volunteers came to help the fire department. Capitol employees and state officials also assisted in fighting the fire, including Governor Albert Cummins. The fire was finally brought under control around 6 p.m., although some newspaper accounts at the time reported that the fire continued smoldering for several days.

Crampton Linley was the engineer working with the Capitol Improvement Commission. He was in the building at the time of the fire and was credited with saving the building. Linley crawled through attic areas to close doors separating wings of the Capitol, an action which smothered the flames and brought the fire under control. Sadly, Linley did not live long enough to be recognized for his heroism. The day after the fire, while examining the damage, Linley fell through

the ceiling of the House Chamber and died instantly from severe head injuries.

The flames had burned through the ceiling and caused much of it to collapse to the floor below, while the lower areas of the building had been damaged by smoke and water.

Elmer Garnsey was the artist hired by the Capitol Improvement Commission to decorate the public areas of the building. Therefore, he seemed the logical candidate to be given the additional responsibility of redecorating the areas damaged by the fire. Garnsey had a very different vision for the decoration, which is why the House Chamber, the old Supreme Court Room, and the old Agriculture offices directly below the House Chamber have a design that is very different from the areas of the building untouched by the fire.



*Section One*  
**Executive Council Report**

# EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REPORT

Vol. 7 Nov. 23, 1903-Jan. 15, 1910 Ex. Council Reports

January 5, 1904

Motion adopted by unanimous vote of all members of the council.

On motion it was ordered that the Ex. Council begin an investigation as to the origin of the fire in the Capitol at 2 p.m. today, Jan. 5, 1904. Council adjourned to meet at 2 p.m.

At 2 p.m. Council reconvened and proceeded to examine witnesses under oath touching their knowledge as to the origin of the fire yesterday in the Capitol. The hearing was concluded at 4 p.m. January 6, 1904, when the council ordered the entry of the following memorandum upon the records to wit. "we have made a careful investigation respecting the origin of the fire in the Capitol Bldg., Monday January 4, 1904, and have examined under oath all the persons who knew anything about the subject, so far as we can discover we believe that the fire originated in the airshaft in Committee room #5, at or near the opening into the room; and that it came from a candle left in the shaft by Mr. H. Frazer, an electrical worker. It is due to Mr. Frazer to say he claims that he removed the candle from the shaft before leaving it." The evidence was taken by short hand by Rufus Harvey to be extended if required.



*Section Two*  
**Senate and House Journals**

# JOURNAL OF THE SENATE AND HOUSE

January 12, 1904

## Condition of the State Address



**Governor Albert Cummins**

### THE LATE FIRE IN THE CAPITOL.

As you all know, a fire occurred in the Capitol on Monday, January 4, 1904, which substantially destroyed the interior finish of the hall of the House of Representatives, wrecked some of the committee rooms in the north wing, and the water used in extinguishing it, damaged to some extent the ceilings of the rooms and offices opening from the north corridor upon the main floor.

The Executive Council made an immediate investigation for the purpose of ascertaining the origin of the fire, and, after examining under oath, every person who had any knowledge of the subject, so far as it could ascertain, it arrived at the conclusion that the fire originated in an air shaft near the southeast corner of room No. 5, and that it came from a lighted candle, left in the shaft by one of the electrical workers engaged in equipping the building with electric lights.

Fortunately the disaster was not so great as at one time it was feared it would be, and a comparatively small sum will be required to repair the injury. A most careful examination of the structural iron, and walls, has been made by the most competent experts that could be employed, and it has been ascertained



that they have suffered little injury. For the temporary repairs hereafter mentioned, a few splices and bolts are all that will be necessary, and for the permanent repair the substitution of a few beams, girders and rods.

Under the informal advice of a caucus of the members of the Thirtieth General Assembly, the Executive Council empowered the Capitol Commission to go forward, clear away the debris, and put the hall of the House of Representatives in order for use during the present session. So rapidly has this work been dispatched, that it is now believed that the House of Representatives can occupy it at the close of the coming week.

As I have already reported, what is known as the providential contingent fund, put at the disposal of the Executive Council by the Twenty-ninth General Assembly, was entirely exhausted in repairing the fire losses occurring at the School for the Deaf and Dumb at Council Bluffs, the Iowa College of Agriculture and Mechanics Arts, at Ames, and the damage from a tornado at the School for the Feeble Minded, at Glenwood. We are, therefore, without any available money to defray what may be termed the fire expenses, which consist of the payment of men employed on the day of the fire for various things which it is not necessary to mention, and to pay for the temporary repair of the hall of the House of Representatives, which is now being carried on. I have not been able to secure precise information as to the outlay which will be required for these two purposes, but inasmuch as the obligations created must be discharged immediately, I recommend that an appropriation be at once made of \$8,000.00. What remains can be carried into the providential contingent fund, which undoubtedly will be created later in your session.

With respect to the permanent repair of the injury caused by the fire, I have three suggestions to make:

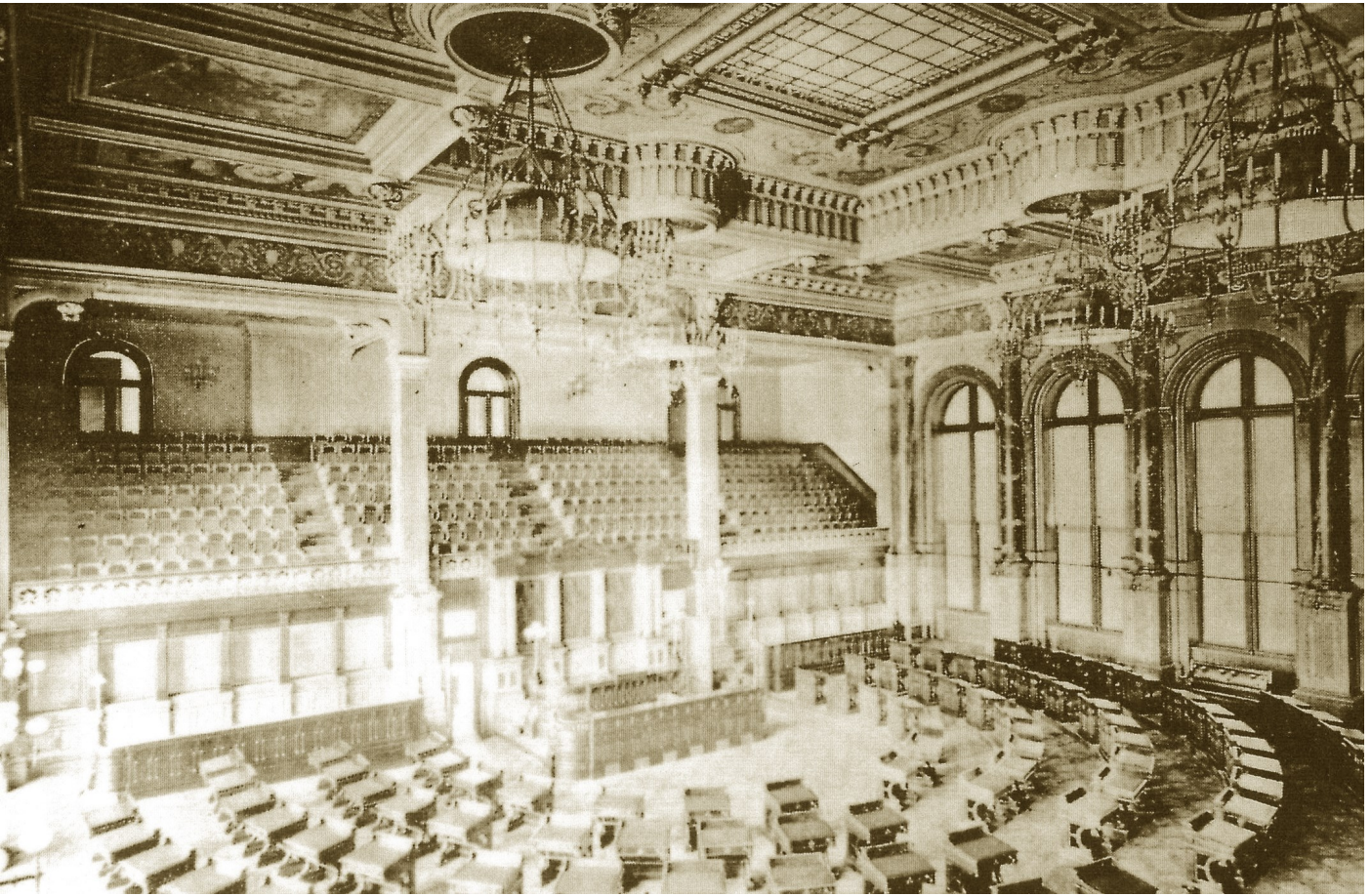
*First*—I believe that the Capitol Commission, already in working order, should be charged with the duty of repair, in connection with the completion of the plan provided for by the Twenty-ninth General Assembly.

*Second*—I believe that the material used in reconstruction should be as nearly fireproof as possible.

*Third*—I believe that an adequate water supply should be installed in the building.

*Section Three*  
**Pictures**





**Above:** The Iowa House of Representatives Chamber before the fire with original chandeliers. **Below:** The same view of the House Chamber today.



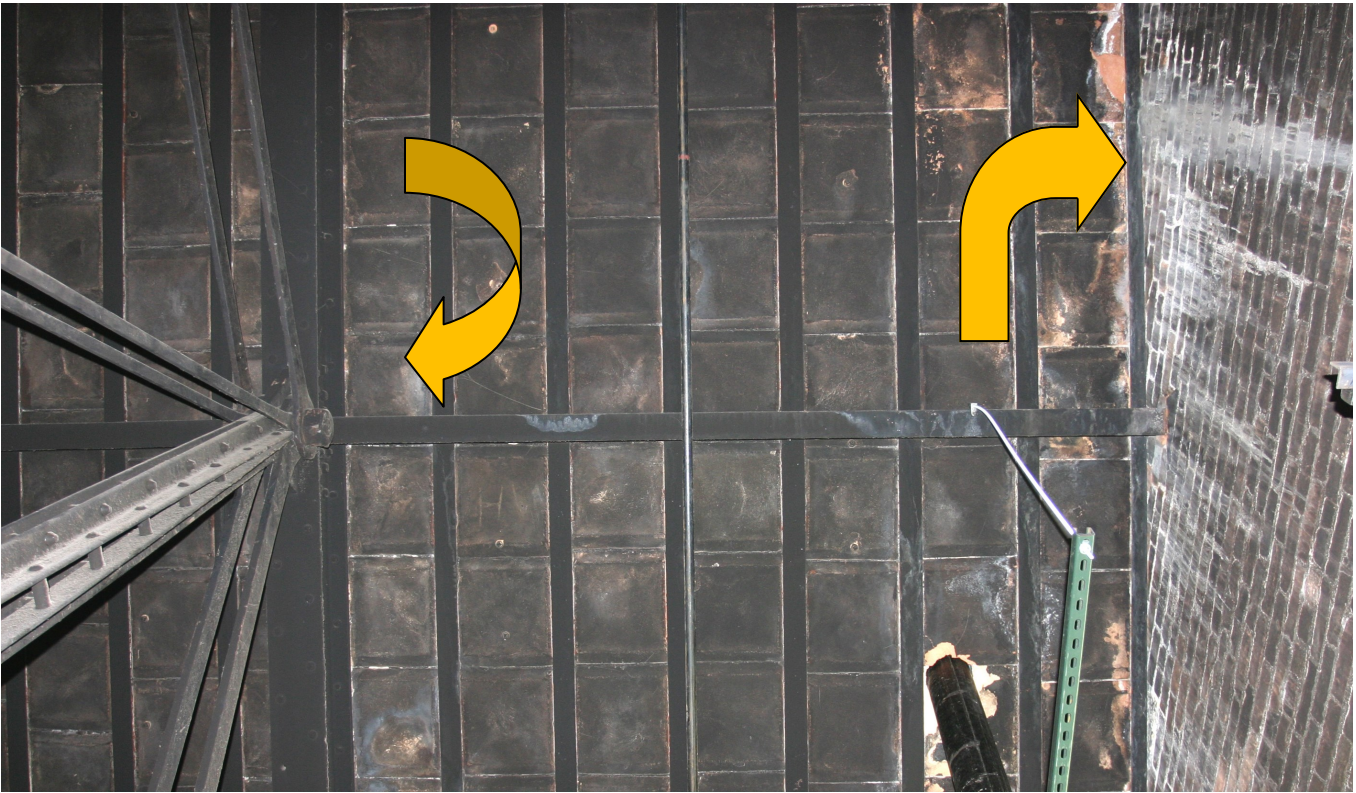




**Above:** The Iowa House of Representatives Chamber's damage after the fire.  
**Below:** The same view of the House Chamber today.







Soot and water stains remain on the walls and ceilings in the north attic more than a century after the fire.



Soot covers the north wall and ceiling of the attic above the House Chamber. Water used to fight the fire streaked areas of the brick wall.





This charred timber was found in the north attic during recent Capitol renovations. It had been hidden from view for more than a century.



Some volumes in the State Library of Iowa—Law Library sustained damage from the heat and smoke.





Side-by-side volumes in the State Library of Iowa—Law Library sustained damage from the heat.



This wall in the State Library of Iowa—Law Library still shows heat, smoke, and possibly water damage.





Lead solder was used to fuse together seams in the copper of the four smaller domes located at each corner of the Capitol. This piece of lead pooled at the base of the northwest dome during the fire and was found during recent Capitol renovations.



Burned embers and charred pieces of wood have been found in the north attic in recent years.





**Left:** During the 1904 fire, the northwest window (circled) can be seen, with smoke billowing out of the Law Library.

**Below:** The same window in the library as seen today from the inside (circled).



*Section Four*  
**Fireproof**

# FIREPROOF

Vol. 4.

February, 1904.

No. 2.

WILLIAM CLENDENIN, EDITOR.

Entered at Chicago Post Office as second class matter.

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Yearly Subscriptions \$1.00.

Single Copies 10 Cents.

; Published Monthly by

**FIREPROOF PUBLISHING COMPANY,**

F. W. CORNWALL, Mgr.

FREDRICK M. KRUGLER, Eastern Representative,  
American Tract Society Bldg., NEW YORK.

NEW YORK LIFE BLDG.,  
CHICAGO.



# FIREPROOF

February 1904

## Iowa Capitol Fire

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### Iowa Capitol Fire

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M. E. BELL, ARCHITECT, CHICAGO, ILL.

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Since my last communication to FIRE-PROOF on the practical use of hollow tile building blocks, their economical use and fireproof qualities, two notable and ever-to-be-remembered fires have occurred that will bring to the attention of the public the necessity of using fireproof material in the construction of buildings where economy and safety to life alone are factors.

In this connection I will be one of the very first to adopt any newly discovered material as a substitute for hollow tile that can be furnished as cheaply to the public and which possesses as good or better fireproof qualities, and all the illustrative drawings, explanations and lengthy specifications would never educate the public as these two fires have done, up to the present time.

The two fires to which I have reference were the Iroquois Theater and the Iowa Capitol fires, the former occurring on the afternoon of December 30, 1903, and the latter January 4, 1904.

Here were two buildings, the one finished and occupied in the fall of 1883, or

twenty-one years ago, and the other just completed and only occupied a month and both supposed to be absolutely fireproof.

The Iroquois Theater Building in Chicago was a semi-fireproof building in so far as the structural parts were concerned, and it stands to-day as a verification of this fact, and yet 600 lives were sacrificed there in a few short moments by the hottest fire, in a given space, known to this generation.

The food for this fire was the stage fixtures and a strange and unaccountable co-operation of the management, who seem to have been both ignorant and indifferent to the danger of the ever-present fire fiend. The question of the proper arrangement of the theater and its operation for the safety of its patrons are, at the present writing, in the hands of the coroner's jury, and entirely independent factors from the structural parts of the building. The sickening details of the death of 600 victims is out of place here, but may God grant that the awful loss of so many precious lives may be the means of educating the public to the



## FIREPROOF

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necessity of fighting fire with fireproof tested material, in both the buildings and their furnishings.

The Iowa Capitol Building was completed and occupied during the winter of 1883-84. The cornerstone was laid in 1871 and at that time the general plans had been completed and the estimates made involving an expenditure of approximately \$3,000,000.

As a draughtsman I had worked and as-

we did when the building was completed in 1883. At the later date steel was not in use for structural work, and wrought-iron beams, cast-iron columns and brick arches were the best-known fireproof materials.

Before the building was ready for the roof work the subject of terra cotta tile was brought to the attention of the capitol commissioners and the architects, and after the most careful consideration



IOWA STATE CAPITOL BUILDING ON FIRE.

sisted in the preparation of these plans and specifications for Messrs. Cochrane & Piquenard, who were the original architects, and after the building was basement story high and upon the death of Mr. Piquenard, I, in partnership with Mr. Wm. F. Hockney of Des Moines, Ia., was appointed by the capitol commissioners the architect to complete the building.

It will be appreciated that thirty-three years ago we did not know as much about fireproof construction as we do now, or as

was adopted for the roof sheathing, the blocks being about sixteen inches square, supported on T-irons, and to which the slate were nailed with galvanized iron nails.

While all the main interior walls were constructed of brick, in the upper stories certain partitions and false ceilings and ornamental girders for architectural effect were constructed with wooden furring, studding and wooden lath, and plastered with gypsum plaster and ground coke cin-

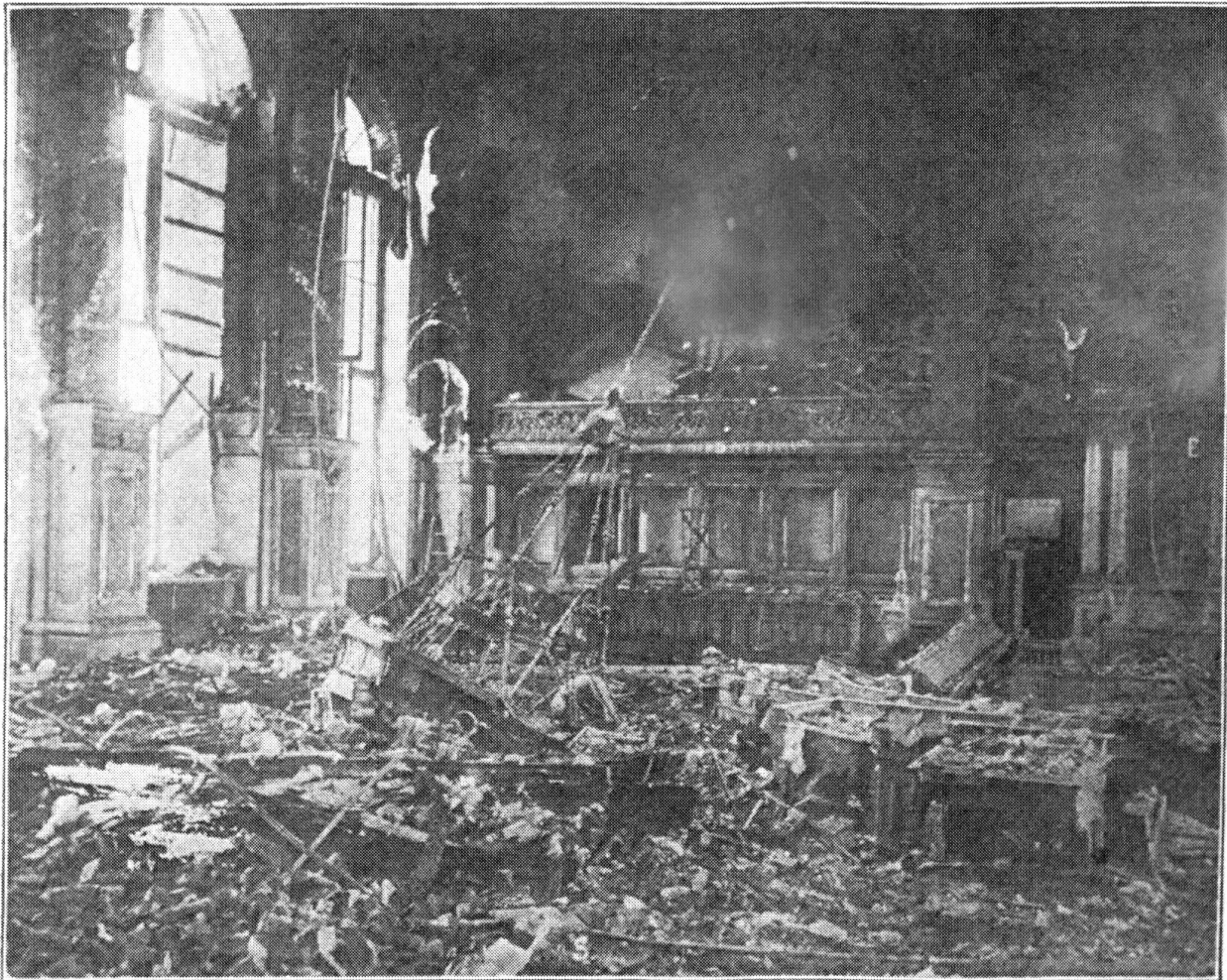
## FIREPROOF

ders. Decorative columns of scagliola were executed upon a framework of wood and plaster.

The floors and ceilings proper were all of wrought iron beams, girders and brick arches, and where level or not raised, as in the house and senate chambers, the brick arches were concreted level with wooden

the ordinary danger of fire, and this being the case, when I read in the newspapers that a fire had started in the building and that the building was doomed to destruction, I made up my mind to visit the ruins as soon as possible.

Upon my arrival at the building I was surprised to see that the exterior showed



**INTERIOR VIEW IOWA STATE CAPITOL BUILDING AFTER THE FIRE. STRUCTURAL PARTS INTACT.**

strips to receive the wooden floors, the same as is now in use.

All the work, therefore, which is generally understood as false work, was constructed with wood and plaster, while the ventilating and fresh air ducts were framed up and plastered with the same material and connected with the outlets by galvanized iron ducts. There were no parts of this false work which was left exposed to

no evidences of the fire at all, except that there were some wagons hauling debris from wooden chutes on the north side of the building. Upon going inside, however, and climbing the marble stairs to the level of the floor of the hall of representatives, I saw a most complete wreck of decorative false work as was ever seen in one room.

A view of this wreck is herewith submitted, looking toward the speaker's desk

## FIREPROOF

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from the opposite angle of the room.

The first question to be solved was as to how the fire started.

It appeared that certain electricians had been employed by the state officers to install their wires, and it was during the progress of this work that the fire started, and when discovered was located in the angle of a small room across the hall in the rear of the hall of representatives and adjoining the speaker's room. The electrician had cut an opening approximately 20 inches by two feet and six inches above the wainscoting of the room, in which to insert his cut-off box and insert his wires.

The space into which he cut was not an air duct at all, but the space between an air duct lined with galvanized iron and the corridor partition. The officers of the state examined witnesses under oath the day after the fire and decided that the electrician had used a lighted candle in the work of installing his wires and left it burning to go to other parts of the building and that is what started the fire.

The space into which the electrician cut his opening terminated at the floor where the brick arches prevented downward communication, but unfortunately it connected at the top with the false ceiling work over the galleries and main representative hall, which, with the air supplied by the fatal opening, allowed the flames to continue their work until it died a natural death, without water to put it out.

The extent of this fire can be imagined by the picture herewith submitted, taken while the fire was in progress, from the exterior, and by the interior view showing the condition of the hall of representatives after the fire had exhausted its efforts at destruction.

I have said that the fire died a natural death. This is literally true, as the fire department of the city could not get water higher than the floor of the hall of representatives. At least, this was what was told me by those who witnessed the efforts of the fire department. The fire evidently

was arrested by the closing of the doors leading to the air ducts, under the stylobate of the dome, thus confining the flames to the north wing of the building. When I first arrived at the building workmen were removing the brick arches between the ceiling beams, and an examination of the iron work, as a result of the fire, was in progress.

An engineer employed by the state in making this examination, while walking upon one of the ceiling beams, which gave way under his weight, was killed, which was the only fatality.

In all this supposed fireproof work the bottom of the structural iron was left exposed and to just what extent its durability had been impaired by the fire could not be determined in the short examination I was able to make. The engineer above mentioned was Mr. C. L. Linley of Chicago, who is credited with an act of great bravery in calling for volunteers to assist him in closing the two doors in the main fire wall at the south side of the hall of representatives.

He headed a human chain through the blinding smoke to these doors and closed them, which evidently prevented the spread of the fire to the other parts of the building.

Previous to the closing of these doors the smoke had penetrated through and into the attic over the east and west wings and into the dome, where it was seen escaping through the lantern or cupola. The galvanized iron ducts ventilated through the cupolas of the northwest and northeast pavilion domes. In that, at the northwest angle of the building the fire had been so intense as to demolish entirely the galvanized iron ducts and entirely destroy all the wooden false work and warp the iron work to a certain extent, while it left the vertical duct intact its entire height to the outside air.

As is always the case, considerable damage was caused by smoke and water, and I should say it would not cost to exceed \$125,000 to restore the building as it was



## FIREPROOF

before the fire, and certainly no fire would have occurred had not the opening been cut in this vacant space and the wood set fire to by means of a tallow candle.

No false work would be tolerated at the present day constructed of wood and lath and plaster in such a building.

If those partitions had been constructed of hollow tile building blocks, that electrician might have cut his opening and let his candle burn out, and that's all there would have been of it. If the other false work had been constructed with steel forms, hollow tile arches, wire lath and plaster, no fire would have occurred in and under the main trusses, and if all the iron had been protected with tested tile covering no damage, even with the fire which did occur, could have happened to the iron work.

And now the remedy:

No one can possibly foresee what fu-

ture electrician or plumber or some other mechanic, with his lighted candle or firepot, will cut holes into the false spaces yet remaining in this building and set fire to the wooden false work now in place. The running of electric wires is a great source of danger, and as yet the system of perfect insulation has not been obtained, so that the only safety is to remove completely all combustible material and replace it with the latest known fireproof work, and the best is always the cheapest. All wooden partitions and ceiling joists should be replaced with tested hollow tile. The raised floors of the house and senate should be removed and replaced with light steel beams and tile fireproof floors with fireproof monolith floors in the place of any wooden floors. These radical changes are essential to the safety of the building in the future, and the state of Iowa should at once see to it that they are made as quickly as possible.

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## *Section Five*

# **1904 Iowa Newspaper Articles**

***NOTE: Original newspaper articles written about the 1904 fire  
often included uncorroborated and erroneous information.***

Vol. I.  1904  ATLANTIC IOWA.	<h1 style="margin: 0;">The Daily Democrat.</h1> <p style="margin: 0;">UP-TO-DATE, FEARLESS, PROGRESSIVE AND INDEPENDENT.</p>	<b>SUBSCRIPTION RATES.</b> BY CARRIER To Atlantic, per month.....50c BY MAIL If paid in advance, Per year.....\$5.00 If not paid in advance, Per month.....\$5c Address all communications to— The Democrat Publishing Co., Old Fellows Bldg. Phone 18
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Monday, January 4, 1904

## State Capitol Is Burning

### Bad Blaze in State Capitol Building at Des Moines

Des Moines, Jan. 4. — (Special.) — A blaze which had its origin in a defective wire was discovered in the State Capitol building at 11 o'clock this morning. The fire companies of the city sought in vain to prevent a spread of the flames and at 12 o'clock the fire was gaining headway. Aid was secured from other towns and renewed vigor applied to combating the fire fiend, but at 2 o'clock the flames were still the master. The building was constructed 20 years ago and cost \$3,000,000.

Des Moines, Jan. 4. — (Special.) — The fire was reported under control at 3 o'clock.

Gov. Cummins, with rubber boots and coat headed a band of volunteers at risk of their lives to save the books from the state library. The flames were kept from that section of the building and many of the books were saved.

Janitor Alberts, who was overcome by smoke and heat, is reported recovering.

# DAILY IOWA STATE PRESS.

IOWA CITY, IOWA.

Monday, January 4, 1904

## IOWA'S MAGNIFICENT CAPITOL FALLS A PREY TO FLAMES

**FIRE DISCOVERED IN ATTIC OF NORTH WING  
SHORTLY BEFORE NOON TODAY**

**AT TWO O'CLOCK THE NORTH HALF OF THE BUILD-  
ING IS DESTROYED . . . LOSS PROMISES TO  
INVOLVE ENTIRE BUILDING  
WORTH \$3,000,000**

**AT THREE O'CLOCK THE STRUCTURE  
IS AN ENTIRE WRECK**

**STATE CAPITOL BURNING.**

**Iowa's Magnificent Official Home Has  
Fallen an Early Prey to Flames.**

Des Moines, Jan. 4. — The Iowa State Capitol building costing over \$3,000,000 is burning and the flames are roaring.

The fire was discovered shortly before noon in an attic, and is due to crossed electric wires.

At 1:30 it is reported that the entire north half of the building is practically destroyed, and the loss is estimated at \$2,000,000.

There is believed to be very slender hope of saving the remainder of the building. All the fire companies of the city are on the ground, but owing to the great height of the building, and the fire being under the metal roof, as well as the difficulty of forcing water to all the fire plugs at a single point so far from the works, the fire can not be well fought.

The building has been for some months in the hands of the commission making repairs and improvements and is filled with a large amount of scaffolding and inflammable material. It was supposed to be fire-proof.

Work has been pushed rapidly in order to have the repairs completed in readiness for the opening of the legislature on Monday next, Jan. 11<sup>th</sup>.

Des Moines, Jan. 4. — (Special to The Press.) — About 11 o'clock this morning fire at state capitol broke out.

At one time it was thought to be under control, but at two o'clock this p.m., it appears the building is doomed.



The fire having spread to the south wing, the house and senate chambers are in ruins.

Governor Cummins will probably call the legislature to meet next Monday in the auditorium.

Shortly after 2 p.m. the ceilings of the house and senate chambers fell.

The fire is still raging.

Seven hundred thousand books are being removed from the state library.

Governor Cummins and other state officials are helping direct the work of the firemen.

The state house furnishings, costing many thousands of dollars, are water soaked.

## **THE NEWS.**

Des Moines, Ia. Jan. 4. – At 2 o'clock this afternoon the State Capitol is doomed, the fire having spread to the south wing. The house and senate chambers are in ruins.

Governor Cummins will probably call the legislature to meet next Monday in the auditorium.

The fire is still raging.

Several hundred thousand books are being moved from the library and Governor Cummins is helping in the work.

The state house furnishings costing several hundred thousand dollars are water soaked.

The loss is estimated at over a million.

The fire is believed to have been started by an electric wire in the upper floors of the north wing where the house chamber is located. They claimed there was no waste paper about the wiring.

Evening



Gazette.

VOLUME 21--NO.

CEDAR RAPIDS IOWA.

JANUARY 1904.

PRICE FIVE CENTS.

Monday, January 4, 1904

## MAGNIFICENT IOWA STATE CAPITOL BUILDING RUINED BY FIRE CAUSED BY ELECTRIC LIGHT WIRE

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FLAMES STARTED IN CUPOLA OF THE NORTH WING AT 11 O'CLOCK THIS  
MORNING.

---

Damage Quickly Amounts to Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars – Des Moines Fire Department Helpless in Fight Against Destroying Element.

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Splendidly Furnished Legislative Halls Completely Guttled – Building was Built at a Cost of Three Million Dollars and was the Pride of the State.

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Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 4 – Bulletin – The state capital building, costing \$3,000,000, caught fire from an electric wire at 11 o'clock this morning and is now believed to be doomed.

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Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 4 – Bulletin – Fire broke out in the attic of Iowa's \$3,000,000 capitol building today, threatening the destruction of the entire structure. Eleven companies of firemen are fighting the flames.

---

Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 4 – The Iowa Capitol building was practically destroyed by fire of unknown origin that started in the cupola of the north wing at 11 o'clock this morning.

Within the first half hour of the fire it was estimated that damage aggregating a quarter of a million dollars had been done, and the flames were then gaining rapid headway, despite the efforts of the entire Des Moines fire department and all the volunteers for whom duty could be found.

The heavy stone walls of the north wing are still standing, but the floors are beginning to fall in.

It will be impossible for the legislature to convene in the building, as both legislative halls are destroyed.

At 12:30 it looks as though the magnificent building would be an utter wreck.

The spread of the flames was so rapid that it was impossible to save anything in the north wing of the building.

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### **NOT YET UNDER CONTROL.**

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Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 4 – 1:30 p.m. – Fire starting from an electric wire in the northwest attic of the state house today at 11 o'clock did nearly \$250,000 damages and indefinitely postponed the opening of the Twenty-ninth general assembly.

It is feared the entire building will be destroyed.

The flames are not yet under control, and entire structure, costing \$3,000,000, may yet be ruined.

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Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 4 – The fire, which started from an electric wire in the Northwest attic, is not yet under control, and the building is doomed. The ceiling of the house of representatives has fallen in and the flames are spreading to the senate chamber. Already a quarter of a million dollars damage has been done, and the Twenty-ninth general assembly is indefinitely postponed.

Eleven fire companies fought in vain to prevent the spread of the flames, but owing to the altitude the pressure was insufficient. The firemen had to abandon the upper floor. The officials are endeavoring to save their effects.

### **Entire Building Doomed.**

At 2:30 State Architect Liebbe gave it as his opinion that the entire building is doomed, in so far as it will be habitable after the flames are under control.

At this hour the fire had not reached the first floor, but the ceiling of the house of representatives had fallen in and the senate chamber is burning.

### **Library Saved.**

The contents of the library and museum have been removed and will be saved.

The contents of the executive offices, including the thousands of dollars worth of matchless paintings, will also be saved.

### **Committee Rooms Burned.**

The committee rooms have been completely destroyed by the flames.

The woodwork of the upper portion of the building is all afire, and the flames are spreading under the floors and ceilings.

### **No Water Pressure.**

The pressure on the city mains is not sufficient to force the water to the upper portion of the building, which is situated on the highest point in the city.

### **Walls Are Intact.**

The stone and steel walls will probably stand practically intact, but the structure will be gutted. It is conceded that the progress of the flames cannot be stayed, and that the entire building will be involved from basement to dome.



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### DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING.

Ex-Governor Benjamin F. Gue in his recent book, the *History of Iowa*, gives the following description of the state capitol building: It is 365 feet in length, 247 feet in width, with a central dome rising to a height of 275 feet. At the time of completion it was surpassed only by the capitol of the state of New York at Albany. The building was dedicated in January, 1884, with imposing ceremonies at which Hon. John A. Kasson delivered the principal address. It was due to his untiring efforts in past years that the general assembly was induced to adopt the general plan and make appropriations for the erection of a state house commensurate with the rank and growing wealth of Iowa.

At the biennial meeting of the Pioneer Law Makers' association in 1896, Mr. Kasson gave an interesting history of the legislation leading to the erection of the building. He says:

"From this time onward the three active commissioners manifested the greatest care and most wise discretion in every detail of the work. Never was a corrupt or misspent dollar charged to their account. The prime principle of honesty in the expenditure of the public money, which requires a dollar's worth for every dollar spent, was their constant guide. Thanks to their unusual fidelity to this obligation and to their wise tact in procedure, the senators and representatives trusted them session after session with amounts largely in excess of the original estimates until the cost of the finished structure has amounted to \$2,871,682.05. Instead of grumbling and dissatisfaction on the part of the people over the cost, there was universal pride in the noble building. Every farmer and mechanic, every merchant and patriotic citizen of Iowa, as he views the grandeur of its proportions, the massive, time-defying walls, the splendid legislative chambers, the beautiful library, the fire-proof vaults, the large and convenient executive offices, the ample committee rooms, and its general adaption to the wants of an intelligent and advancing state, feels and expresses satisfaction over this home of his state government. It is his constant boast that there is not a dishonest dollar from the base course to the crown of the dome. The names of John G. Foote, Peter A. Dey and Robert S. Finkbine should long be remembered among us as names of men who executed their duties faithfully and well, and who were above the sordid temptation to make private profit out of a public trust, under which so many men elsewhere have fallen."

# Waterloo Daily Courier.

Monday, January 4, 1904

## THE CAPITOL IN FLAMES

**Iowa's Magnificent Structure  
Damaged to the Extent of a  
Quarter Million.**

Des Moines, Jan. 4. – (Special) – Fire originating from an electric wire in the northwest attic of the state house today at 11 o'clock did nearly \$250,000 damage and indefinitely postponed the opening of the twenty-ninth general assembly. It was feared for a time that the entire building would be destroyed. The flames are not yet under control and the entire structure, costing over \$3,000,000 may yet be ruined.

[By Associated Press.]

### **ORIGINATED IN ATTIC.**

Des Moines, Jan. 4. – Fire broke out in the attic of Iowa's three million dollar capitol building at 10 o'clock this morning and threatened the destruction of the entire structure. Eleven companies of firemen were fighting the flames.

### **NO HOPE OF STRUCTURE.**

At 2 o'clock this afternoon the fire which started from an electric wire in the northwest attic was not yet under control and the building seems doomed. The ceiling of the house of representatives fell in and the flames are spreading to the senate chamber. Already a quarter of a million dollars damage has been done and the twenty-ninth general assembly will be indefinitely postponed. Eleven fire companies fought in vain to prevent the spread of the flames but owing to the altitude and pressure being insufficient the firemen had to abandon the upper floor. Officials are endeavoring to save their effects.

Evening



Gazette.

VOLUME 21--NO.

CEDAR RAPIDS IOWA.

JANUARY 1904.

PRICE FIVE CENTS.

Tuesday, January 5, 1904

# LEGISLATURE WILL CONVENE

## NO POSTPONEMENT BECAUSE OF CAPITOL FIRE.

**Damage to Great Structure is at  
Least Half a Million—Some  
Details of the Fire.**

State house cost . . . . . \$3,000,000  
Loss will reach . . . . . \$500,000  
Insurance . . . . . None

Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 5 — The executive council of the state, consisting of Gov. Cummins, Secretary of State Martin, State Auditor Carroll, and State Treasurer Gilbertson, held a brief session last evening and announced the convening of the legislature would not be postponed. It will meet one week from today and arrangements will be made so that the sessions can be held.

The plan is to have the house sessions in the senate chamber, the senate sessions in the room of the supreme court, and the supreme court will either adjourn or hold its sessions in one of the committee rooms.

The origin of the fire is a mystery, and Gov. Cummins will order an immediate investigation.

The state capitol commission appointed for this purpose had just completed the restoration and repairs of the building at a cost of \$125,000, most of which was expended in the chamber which is ruined. The building was supposed to be fire-proof, but the use of false ceilings on the house furnished excellent material for the flames.

Governor Cummins says that the House chamber can not possibly be repaired this winter. Estimates of the loss vary. Governor Cummins placed it at \$300,000, but a majority of estimates place the loss at \$500,000 to \$700,000.

The building, like the remainder of the state buildings and institutions, was not insured. It has been the policy of the Iowa legislators to refuse to make appropriations for insurance on state buildings, claiming it is cheaper for the state to carry its risks than to pay premiums.

At the last meeting of the Iowa legislature the question of insuring the state buildings was brought up and referred to a committee. Its members examined the records of the fires in the state buildings and reported that the premiums on insurance for the period of statehood would slightly exceed the total loss during that time. In consequence the legislature did not make an appropriation for insurance.



During the last two years Iowa has suffered heavy losses on the State university library at Iowa City, the school for the deaf and dumb at Council Bluffs, the hospital for the insane at Glenwood, the medical building at the State university, and the main building of the Agricultural college at Ames.

### **The Battle With the Flames.**

At 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon the fire was under control. For four hours the entire fire department of Des Moines had been making a futile endeavor to check the progress of the flames that had started from a tiny spark in the northwest corner of the House chamber and rapidly spread throughout the third floor and garret.

At 2:30 o'clock Governor Cummins, upon advice of the chief of the fire department, issued an appeal for aid from outside towns. The fire department of Stuart was the first to promise to send assistance. Chief Burnett of the local fire department had stated that his force was utterly incapable of waging a successful fight against the flames and that the long struggle of his men seemed hopeless.

A few minutes later Governor Cummins appeared on the lawn at the state house and called for volunteers to assist in rescuing the library, which seemed doomed. Twoscore of workmen immediately responded and the work of lowering the books from the windows on improvised rope elevators proceeded rapidly.

About this time the unconscious figure of F. J. Elbert, one of the workmen employed in the building, was borne to an ambulance and removed to his home. He had been overcome by smoke.

Not a particle of furniture or other contents of the offices in the north wing of the building had not been damaged by water by this time. From the garret to the basement was one great sea of water and the damage from this source was as great as that from fire.

A great volume of smoke was pouring from every portion of the immense roof and bright tongues of flame darted in and out through the openings. The interior of the representatives' chamber and of the north and south domes was a mass of flame and no fireman was so foolhardy that he dare trust his life about the second floor of the north wing.

The fire spread rapidly, quickly forcing the firemen back from the gallery of the House chamber in which they were working. After fifteen minutes' heroic endeavor in this section of the building, there was an ominous cracking in the ceiling and the terrible cry was at once heard from a score of throats:

"Run for your lives!"

Spectators and firemen sprang from the room into the rotunda of the second floor and they were scarcely too soon, for within five minutes a great section of the gallery collapsed with a deafening crash.

Presently there was another and more terrible rumble that increased to a roar as the entire ceiling gave way and the firemen were compelled to spring back from the entrance.

Then for the first time the true seriousness of the fire was realized. Embers flew in every direction. Great tongues of flame shot out and the flying sections of wood fairly hissed as they darted past the faces of firemen gathered at the entrance of the room. Several were slightly injured, but no one minded it, so engrossed were they with the terrible spectacle.

### **Old Soldiers Guard Flags.**

One of the pathetic features of the fire was the great interest manifested by the old soldiers who had gathered about the cabinets which contained the battle-scarred flags that were borne by Iowa regiments through the civil war. The veterans were determined that the moment it became apparent that the flags were in danger they would remove them to a place of safety. When the police attempted to clear the building of spectators, he approached the little group of soldiers and ordered them to leave.

"Not much," answered one. "We stood by those flags throughout the civil war and we're not going to desert them now when they are threatened by a different kind of fire and smoke."

"They're old soldiers. Let them remain," interrupted Dr. George A. Newman, assistant adjutant general, and the policemen readily acquiesced.

### **Origin of the Fire.**

The best account of the origin of the fire is afforded by Samuel Addington, a painter, who is in charge of a portion of the men employed at the state house.

"I went into room 5, which is occupied by the chief clerk during the session of the house, and found it all ablaze. It is my impression that the fire was started by a candle in the hands of an electrician who is said to have been employed in that portion of the building at the time. In fact, I saw such a man when I appeared on the scene, but I didn't know him and do not know what became of him."

At 4 o'clock the fire was still burning furiously in the house chamber, but was under control in other parts of the building. The senate had been dismantled by workmen in anticipation that it would suffer from the flames, but the stuff that had been removed can easily be replaced by the time the legislature convenes and it will simply be necessary to provide a meeting place for the house. Repairs of the house will inevitably consume many weeks and involve much expense.

City Electrician Hupp stated after an examination of the premises that the fire did not start from a live electric wire. Of that he was certain. There was only one live wire in the state house and that was in the basement. From the basement are distributed six wires, but in not one of them, stated Mr. Hupp, was the power for light turned on.

## **SUPERVISING ENGINEER OF THE CAPITOL KILLED**

### **C. L. Linley Meets Death While Inspecting Ruin Wrought by Yesterday's Fire.**

Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 5 – C. L. Linley of Chicago, supervising engineer for the state capitol commission, who has been in personal charge of the placing of the new equipment in the capitol, was instantly killed this morning by falling from the roof to the floor of the house chamber. He was inspecting the burned place, and fell through a weak spot. He was precipitated sixty-five feet to the floor and was dead when found.

# **SEMI-WEEKLY IOWA STATE REPORTER.**

Tuesday, January 5, 1904

## **BIG DES MOINES FIRE**

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**Capitol Building Saved Only by Most Difficult  
Work This Afternoon.**

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**LOSS WILL REACH \$1,000,000**

**Meeting of General Assembly is Postponed  
Indefinitely on Account of Fire.**

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**Fire Started in Attic and Spread With Wonderful Rapidity  
—Thirteen Fire Companies Battle With the Flames  
Which are Suppressed With Great Difficulty—House  
Chambers are Badly Wrecked—Water Ruins Furniture**

Des Moines, Jan. 4. — Fire broke out in the attic of Iowa's three million dollar capitol building at 10:00 o'clock today, and threatened destruction to the entire structure. Eleven companies of firemen are fighting the flames.

Des Moines, Jan. 4. — Special to Reporter. — At 3:15 o'clock this afternoon the fire which had been raging in the state capitol building was practically extinguished. Firemen are still on duty at this hour and are seeking to extinguish the flames completely, but the blaze is entirely under control and there is no fear of its spreading.

The total loss will undoubtedly reach \$1,000,000.

The fire burned almost altogether in the north wing of the building. In this section of the structure is the house of representatives' chamber. Directly across the hall from this chamber, passing through a wide rotunda, is the senate chamber. The fire was fortunately confined to the house chamber and although this is practically ruined the loss is much less than had the flames been allowed to reach the apartments devoted to the senate.

The fire in the northwest wing started from an electric wire and for a time the entire building looked doomed to destruction. The magnificent ceiling in the house of representatives was totally destroyed and furniture and carpets were reduced to a useless mass of debris. Eleven fire companies fought like mad to prevent the spreading of the fire to the senate chambers.



### **Books and Effects Removed.**

Many of the officers in the building immediately began to remove their books, etc., upon the breaking out of the fire. Everywhere was the scene of wildest excitement, although the firemen were held in good control by the chief, and under perfect direction. Valuable belongings which would have certainly been destroyed by the flames were saved, but the loss will be enormous. The fire spread very quickly after discovered, and it was not until the enormity of the blaze was discovered that additional fire companies were hurriedly summoned to the scene.

### **Governor Makes Statement.**

The meeting of the twenty-ninth general assembly has been indefinitely postponed. Governor Cummins to a Daily Reporter representative, stated the house would convene and immediately adjourn to other quarters until the damage could be repaired. Mammoth crowds are assembled outside the burning building and the progress of the firemen is being watched with intense interest.

The property loss in this afternoon's fire will be larger than any previous blaze in Des Moines for years. The interior finishings of the building were very costly and the recent improvements made in the structure increased its value many thousands of dollars.

All the News  
and  
Accurately Told.

# The Register and Leader.

THE WEATHER.  
Snow Tuesday, warmer; Wednesday, fair in west, snow in east portion.

NO. 554.

DES MOINES, IOWA, TUESDAY MORNING, JANUARY 5, 1904.—TEN PAGES

PRICE TWO CENTS.

## IOWA STATE HOUSE ON FIRE YESTERDAY; THE LOSS WAS BETWEEN \$300,000 AND \$500,000

*Interior of the House Legislative Chamber and the Adjacent Committee Rooms Are Eaten Out by the Flames.*

*Senate Chamber, Library and the First or Main Floor Offices Were Not Reached by the Spreading Fire.*

*Legislature Will Meet Monday, but Will Have to Provide Quarters for the House to Hold Its Winter Sessions.*

*Origin of the Fire Somewhat Mysterious, but an Investigation Will be Set on Foot at Once by Executive Council.*



HOW THE STATE HOUSE LOOKED AS IT BURNED.

Within a week of the opening of the legislature, the beautiful state capitol yesterday furnished material for the flames. The chamber of the house of representatives, which the capitol commission had labored so hard to put in shape and render fair to look upon, is a mass of charred and smoldering ruins.

The galleries, precipitated to the floor below, the false ceiling above and the expensive chandeliers, are all huddled in one inextricable mass, over which water played all last night, and which bear mute testimony to the evidence of the element of destruction, which so nearly swept Iowa's \$3,000,000 capitol away.

In the fire a half dozen men were injured more or less seriously.

The loss is estimated variously from \$300,000 to half a million. Governor Cummins places an approximate estimate of \$300,000 upon the damage done, but State Architect Liebke believes the higher figure is more nearly correct.

Last night, the beautiful structure on Capitol hill presented a scene of desolation. The outer steps were covered with ice, while within, lighted candles and lanterns, the only means of illumination, were flitting fitfully about. Water dripped down the marble walls and rushed in torrents down the broad staircases. The floors were covered with from one to two inches of water, which was being swept out as fast as it gathered, while the dismantled offices throughout the building presented a scene of desolation — a sort of mute mourning for the calamity that had overtaken the state.

The damage by fire was confined mostly to the north wing, but the offices below are flooded with water. The valuable pictures that were hanging on the walls of the room of the supreme court were early removed by Clerk of the Supreme Court John Crockett and safely locked in the vault.

### **Legislature Will Convene.**

At 6 o'clock last night, a hastily called meeting of the executive council was held in the dismantled office of Governor Cummins and plans for taking care of the legislature were gone over. Nothing was definitely decided upon, but Governor Cummins stated that the following plan would probably be carried out: The house to meet in the senate chamber, the senate in the room of the supreme court, and the supreme court in one of the committee rooms of the senate, or will adjourn for an indefinite period.

The executive council will arrange for the preliminary session of the legislature. The different houses will then make their own arrangements. Definite action will be taken this morning.

The convening of the legislature will not be delayed. The inaugural exercises will be carried out as previously arranged.

### **Origin of It.**

The origin of a fire is in doubt, and Governor Cummins will order an immediate investigation.

Last night, the state officials were stunned by the extent of the damage done. They had not supposed it was possible that the building, supposedly fire-proof, should have burned so extensively, or that it would present so many obstacles in the way of the subjection of the flames.

With it, is the rebound of feeling that followed the certainty, entertained at noon, that the entire building was doomed. Now, the officials are beginning to take stock and to formulate plans of repair and of rebuilding on a safer plan.

The progress of the fire was picturesque, and the inability of the firemen to stop its progress was heartrending.

The distance of the building from hydrants rendered the use of high water pressure impossible without bursting hose, and the water merely ran from the nozzles. The hill upon which the building is located is one of the highest points in the city, while the height of the building added to the difficulty. The firemen were further handicapped by their lack of knowledge of the building, and did not know where to go to get at the flames.

### **Fire Alarm at 10.**

It was about 10 o'clock in the morning when the fire alarm was turned in. The blaze was first noticed in the house gallery by a colored man, who communicated his information to Charles Haynie, the state house barber. Haynie rushed down to the office of Adjutant General Byers, and with face pale with excitement told Major Hume to turn in an alarm, for the state house was on fire.

Major Hume looked at him incredulously for a moment.

"I mean it," said Haynie, and the way he said it left no doubt in the mind of Major Hume, who immediately turned in an alarm. Then he rushed up to the north wing of the capitol, where the fire was burning.

There is some question as to the exact spot in which the flames started. The determination of this fact will help fix in some measure the responsibility for the conflagration.

G. W. Blake, foreman in charge of the electricians at work fixing electric light wires, believes it started under the gallery of the house. The other theory, and probably the correct one, is that it started in the duct or flue in committee room No. 5, next to the speaker's room, and in the rear of the house chamber.

When Major Hume reached the upstairs part of the building, he was met by blinding clouds of smoke. The flames quickly spread to the ceiling of the senate chamber. They forced their way about the frame work of the gallery and the combustible material of the ceilings invited the fire.



Buckets of water were poured on the blaze, but without effect, before the arrival of the fire department. Chief Burnett soon had his entire department on hand, but the fight was a hopeless and discouraging one. No place could be found to pour water from above, and the water pressure was insufficient to force the water upwards.

The battle with the flames proceeded until parts of the gallery and false ceiling fell with a crash, and then the true seriousness of the fire was realized.

### **Building Saved.**

“Unless we succeed in keeping the flames from extending to the senate chamber the building is doomed,” said Chief Burnett.

This fate seemed inevitable, and probably would have occurred had it not been for the insistence of Governor Cummins and the courageous action of T. H. Rattenbury, Consulting Engineer Lindley and an unknown electrician. These three went into the garret over the north dome, forced their way through a door and groping their way through the blinding smoke, closed the doors which communicated between the senate chamber and the house. The three men held each other's hands, none of them knew if he would ever get back alive. The smoke hurt their lungs at first, but after a little they felt no sensation. On they went until they reached the doors which lead from the dome to the house chamber, closed them and returned. This shut off the fire and rendered it possible for the firemen to get into this part of the building, which became free from smoke, and they were thus enabled to keep back the fire from invading the senate chamber.

### **Governor Worked Hard.**

Governor Cummins was an active figure in the group that was fighting the fire. Clad in high rubber boots and rough coat, the chief executive cast gubernatorial dignity aside and worked as hard as any one in fighting the fire. The governor was cool throughout, and his wise counsel probably went far in bringing the fight against the fire to a successful conclusion.

It was shortly after noon, when the fate of the building seemed to hang in the balance. State Architect Liebbe made up his mind that the building was doomed, and advised that all the offices be emptied of their contents. Chief Burnett was of the same opinion, and Governor Cummins became discouraged.

The work of dismantling the offices set in at once. Governor Cummins called for volunteers to help save the valuable library books, while others assisted in taking the documents from the other rooms.

The removal of the funds of the state treasurer created considerable interest. The state is supposed to have a considerable sum on hand and just what preparations would be made to guard the funds, was a subject of curiosity. State Treasurer Gilbertson answered the question by a clever coup d'état. He had the wagon drive up to the building and gave it out that books and documents would be carried in it. Instead of books, there were bags containing \$25,000 in money. Six or seven men got on the wagon to take charge of the “books” and they were taken to the Capital City bank, where the money was deposited.

In the office of the state auditor, there were securities, deposited by the different insurance companies, amounting to \$12,000,000. These were placed in trunks which were ensconced in the vault, ready for removal at the first notice. Fortunately, the necessity never arrived.

“If I had my way about it,” said Assistant Auditor Roe, “I would leave the securities right in the vault. I would feel they would be perfectly safe there.”

All of the furniture in the governor's office was taken out and removed.

The attorney general's office was drenched by the water which came down from above, and last night the office was moved into the adjutant general's office, where it will remain until the damage is repaired.

### **Enormous Crowds Saw.**

The scenes in and out of the building during the progress of the fire were picturesque in the extreme. Thousands of people gathered about the building as soon as the first reports of the fire became bruited about the city. They crowded the cars or walked up Capitol hill. Policemen were stationed at the doors, with orders to keep everybody out, but many got in, notwithstanding, and thronged the corridors, wading about in the water which was everywhere.

The fire looked dangerous in the extreme. As the spectators who lined the outside walks looked up, they could see the north dome belching black smoke as if it were a smoke stack of some giant steamer. Now and then, some firemen would be seen clinging to the wall and trying to get at some point of vantage from which water could be poured down on the seething mass below. The report went forth that the building was doomed and people held their breath in view of the impending calamity.

Within, the scene was more exciting. High state officials rushed back and forth. Firemen would appear and disappear. Water came pouring down the staircases, trickled along the walls and sought out every possible crevice.

Governor Cummins was the center of an interesting group at all times. The governor, himself, was not the least picturesque figure in the crowd that surged up and down the corridors. With his high rubber boots and rough coat, the handsome governor presented a military and commanding presence, and his coolness and self-command inspired confidence.

The governor was face to face with an impending calamity which if realized would have been one of the most stupendous in the history of the state. However, he was equal to the occasion, and prevented the panic among the officers that was at one time impending. As soon as the danger of fire spreading throughout the building seemed less, the governor ordered the removal of the books from the state library stopped, an order which probably saved many volumes from mutilation.

On the upper floor where the firemen were fighting the fire, the scene was even more picturesque. Clad in the helmets and rubber coats, the brave fire fighters buckled to their task with an enthusiasm which was marvelous. Blinding clouds of smoke met them at every step, but they forced their way through it to get at the flames. Holes were cut in the walls, and the firemen went as near the flames as possible. Now and then a fireman would emerge, deathly sick and nauseated, but as soon as he had recovered he would rush back into the sickening mass of smoke and steam.

# The Des Moines Daily Capital

Tuesday, January 5, 1904

## FIRE RUINS NORTH WING OF CAPITOL

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**Loss to the Property Will Amount to Fully  
Half a Million Dollars---Old  
Soldiers Save their Flags**

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**Arrangements Already Being Made to  
Provide for the Meeting of the  
Legislature Next Monday**

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(From Yesterday's Eighth Edition.)

**State House cost . . . \$3,000,000**

**Ground broken in . . . . . 1871**

**First occupied in . . . . . 1884**

**Loss will reach . . . . . \$500,000**

**Insurance . . . . . None**

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### THE INJURED.

**Eugene Maxwell, fireman, knocked down and head bruised.**

**A. J. Albert, janitor, overcome by smoke.**

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“It’s too horrible to conceive. I don’t know what can be said about it. Of course I presume it will be necessary to postpone the meeting of the legislature if the house and senate chambers are ruined, until we can equip them for the work or prepare temporary quarters. – Governor Albert B. Cummins.”

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The Iowa state capitol, the pride of Des Moines and the entire state and one of the finest structures of its kind in the country, appeared at 3 o’clock to be all but doomed, but at 4 o’clock Chief Burnett expressed the opinion that it was under control and could spread no farther.



For four hours the entire fire department of Des Moines had been making a futile endeavor to check the progress of the flames that had started from a tiny spark in the northwest corner of the house chamber and rapidly spread throughout the third floor and garret.

At 2:30 o'clock Governor Cummins, upon advice of the chief of the fire department, issued an appeal for aid from outside towns. The fire department of Stuart was the first to promise to send assistance. Chief Burnett of the local fire department had stated that his force was utterly incapable of waging a successful fight against the flames and that the long struggle of his men seemed hopeless.

A few minutes later Governor Cummins appeared on the lawn at the state house and called for volunteers to assist in rescuing the library, which seemed doomed. Two-score of workmen immediately responded and the work of lowering the books from the windows on improvised rope elevators proceeded rapidly.

About this time the unconscious figure of F. J. Elbert, one of the workmen employed in the building, was borne to an ambulance and removed to his home. He had been overcome by smoke.

Not a particle of furniture or other contents of the offices in the north wing of the building had not been damaged by water by this time. From the garret to the basement was one great sea of water and the damage from this source was as great as that from fire.

At 1 o'clock Fire Chief Burnett watched the smoke pouring from the dome at the extreme south end of the magnificent structure, more than 300 feet from where it started, and shook his head sadly.

"It seems no use. We can't get at it, and it has spread through the garret and between the floors for the entire length of the building. It is too high for the water to reach and is inaccessible to lines of hose."

Great volumes of smoke was pouring from every portion of the immense roof and bright tongues of flame darted in and out through the openings. The interior of the representatives' chamber and of the north and south domes was a mass of flame and no fireman was so foolhardy that he dare trust his life about the second floor of the north wing.

It was the consensus of opinion at that time that the entire upper portion of the building was doomed and that nothing combustible could be saved above the main floor. The great mass of granite and steel trusses would of course remain intact, but the beautiful painting, frescoing, etc., that had ornamented the upper floors and represented enormous cost was hopelessly ruined, as was also the costly woodwork and furnishings in the rooms that had been invaded by the flames.

Up to 3 o'clock there had been no known loss of life, although there was an unconfirmed rumor that a workman who had been engaged in the vicinity of the origin of the fire had been cut off from escape and had perished. Another workman whose name could not at that time be learned, had been found lying unconscious in one of the committee rooms back of the house chamber and was drawn to a place of safety just in time. He had been overcome with smoke and was easily resuscitated.

The fire spread rapidly from this time, quickly forcing the firemen back from the gallery of the house chamber in which they were working. After fifteen minutes' heroic endeavor in this section of the building there was an ominous cracking in the ceiling and the terrible cry was at once heard from a score of throats:

“Run for your lives!”

Spectators and firemen sprang from the room into the rotunda of the second floor and they were scarcely too soon, for within five minutes a great section of the gallery collapsed with a deafening crash.

Presently there was another and more terrible rumble that increased to a roar as the entire ceiling gave way and the firemen were compelled to spring back from the entrance.

Then for the first time the true seriousness of the fire was realized. Embers flew in every direction. Great tongues of flame shot out and the dying sections of wood fairly hissed as they darted past the faces of firemen gathered at the entrance of the room. Several were slightly injured, but no one minded it, so engrossed were they with the terrible spectacle.

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### **Origin More or Less a Mystery.**

The origin of the fire is more or less a mystery. It is the universal belief that it was caused by an electric light wire. It was discovered by a painter who was working in the northwest corner of the gallery in the house chamber at the extreme north end of the building. He immediately gave the alarm and the fire departments from all over the city responded promptly. It was apparent when they arrived, however, that the fire had been burning for an hour or two back in the garret among the rafters where no one could see it. They found themselves utterly unable to get at the flame. The back garret was so densely filled with smoke that no human being could take a lead of hose within a hundred feet of the flame. The only flame that was in sight was immediately quenched – in fact a bucket brigade had accomplished this much even before the arrival of the fire department. But the great seat of danger was absolutely inaccessible. Axes were procured and the firemen chopped their way into the fire, but by this time the flames had eaten their way over the garret and between the floors above the chamber until it was apparent that the whole house chamber and adjoining rooms were doomed. The firemen ordered the room cleared and themselves fled to a place of safety just in time to escape certain death that awaited them when the ceiling of the room collapsed.

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### **Awaited Collapse of North Dome.**

Firemen and state house employees and officials then instituted an investigation of the garret, which could be reached only by means of the dark, winding stairway which was a veritable death trap. They braved its danger and penetrated far enough above the house chamber to find that smoke and fire had progressed so far in this vicinity that any attempt of combatting it was foolhardy and useless.

Two dozen policemen had been sent to the scene by this time, and these were directed by the fire chief to fear the entire north section of the building, as there was danger of the dome or at least other floors giving way. A collapse of either meant death to any one in that vicinity and the spectators were driven from the second and main floors. No one was permitted to remain who was not engaged in rescuing the documents and valuables stored in the various offices.

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### **Stumbled Over a Prostrate Form.**

While the firemen were groping their way through the garret one of them stumbled over the prostrate form of a man.

“My God!” he exclaimed. “Some one has been killed.”

He grasped the lifeless form and was able to discover no sign of life. He dragged it from the dense smoke and with the aid of others commenced moving the arms up and down in the hope of starting respiration. His efforts were almost immediately rewarded. The supposed dead man quickly revived and was able to walk down stairs and out into the fresh air without assistance. No one thought to inquire his name and his identity remains unknown.

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### **Great Alarm for the Library.**

By this time great alarm was expressed for the safety of the state library, which contains over 700,000 volumes, and is the third best library in the United States. Chief Burnett advised Johnson Brigham, the state librarian, to remove all of the books and a force of thirty men was immediately set to work at the immense task. It was manifest a short time after they had begun operations that the task would take so long as to preclude the saving of all the volumes in case the fire invaded the library, and also that the volumes thus rescued would be so badly ill arranged as to make the work of reclassifying them an almost endless labor. The more valuable works were removed at the beginning, however, and it was the belief by 3 o'clock that the best part of the magnificent library could be rescued and that possibly the entire west wing, in which the library was located, would be saved.

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### **Water Pressure Was Inadequate.**

One of the heart-breaking features of the fire was the utter inadequacy of the water pressure after the firemen had got within striking distance of the seat of the flame at great personal risk. When Chief Burnett, Assistant Chief Warren Taylor and a half dozen brave followers wound their way up the tortuous stairway through blinding smoke to the garret, dragging a lead of hose with them that was attached to a hydrant over 600 feet distant, they were rewarded by discovering what appeared to be the chief source of danger in the extreme upper section of the north wing. They directed the hose upon it only to find that a feeble stream issued from the nozzle and that it fell far short of the flames. The length of hose and the height of the building, which was easily 150 feet at the point they worked, was so great as to render the water pressure utterly unequal to the demand.

Talk was heard of erecting the aerial truck on the outside of the building, but a little investigation disclosed that it would not reach to a point from which the flames could be reached.

The chief and assistant chief and two volunteers crawled through the roof on the south side of the main dome and at imminent peril of their lives, dragged themselves across the icy roof of the structure in the hope of discovering some better means of reaching the fire. This hope was not realized and when they returned they found themselves almost cut off from escape by reason of dense clouds of smoke that had penetrated the south wing by that time and was rapidly filling the south winding stairway.

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## IRONY OF FATE HAS HAND IN IT.

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### Recent Investment of \$125,000 In Improvements probably Contributes to Loss.

It was the irony of fate that the recent expenditure of nearly \$125,000 in improving the building should have probably contributed largely to its destruction. The recent expenditure was chiefly for the purpose of installing an electric light plant and wiring the building with electric wire conduits, and also to revolutionize the heating system by installing what is known as the "fan" system of heat and ventilation.

There were those who shook their heads when it was proposed to abandon the present system of gas light which serves very acceptably for the small amount of night work that takes place in the state house. The dangers of electric wiring were mentioned and were laughed down by those who were more progressive. It now appears, however, that the fear was well founded, as it was probably an electric wire that started the fire and the system of ventilation and the huge fans used to blow the hot and cold air through the building constituted so many great flues for fanning and drawing the flame today to expedite its spread through the building.

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## AGAIN DEFENDED THEIR FLAGS.

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### Veterans of Civil War Stood Guard Over the Battle-Scarred Emblems.

One of the pathetic features of the fire was the great interest manifested by the old soldiers who had gathered about the cabinets which contained the battle-scarred flags that were borne by Iowa regiments through the civil war. The veterans were determined that the moment it became apparent that the flags were in danger they would remove them to a place of safety. When the police attempted to clear the building of spectators, he approached the little group of soldiers and ordered them to leave.

"Not much," answered one. "We stood by those flags throughout the civil war and we're not going to desert them now when they are threatened by a different kind of fire and smoke."

"They're old soldiers. Let them remain," interrupted Dr. George A. Newman, assistant adjutant general, and the policemen readily acquiesced.

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## CROWDS WATCH DESTRUCTION.

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### First Capital Extra Caused Thousands to Rush to Scene of Conflagration.

Thousands of anxious people are gathered about the state capitol watching the destruction the fire is working to the second most beautiful state house in the United States. With deep sorrow the crowds see each fresh shooting of heavy columns of smoke from some new quarter. Though they are powerless to help hundreds refused to leave the grounds even for dinner.

Crowds commenced to hurry up Capitol Hill soon after the first Daily Capital extra appeared shortly after the fire was discovered and continued to go till long after the noon period. Excited men and women ran along Locust street and the cars going

at a safe distance from the building. As the smoke continued to roll from the north end of the building it was announced the small dome might fall. This drove the crowd back to a safer distance.

Business men left their stores, professional men closed their offices and the entire city, it seemed, hurried to the spot to see and to do, if could be, anything to help save the structure.

Among the crowd were senators and representatives who had already gathered in Des Moines to make arrangements for rooms during the session which was to convene Friday. As the ceiling of the house fell in the news rapidly spread and then for the first time was it realized there could be no legislative meetings there.

Obstinately the fire worked against the firemen and as no progress seemed to be gained and bad tidings were carried to the crowd from within the building hundreds stamped their feet with impatience. They were powerless and could only express their regrets at the sad accident which came just as hundreds of thousands of dollars had been expended to improve the building, make it modern and bring it near a point of completion.

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### **ROBT. FINKBINE'S WARNING.**

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#### **Wrote a Letter to Gov. Boles Calling His Attention to the Storing of Waste.**

This afternoon as C. A. Finkbine was discussing the fire at the state house he said:

"My father, R. S. Finkbine, paid a call at the state house during the administration of Governor Boles and climbed up in the garret. He was astonished to find tons and tons of waste paper. He immediately started for his office down town and penned a lengthy and firm letter to the governor, calling his attention to the placing of waste paper in the garrets and declared that the state house would surely burn in consequence. He went on and predicted a catastrophe similar to the one occurring today."

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### **GOVERNOR SUPERINTENDS WORK.**

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#### **With Rubber Boots on His Feet High Executive Fights the Fire.**

With rubber boots upon his feet Governor A. B. Cummins laid all dignity aside and pitched in with the firemen to fight the fire which was working the destruction of the building.

Shortly after noon he saw that there was danger of destruction to the library and he ordered that all books be removed from the building. Accordingly an army of men was set at work taking the massive volumes from the building out upon the balcony where they would be safe from smoke and water.

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## **WORK OF RESCUE WAS HEROIC.**

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### **Every Office Occupant From Official to Janitor Bore Valuables to Safety.**

The work of rescue in the various offices of the state house was heroic in the extreme. It is doubtful if the occupants of the offices ever worked so hard before. From official to janitor they pulled off their coats and with sweat dripping from their faces waded through the water and smoke to rescue their personal and state belongings from their offices. Everything of great value that was easily portable was either borne into the vaults and locked up or was carried from the building.

Considerable interest attached to the removal of the contents of the office of State Treasurer Gilbertson. It was supposed the state had a great sum of money in his control when a heavy transfer wagon was seen to back up to the rear window for the purpose of carrying away inquiry was made, and it was learned that nothing but books was thus removed an inquiry was made, and it was learned that the state rarely has more than \$5,000 or \$10,000 in actual cash, the great bulk of its treasure being represented in securities and certificates of deposit.

Women vied with men in the work of rescue. The stenographers and the lady chiefs in some of the offices were among the most active in the work of removing valuables. In the office of Miss Tyler, head of the traveling library, she and Miss Goodrell disposed of a big task of this kind alone.

When the fire broke out some one remembered that Miss Walker, the sculptress who is engaged in preparing a bust of Governor Cummins, was at work in the garret above the south wing. Some one apprised her of her danger in time to enable her to reach the main floor without difficulty, but when she sent the elevator boy back in the hope of having him rescue the bust it was found that smoke had permeated the garret to such an extent that rescue of the bust was impossible.

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## **TALLOW CANDLE STARTED FIRE.**

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### **Blazing Drippings Fell Into Rubbish in House Gallery.**

The first report that the fire was started by an electric wire seems to have been erroneous, according to later evidence received by the officials. It was shortly after 10:30 o'clock this morning when one of the workmen who was at work in the house gallery discovered the blaze. It was hidden away in one of the dark passages and he found it when he lighted a bit of tallow candle to go there and call a fellow employee. He says the fire was started by a candle which some one of the workmen had been using and it is thought it was due to the blazing drippings from the tallow falling into rubbish, a great quantity of which is scattered about in the dark passages where the clearing up work of the improvements was being hurried, in order to have the chamber in readiness for the legislators next week.



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## **PICKED UP ABOUT THE FIRE.**

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### **Enormous Crowds Visit the Scene—Street Car Traffic Tied Up.**

That the state house means something to the people of Des Moines and is appreciated by them was disclosed by the interest they displayed in the fire. Great commotion was occasioned over the city when the first reports of the fire became current. Immediately every street car was packed to the door if it was headed eastward and a steady stream of humanity poured over the bridge in the direction of the state capitol. By 1 o'clock several thousand people were gathered about the lawn and at other points of vantage, watching the fire.

Street car traffic to points east of the state house was entirely suspended for near six hours by reason of the lines of hose that were laid across the street surrounding the state house.

Members of the Women's Club of Des Moines were greatly concerned for the safety of an expensive bronze bust, a fine piano and some valuable paintings that they had placed in the governor's office temporarily. Many other valuable paintings that adorned the walls of the governor's office occasioned the governor considerable worry. He issued orders that all be removed from the building as soon as the fire chief advised that his rooms were in danger.

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## **LEGISLATURE MUST MEET ANYWAY.**

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### **Will Probably Convene Somewhere to Canvass Vote, Then Adjourn for a Time.**

Considerable talk is heard regarding the assembling of the legislature. The impression prevails that it will be necessary to convene and canvass the vote, January 11 and 12, as required by law, which will of course mean that the two houses must formally organize. It is probable that the legislature will be assembled somewhere for this purpose and will then adjourn pending the selection of quarters in which to hold its sessions. That this is not absolutely necessary is apparent to those who recall a circumstance many years ago when the governor held over without having been formally declared elected by the legislature.

At the time John H. Gear was elected speaker the vote was not canvassed for nearly two weeks after the general assembly met on account of the inability to organize. Therefore the vote on governor and lieutenant governor was not canvassed for nearly three weeks after the legislature met. Consequently the inauguration was postponed accordingly.

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## **STATE CARRIES NO INSURANCE.**

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### **Policy of State Again Proven Exceedingly Costly Method of Procedure.**

The state of Iowa carries no insurance on any of its buildings, believing that the

immense value of its property, the fire-proof construction and other safeguards against fire renders it possible for it to carry its own risk more cheaply than to permit insurance companies to bear it.

Thus the state has again suffered an enormous property loss without indemnity. The fires at various state institutions were mere drops in the bucket as compared with the fire loss at the state house, although the latter was constructed mostly of steel and granite and was supposed to be practically fire-proof.

The loss was estimated at 8 o'clock at approximately \$1 million, although no one was able to give anything like an adequate idea of the damage.

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### **JANITOR IS OVERCOME.**

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#### **S. J. Albert Removed From Burning Building to His Home by Ambulance.**

At about 1 o'clock S. J. Albert, one of the state house janitors who was working in the building and assisting the firemen, was overcome by gas and smoke. He was carried from the building to the open air. Though he was worked over for some time he did not regain consciousness and was removed from the place in the city ambulance to his home on South Ninth street. He is said to be in a serious condition.

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### **ONE FEATURE WAS FORTUNATE.**

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#### **Recent Removal of Documents Stored in Garret Prevented Spread of Fire.**

One feature that was fortunate was the recent removal of the documents and other combustible material that had been stored in the garret and elsewhere to the new warehouse which has just been completed across the street north of the state house.

Mr. Finkbine, of the original state capitol commission, in a report some years ago, issued a warning that just such a fire might easily occur unless the paper and other combustible material was removed from the garrets.

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### **CALL OUT MILITIA.**

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#### **Maj. Gen. Byers Believes Building Should Be Guarded.**

At 2 o'clock Major Hume was instructed by Adjutant General Byers to call out the Des Moines militia to guard the grounds and keep people from going into the dangerous places. Excited men push to the front and unless conditions improve it is feared there would be injuries.

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**FIREMAN MAXWELL INJURED.**

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**Fireman From Station No. 13 Pinned  
Under Timbers.**

Fireman Eugene Maxwell of Station No. 13 was slightly injured this afternoon by the falling timbers in the gallery of the house. He was taken to his home in the ambulance. It is believed that the injuries will not prove serious.

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**MYSTERY AS TO ORIGIN.**

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**Samuel Addington, Porter, Claims He  
Discovered the Fire In Room 5.**

The best account of the origin of the fire is afforded by Samuel Addington, a painter, who is in charge of a portion of the men employed at the state house.

"I discovered the fire," said he, "but it is a mistake to say that it was a painter who had any thing to do with it. I went into room 5, which is occupied by the chief clerk during the session of the house, and found it all ablaze. It was impossible for me to tell how it had started, but I do want it understood that it was not a painter, for there were no painters employed on that floor at the time.

"It is my impression that the fire was started by a candle in the hands of an electrician who is said to have been employed in that portion of the building at the time. In fact, I saw such a man when I appeared on the scene, but I didn't know him and do not know what became of him."

All effort to locate the electrician who is said to have been working with a candle and caused the fire had failed up to 4 o'clock. At that time the fire was still burning furiously in the house chamber, but was under control in other parts of the building. The senate had been dismantled by workmen in anticipation that it would suffer from the flames, but the stuff that had been removed can easily be replaced by the time the legislature convenes and it will simply be necessary to provide a meeting place for the house. Repairs of the house will inevitably consume many weeks and involve much expense.

The total loss on the building was estimated at \$500,000 at 4 o'clock. Thirty thousand volumes had been removed from the state library at this time. Miss Tyler, assistant librarian, mashed her finger badly while engaged in the work of removal.

City Electrician Hupp stated this afternoon after an examination of premises that the fire did not start from a live electric wire. Of that he was certain. There was only one live wire in the state house and that was in the basement. From the basement are distributed six wires, but in not one of them, stated Mr. Hupp, was the power for light turned on.



# Stevens Point Daily Journal.

Tuesday, January 5, 1904

## IOWA'S CAPITOL BADLY DAMAGED

Fire Practically Ruins Beautiful Structure at Des Moines

THE LOSS IS ABOUT \$500,000

Hall of the House of Representatives  
Suffers Most – Arrangements Made  
for Meeting of Legislature  
Next Week.

Des Moines, Ia., Jan. 5. – Fire gutted the northwest wing of the state capitol Monday with an approximate loss of half a million. The chamber of the house of representatives is a charred mass of ruined debris and cannot be fixed up in time for the approaching session of the legislature. The fire gained great headway before it was checked, starting about ten o'clock, and at noon it was thought the entire building was doomed, and Gov. Cummins ordered the contents of all the offices removed. However, it was finally confined to the wing of the capitol in which it originated and by six o'clock was practically extinguished.

### Legislature Will Meet.

The executive council of the state, consisting of Gov. Cummins, Secretary of State Martin, State Auditor Carroll and State Treasurer Gilbertson, held a brief session Monday evening, and announced the convening of the legislature would not be postponed. It will meet next Monday and arrangements will be made so that the sessions can be comfortably held. The plans are not completed, but the thought is to have the house sessions in the senate chamber, the senate sessions in the room of the supreme court, and the supreme court will either adjourn or hold its sessions in one of the committee rooms.

### Origin a Mystery.

The origin of the fire is a mystery and Gov. Cummins will order an immediate investigation. The supposition that it started either from a lighted candle carelessly left burning or from an electric light wire. The fire originated near a shaft in committee room No. 5 and spread upward and all around the ceiling of the house chamber. The fire department was unable to fight the flames effectively, the height of the building and elevation of the capitol site, making pressure impossible. The only thing possible was to cut off the progress of the flames. The gallery of the house chamber fell with a crash, portions of the debris

slightly injuring two firemen and endangering the lives of several. The crash and scattering of the burning debris, made the saving of the building seem impossible. Gov. Cummins gave up hope and State Architect Liebbe was also of the opinion that the building was doomed.

The valuable volumes of the state library, located near the fire, were hastily removed and the state offices were hastily emptied. The funds of the state treasurer were hastily loaded on a wagon, supposed to contain books, and carried to a downtown bank for deposit. Gov. Cummins laid aside gubernatorial dignity and clad in rubber boots and rough coat, engaged in the work of fighting the fire. After a conference with the governor, it was decided to send for a steam engine from Stuart, but when it arrived the fire had burned itself out in the wing in which it started, and its spread had been prevented.

#### **Was Pride of the State.**

The beautiful state capitol presents a scene of desolation. The marble staircases are covered with ice, the floors are flowing with water and the offices under the burned part of the building are flooded. Many beautiful frescoes in the chamber of the house can never be replaced. The Iowa capitol is one of the most beautiful in the United States. It is built along the lines of the beautiful capitol at Albany. It has been the pride of the state and of the city of Des Moines, and was erected at a cost of \$3,000,000. The state capitol commission, appointed for this purpose, had just completed the restoration and repair of the building at a cost of \$125,000, most of which had been expended in the chamber which is ruined.

#### **The Loss.**

The building was supposed to have been fireproof, but the use of several false ceilings in the house furnishes excellent material for the flames. Gov. Cummins states that the house chamber cannot possibly be repaired this winter. The estimates on the loss are varying, Gov. Cummins placing it at \$300,000, but the majority of estimates place the loss at \$500,000 to \$700,000. The state of Iowa carries no insurance on any of its property. It believes the better policy is to carry its own insurance. The loss on the building is therefore total.

# The Akron Register-Tribune.

Thursday, January 7, 1904

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## IOWA CAPITOL SAVED.

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### Fire in Structure Extinguished After Hard Fight.

A Des Moines, Ia., special says: The fire which gutted the northwest wing of the state capitol Monday was brought under control late in the afternoon, after burning for over seven hours, although firemen remained on duty all night.

The estimates on the loss are varying, Gov. Cummins placing it at \$300,000, but some of the estimates place the loss at \$500,000 to \$700,000.

The chamber of the house of representatives is a charred mass of ruined debris and cannot be fixed up in time for the approaching session of the legislature.

The executive council of the state, consisting of Gov. Cummins, Secretary of State Martin, State Auditor Carroll and State Treasurer Gilbertson, held a brief session Monday evening and announced the convening of the legislature would not be postponed.

The State of Iowa carries no insurance on any of its property. It believes the better policy is to carry its own insurance. The loss on the building is therefore total.

The fire gained great headway before it was checked. The fire department was unable to fight the flames effectively, the height of the building and elevation of the capitol site making pressure impossible. The only thing possible was to cut off the progress of the flames. The gallery of the house chamber fell with a crash, portions of the debris slightly injuring two firemen and endangering the lives of several. The crash and scattering of the burning debris made the saving of the building seemed impossible. The valuable contents of the state library, located near the fire, were hastily removed in the state offices were empty. The funds of the state treasurer were loaded on a wagon, supposed to contain books, and carried to a downtown bank for deposit.

The beautiful state capitol presents a scene of desolation. The marble staircases are covered with ice, the floors are flowing with water in the offices is under the burnt part of the building are flooded. Many beautiful frescoes in the chamber of the house can never be replaced.

The origin of the fire is a mystery and Gov. Cummins will order an immediate investigation. The supposition is that it started either from a lighted candle carelessly left burning or from an electric wire.

# THE PELLA CHRONICLE

Thursday, January 7, 1904

## **FIRE IN CAPITOL BUILDING**

**Damaged to the Extent of Nearly Half a Million Dollars –  
Origin of Fire Somewhat of a Mystery**

**Fire Fighting Appliances Entirely Inadequate to Meet the Demands**

**LOSS IS NOT COVERED BY INSURANCE**

**The State of Iowa Does Not Carry Insurance on Any of its Buildings**

The state capital building was damaged by fire Monday afternoon to the extent of about \$300,000. Lucky it is that the damage is not very much more.

The alarm of fire was given by the state house barber at 11 o'clock Monday forenoon. In ten minutes the entire fire fighting apparatus of the city was in action and was either on the grounds or getting there as fast as it could. It was soon discovered that the amount of hose on hand was entirely inadequate to the occasion and after more hose had arrived it was found that on account of the distance the water had to be pumped and because of the great height of the building and the high ground upon which it was built that force sufficient to throw water onto the flames was also sufficient to burst the fire hose. So it was, that at 1 o'clock City Fire Chief Brackett called his men away from the dangerous places and announced that the building was doomed to destruction.

In the meantime other work had been in progress and when announcement came for the fire chief Gov. Cummins, assisted by about fifty volunteers, began the work of carrying the great state library to a place of safety, it being evident that the library room which surely be burned. Also \$25,000 in cash which was contained in the state house vault was taken out in boxes and deposited in the State Capital Bank. Everything was made ready as nearly as possible in the belief that the total destruction of the fine \$3,000,000 building was inevitable.

Gov. Cummins despaired of saving anything when the scientific firefighters gave up the job, and the flames were allowed to take their course with very little hindrance from any one. The water pressure was insufficient to throw water from the floor to the ceiling, and there was no way in which access to the fire could be obtained when the water could be poured on it. By force of circumstances therefore the splendid structure was left to be dealt with according to the mercies of fate.

### **ORIGIN OF THE FIRE**

There is no way of knowing at this time exactly how the fire started. The Register and Leader of Tuesday morning in speaking of it says:

The origin of the fire is a mystery, and this morning Governor Cummins will order a rigid investigation.



The theory most generally held, and supported by some testimony, is that one of the electrical workers left a candle in the duct that starts in committee room No. 5 and runs upward. It is thought a lighted candle was left there until it burned down and communicated the fire to the woodwork within.

Another theory is that in the electrical wire might have caused the trouble, but Superintendent Lindley says no current was on the north wing. Another theory is that some of the workmen under Custodian McCurdy may have left a lighted candle near some inflammable material.

Just where the fire started is also a mooted question, Foreman G. H. Blake of the electrical workers maintaining it started under the gallery of the house chamber.

### **NOT ELECTRICITY**

Mr. Crampton L. Linley, consulting engineer of the capital commission for the new electrical and mechanical equipment, emphatically denies the early rumor that the fire originated from the short-circuiting of an electric wire. Mr. Linley says: "There was no live wire, for there was no current turned on in that part of the building. I was one of the first on the ground, and went through the basement and the first floor. I am positive that the fire originated on the second story. It is hard to tell just what did cause the fire, but I am positive that it was not any of the electrical apparatus."

Seen later, Mr. Linley was still reticent about expressing any opinion as to various rumors as to the origin, other than that of a short circuit, which he had denied.

### **THE GOVERNOR'S VIEWS**

"I feel certain," said Governor Cummins last night, "that the responsibility for the fire rests with one of two bodies of workmen were employed about the building. It was caused either by some of the electrical workers or by some of the workmen employed under Custodian McCurdy. I would not want to direct suspicion to either one of them now, but it seems the responsibility rests with someone from one of these two groups. I shall order an investigation immediately."

### **STATE CARRIES NO INSURANCE**

The state of Iowa carries no insurance on any of its buildings. This is in accordance with the life-long policy of the state endorsed by the state board of control, which advocates a non-insurance policy in its last biennial report. The theory of the board of control is that the state can better afford to carry its own insurance, notwithstanding such heavy losses as are involved in the damage to the state capitol, than to pay heavy premiums constantly. They say it is cheaper in the long run.

### **LOSS ESTIMATES**

State Architect Liebbe at 11 o'clock last night estimated the damage to the state house at about \$500,000.

"It is impossible to estimate the damage exactly at this time," said Mr. Liebbe. "Of course, the damage by water will be considerable, and no one can tell just how much damage has been done in this way. I would think that half a million would cover the loss and it may be less than that."

Gov. Cummins put the loss at \$300,000. C. A. Cumming, of the capitol commission, put it at \$150,000. Mr. Shoentgen, of the commission, said \$200,000. C. L. Linley said the damage to the mechanical equipment would reach \$10,000. L. C. Kurtz said \$50,000 would cover the damage to the interior of the house chamber.

## REPORT OF THE STATE CAPITOL COMMISSION

In Sunday's Daily News the first report of the state capitol commission was published.

The report shows that the commission has expended about \$120,000 of the money appropriated and made available up to this time and has contracted for work which will take at least \$70,000 more from the fund of \$250,000 appropriated. Estimates made show additional expenditures aggregating \$197,000 or more. The total cost of completing the capitol, if the plans adopted by the preliminary commission some years ago are carried out, will therefore be about \$400,000.

Original cost of capitol.....	\$3 million
Appropriated for completion.....	250,000
Additional amount needed.....	150,000
Amount expended by commission.....	200,000

## ENGINEER PLUNGES TO DEATH

**Consulting Engineer Linley at Des Moines fell through Ceiling in Capitol Building  
and Died in Eight Minutes  
Was Examining Condition of Steel and Brick work over House Chamber**

Consulting Engineer C. C. Linley, of Chicago, who had been employed by the Capitol Improvement Commission to make an examination of the steel girders and brick arches in the capitol building after the fire in Des Moines, was about his work last Tuesday morning, when one of the arches gave way under his weight in the mid-brick and much other debris he fell to the floor of the house chamber 40 feet below. Brick struck him on the head as he was falling and that, together with injuries sustained from the fall resulted in his death in eight minutes.

He was accompanied on his errand by one man in the last words he ever uttered were said to have been a warning to his comrade to be very careful in selecting his way, as any of the brick arches were so weakened from the effects of water and fire that it was unsafe to tread upon them. Almost as the words died on his lips he was plunged to his death 40 feet below.

This is the only fatality of the fire on Monday afternoon, so far.

# The Oskaloosa Herald.

Thursday, January 7, 1904

## ONE FATALITY IN STATE HOUSE FIRE

**While Seeking Source Of Flames C. L.  
Linley Falls Sixty Feet to Instant Death.**

**Des Moines, Ia., Jan. 5. — C. L. Linley, of Chicago, supervising engineer employed by the Iowa Capitol Commission to improve the state building, fell sixty feet to death today, while inspecting the origin of Monday's fire. His skull was crushed and he died instantly. Mr. Linley was twenty-five years old and single. Authorities generally agree today that it will cost half a million dollars to repair the loss done in yesterday's conflagration.**

Des Moines, Jan. 5. — Within a week of the opening of the legislature, the beautiful state capitol yesterday furnish material for the flames. The chamber of the house of representatives, which the capitol commission had labored so hard to put in shape and render fair to look upon, is a mass of charred and smoldering ruins.

The galleries, precipitated to the floor below, the false ceiling above and the expensive chandeliers, are all huddled in one inextricable mass, over which water played all last night and which bears mute testimony to the evidence of the element of destruction, which so nearly swept Iowa's \$3,000,000 capitol away.

In the fire a half dozen men were injured more or less seriously.

The loss is estimated variously from \$300,000 to half a million. Governor Cummins places an approximate estimate of \$300,000 upon the damage done, but first State Architect Liebke believes the higher figure is more nearly correct.

Last night the beautiful structure on Capitol hill presented a scene of desolation. The outer steps were covered with ice, while within, lighted candles and lanterns, the only means of illumination, were flitting fitfully about. Water dripped down the marble walls and rushed in torrents down the broad staircases. The floors were covered with from one to two inches of water, which was being swept out as fast as it gathered, while the dismantled offices throughout the building presented a scene of desolation — a sort of mute mourning for the calamity that had overtaken the state.

The damage by fire was confined mostly to the north wing, but the offices below are flooded with water. The valuable pictures that were hanging on the walls of the room of the supreme court were early removed by Clerk of the Supreme Court John Crockett and safely locked in the vault.

### **Legislature Will Convene.**

At 6 o'clock last night, a hastily called meeting of the executive council was held in the dismantled office of Governor Cummins and plans for taking care of the legislature were gone over. Nothing was definitely decided upon, but Governor Cummins stated that the following plan would probably be carried out: The house to meet in the senate chamber, the senate in the room of the supreme court, and the supreme court in one of the committee rooms of the senate, or will adjourn for an indefinite period.

The executive council will arrange for the preliminary session the legislature. The different houses will then make their own arrangements. Definite action will be taken today.

The convening of the legislature will not be delayed. The inaugural exercises will be carried out as previously arranged.

### **Library Saved.**

When the fire threatened to spread from the house chamber across the rotunda to the senate chamber, on suggestion by Governor Cummins, librarian Brigham at once took steps to remove the most valuable books beyond the reach of danger. A large force of volunteers began carrying the books from the library floor, and Mr. Brigham estimates that 20,000 volumes were piled on the balcony over the west entrance. Boards were run from the windows to the galleries, and the books in the upper stacks were slid down to the floor of the balcony.

Mr. Brigham said: "The actual loss may not exceed \$1,000 for repairs, and it may be much greater."

### **State Carries No Insurance.**

The state of Iowa carries no insurance on any of its buildings. This is in accordance with the life-long policy of the state, endorsed by the state board of control, which advocates a non-insurance policy in its last biennial report. The theory of the board of control is that the state can better afford to carry its own insurance, notwithstanding such heavy losses as are involved in the damage to the state capitol and to pay heavy premiums constantly. They say it is cheaper in the long run.

### **Building Cost \$3 million.**

The ground was broken for the new state house in March, 1870. Governor Merrill through the first spade full of dirt. Colonel S. F. Spofford's matched white horses drew the plow. The state house was occupied first under the administration of Governor Buren R. Sherman in the year 1884, but was not fully occupied for three or four years thereafter. The building cost \$3,000,000 and was thought to be fire-proof. The plans were furnished by an architect from Springfield, Illinois, who died before the building was completed. The Iowa capitol is much like the capitol at Springfield, and has been considered one of the great capitol buildings of the union. There have never been cracks of the wall caused by the settling of the structure. The state of Iowa appropriated \$250,000 per year for the erection of the building and towards the conclusion of the work extra appropriations were made to hasten its completion. The cornerstone of the state house is made of an Iowa boulder, the most enduring stone known. It was obtained in Buchanan county and was presented by David Armstrong of that county.



### **Corner Stone Laid in 1871.**

The laying of the cornerstone took place with imposing ceremonies on the 23d day of November, 1871, when addresses were made by several distinguished gentlemen.

The central dome of the capitol, which was threatened with collapse, has been the pride of all Iowa, being visible for miles out from the city of Des Moines as one of the landmarks of the capital city. This dome was covered with a gold leaf at the cost of \$3,500.

The house of representatives, which was gutted by the fire, was a magnificent room, 74 by 91 feet 4 inches in extent, and a ceiling which measured 47 feet 9 inches. The senate chamber was as well proportioned a room, though not quite so spacious. It measured 58 by 91 feet 4 inches in extent, with a ceiling 41 feet 9 inches in height.

The length of the building from north to south is 363 feet 8 inches; from east to west, 246 feet 11 inches. This includes porticos. The height to the top of the dome balcony, just below the painted clouds, is 219 feet 1 inch. The height to the top of the ball lantern, which is poised above the center dome is 259 feet from the ground. This is where visitors always climbed to secure the fine view of the city and surrounding country.

### **Supposed to be Fireproof.**

While the state capitol was generally considered to be built entirely of stone and steel and therefore absolutely fireproof, the fire there demonstrated there is a large quantity of combustible material used in the construction. Away up in the garret where it was impossible for the firemen to throw water and where the fire crept slowly and surely from its starting point in the house gallery, there were located numerous large wooden beams. These fed the flames and as the fire slowly forced its way along between the ceiling and the floor above the house chamber of the legislature, it found plenty of material to feed on. This was slowly consumed because there was no ventilation to it and no air to fan the flames to violence. All through the building, from garret to the foundation, there is hidden away much of this woodwork, and the fact of its being thus hidden by the steel pillars and plaster made the work of the firemen all the more puzzling.

### **The Irony of Fate.**

It was the irony of fate that the recent expenditure of nearly \$125,000 in improving the building should have probably contributed largely to its destruction. The recent expenditure was chiefly for the purpose of installing an electric light plant and wiring the building with electric wire conduits, and also to revolutionize the heating system by installing what is known as the fan system of heat and ventilation.

There were those who shook their heads when it was proposed to abandon the present system of gas light, which serves very acceptably for the small amount of night work that takes place in the state house. The dangers of electric wiring were mentioned and were laughed down by those who were more progressive. It now appears, however, that the fear was well founded, as it was probably an electric wire that started the fire and the system of ventilation and the huge fans used to blow the hot and cold air through the building constituted so many great flues for fanning and drawing the flame to expedite its spread through the building.

SEMI-WEEKLY  
**IOWA STATE REPORTER.**

Friday, January 8, 1904

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**STATE HOUSE RUINED**

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**Loss on Capitol Building Fire at Des Moines  
Will Reach Over \$500,000.**

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**ORIGIN OF FIRE MYSTERIOUS**

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**Legislature Will Meet Monday but Will Provide  
Other Quarters for the Session.**

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**Senate Chamber, Library and the First or Main Floor Offices Were Not  
Reached by the Spreading Fire—Investigation as to Origin of Fire Will  
be Begun at Once by the Executive Council.**

State House Cost . . . . .	\$3,000,000
Ground Broken in . . . . .	1871
First Occupied in . . . . .	1884
Loss Will Reach . . . . .	\$500,000
Insurance . . . . .	None

**THE INJURED.**

**Eugene Maxwell**, fireman, knocked down and head bruised.  
**A. J. Albert**, janitor, overcome by smoke.

Des Moines, Jan. 5. — Within a week of the opening of the legislature, the beautiful state capitol yesterday furnished material for the flames. The chamber of the house of representatives, which the capitol commission had labored so hard to put in shape and render fair to look upon, is a mass of charred and smoldering ruins.

The galleries, precipitated to the floor below, the false ceiling above and the expensive chandeliers, are all huddled in one inextricable mass, over which water played all last night, and which bear mute testimony to the evidence of the element of destruction, which so nearly swept Iowa's \$3,000,000 capitol away.

In the fire a half dozen men were injured more or less seriously.

The losses estimated variously from \$300,000 to half a million. Governor Cummins places an approximate estimate of \$300,000 upon the damage done, but State Architect Liebke believes the higher figure is more nearly correct.

Last night, the beautiful structure on Capitol hill presented a scene of desolation. The outer steps were covered with ice, while within, lighted candles and lanterns, the only means of illumination, were flitting fitfully about. Water dripped down the marble walls and rushed in torrents down the broad staircases. The floors were covered with from one to two inches of water, which was being swept out as fast as it gathered, while the dismantled offices throughout the building presented a scene of desolation — a sort of mute mourning for the calamity that had overtaken the state.

The damage by fire was confined mostly to the north wing, but the offices below are flooded with water. The valuable pictures that were hanging on the walls of the room of the supreme court were early removed by first Clerk of the Supreme Court John Crockett and safely locked in the vault.

### **Legislature Will Convene.**

The convening of the legislature will not be delayed. The inaugural exercises will be carried out as previously arranged.

The origin of the fire is in doubt, and Governor Cummins will order an immediate investigation.

Last night, the state officials were stunned by the extent of the damage done. They had not supposed it was possible that the building, supposedly fire-proof, should have burned so extensively, or that it would present so many obstacles in the way of the subjection of the flames.

With it, is the rebound of feeling that followed the certainty, entertained at noon, that the entire building was doomed. Now, the officials are beginning to take stock and to formulate plans of repair and of rebuilding on a safer plan.

The progress of the fire was picturesque, and the inability of the firemen to stop its progress was heartrending.

The distance of the building from hydrants rendered the use of high water pressure impossible without bursting hose, and the water merely ran from the nozzles. The hill upon which the building is located is one of the highest points in the city, while the height of the building added to the difficulty. The firemen were further handicapped by their lack of knowledge of the building, and did not know where to go to get at the flames.

### **Fire Alarm at 10.**

It was about 10 o'clock in the morning when the fire alarm was turned in. The blaze was first noticed in the house gallery by a colored man, who communicated his information to Charles Haynie, the state house barber. Haynie rushed down to the office of Adjutant General Byers, and with face pale with excitement told Major Hume to turn in an alarm, for the state house was on fire.

Major Hume looked at him incredulously for a moment.

"I mean it," said Haynie, and the way he said it left no doubt in the mind of Major Hume, who immediately turns in an alarm. Then he rushed up to the north wing of the capitol, where the fire was burning.

There is some question as to the exact spot in which the flames started. The determination of this fact will help fix in some measure the responsibility for the conflagration.

G. W. Blake, foreman in charge of the electricians at work fitting electric light wires, believes it started under the gallery of the house. The other theory, and probably the correct one, is that it started in the duct or flue in committee room No. 5, next to the speaker's room, and in the rear of the house chamber.

When Major Hume reached the upstairs part of the building he was met by blinding clouds of smoke. The flames quickly spread to the ceiling of the senate chamber. They forced their way about the frame work of the gallery and the combustible material of the ceilings invited the fire.

Buckets of water were poured on the blaze, but without effect, before the arrival of the fire department. Chief Burnett soon had his entire department on hand, but the fight was a hopeless and discouraging one. No place could be found to pour water from above, and the water pressure was insufficient to force the water upwards.

The battle with the flames proceeded until part of the gallery and false ceiling fell with a crash, and there the true seriousness of the fire was realized.

### **Building Saved.**

"Unless we succeed in keeping the flames from extending to the senate chamber the building is doomed," said Chief Burnett.

This fate seemed inevitable, and probably would have occurred had it not been for the insistence of Governor Cummins and the courageous action of T. H. Rattenbury, Consulting Engineer Lindley and an unknown electrician. These three went into the garret over the north dome, forced their way through a door and groping their way through the blinding smoke, closed the doors which communicated between the senate chamber and the house. The three men held each other's hands none of them knew if he would ever get back alive. The smoke hurt their lungs at first, but after a little they felt no sensation. On they went until they reached the doors which lead from the dome to the house chamber, closed them and returned. This shut off the fire and rendered it possible for the firemen to get into this part of the building which became free from smoke, and they were thus enabled to keep back the fire from invading the senate chamber.

### **Governor Worked Hard.**

Governor Cummins was an active figure in the group that was fighting the fire. Clad in high rubber boots and rough coat, the chief executive casts gubernatorial dignity aside and worked as hard as anyone in fighting the fire. The governor was cool throughout, and his wise counsel probably went far in bringing the fight against the fire to a successful conclusion.

It was shortly afternoon, when the fate of the building seemed to hang in the balance. State Architect Liebbe made up his mind that the building was doomed, and advised that all the offices be emptied of their contents. Chief Burnett was of the same opinion, and Governor Cummins became discouraged.

The work of dismantling the offices set in at once, Governor Cummins called for volunteers to help save the valuable library books, while others assisted in taking the documents from the other rooms.

The removal of the funds of the state treasurer created considerable interest. The state is supposed to have a considerable sum on hand and just what preparations would be made to guard the funds, was a subject of curiosity. State Treasurer Gilbertson answered the question by a clever coup d'état. He had the wagon drive up to the building and gave it out that books and documents would be carried in it. Instead of books, they were bags containing \$25,000 in money. Six or seven men got on the wagon to take charge of the "books" and they were taken to the Capitol City bank, where the money was deposited.



In the office of the state auditor, there were securities, deposited by the different insurance companies, amounting to \$12,000,000. These were placed in trunks which were ensconced in the vault, ready for removal at the first notice. Fortunately the necessity never arrived.

"If I had my way about it," said Assistant Auditor Roe, "I would leave the securities right in the vault. I would feel they would be perfectly safe there."

All of the furniture in the governor's office was taken out and removed.

The attorney general's office was drenched by the water which came down from above, and last night the office was moved into the adjutant general's office, where it will remain until the damage is repaired.

### **Enormous Crowds Saw.**

The scenes in and out of the building during the progress of the fire were picturesque in the extreme. Thousands of people gathered about the building as soon as the first reports of the fire became bruited about the city. They crowded the cars or walked up Capitol hill. Policemen were stationed at the doors, with orders to keep everybody out, but many got in, notwithstanding, and thronged the corridors, wading about in the water which was everywhere.

The fire looked dangerous in the extreme. As the spectators who line the outside walks looked up, they could see the north dome belching black smoke as if it were a smoke stack of some giant steamer. Now and then, some fireman would be seen clinging to the wall and trying to get at some vantage point from which water could be poured down on the seething mass below. The report went forth that the building was doomed and people held their breath in view of the impending calamity.

Within, the scene was more exciting. High state officials rushed back and forth. Firemen would appear and disappear. Water came pouring down the staircases, trickled along the walls and sought out every possible crevice.

Governor Cummins was the center of an interesting group at all times. The governor, himself, was not the least picturesque figure in the crowd that surged up and down the corridors. With his high rubber boots and rough coat, the handsome governor presented a military and commanding presence, and his coolness and self-command inspired confidence.

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## ***AN ENGINEER'S FATAL FALL***

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### **IN IOWA CAPITAL RUINS**

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#### **Supervising Engineer Linley of Chicago Falls Sixty Feet to His Death — Was Making Inspection of the Ruins.**

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Des Moines, Jan. 5. — Supervising Engineer C. L. Linley, of Chicago, fell sixty feet to death to-day, while inspecting the capitol building ruined by fire yesterday.

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# WATERLOO DAILY REPORTER.

Saturday, January 9, 1904

## GIVES GOOD NEWS

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Iowa Capitol Can be Restored for \$150,000.

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**SAYS MAN WHO BUILT IT**

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Architect Bell, of Chicago Makes Careful Estimate.

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Supreme Court Will Move Back Soon.

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Des Moines, Jan. 9. — M.E. Bell, the architect who built the Iowa state capitol and who for several years past has been supervising architect for the treasury department and is now an architect in Chicago, went over the capitol building yesterday.

Mr. Bell is an authority on fire-proof construction and is here representing Fire Proof, a magazine devoted to fire-proof construction and architecture. He will get up an illustrated article on the Iowa capitol for his magazine. He went carefully over the burned portion of the building yesterday and after having done so, made an estimate of the damage done. His estimate will be the greater interest because of his familiarity with the manner of construction involved in the building of the state house.

Mr. Bell estimates that to replace the capitol in its original shape and condition would not come to more than \$125,000. To make it absolutely fire proof, so far as modern methods will make a building fire proof, he thinks would not cost more than \$150,000.

“This estimate,” explained Mr. Bell, “of course is merely an approximate estimate. I do not include in that the damage done by the water to the lower part of the building, but I would not anticipate this will be considerable, with the possible exception of the supreme court room.

“I would not suppose the state would take any other course than to make the building fire proof. This would not cost more than 10 per cent more than the price to place it in its original condition, and it could be done for \$150,000 as an approximate estimate.

The members of the capitol commission were told of Mr. Bell’s estimate, and were greatly pleased with it. The members of the commission have held all along that the damage was not so great as was originally believed.

### **Supreme Court Meets.**

The justices of the supreme court held a meeting yesterday for the purpose of deciding what they shall do in regard to holding their January session. They are now using the federal court building. There was a feeling that the session need not be delayed, but it was thought wiser to wait a thorough examination until it could be determined whether or not their room in the capitol building was perfectly safe.

Yesterday one of the large oil paintings that was cemented to the ceiling fell to the floor. The ceiling had been examined, and no such danger was anticipated. The justices are not willing to take any chances, and will not go into the room until it is made perfectly safe. Yesterday workmen were engaged in putting copper supports about the ceiling, and it is not thought that there is any danger of large pieces of plastering falling.

Evening



Gazette.

VOLUME 21--NO.

CEDAR RAPIDS IOWA.

JANUARY 1904.

PRICE FIVE CENTS.

Tuesday, January 12, 1904

## GOSSIP OF THE NEW ASSEMBLY

YESTERDAY'S OPENING SESSION  
A MILD AFFAIR.

Legislators Will Not Get Down to  
Business for Two Weeks Yet  
— Some Interviews.

(Special Correspondence.)

Des Moines, Iowa, Jan. 12 — The first wheel has been turned, and yesterday the Thirtieth general assembly of Iowa had its beginning. Never since territorial days has the legislature met under circumstances which entailed equal inconveniences. This, of course, owing to the fire which has ruined the house chamber. That body met yesterday in the senate hall, while the members of the latter were packed like sardines in one of the committee rooms. Meanwhile an army of workmen are bringing order out of chaos and effecting temporary repairs. A canvas ceiling will be put in, the chamber re-carpeted, lights hurriedly arranged, school desks or other makeshift conveniences found, and within a few days the house will be back in its old quarters.

### Ruin in House Chamber.

Viewed from the outside the capitol building has suffered little. Fortunately its beauty is hardly marred. A slight smokiness here and there apparent, a few windows broken, and an unsightly runway on which the rubbish inside is shot to the ground. I am sending you here-with a photograph which does more than any words of mine to indicate the ruin in what before the blaze was one of the most beautiful of public halls. Now the ceiling has been torn away and gapes open to the skylights.

If one man more than another feels the loss the state has sustained it is Governor Cummins. I talked with him on other matters yesterday, but all through the conversation his remarks recurred to the loss and ruin. He told of his work and his fears, of his regret and also of his thankfulness that greater damage had not been done. Never yet has Iowa had a man in the governor's chair who more closely identified himself with all the affairs and interests of the state.

# DAILY IOWA STATE PRESS.

IOWA CITY, IOWA.

Wednesday, January 13, 1904

## IOWA LEGISLATURE WILL TAKE VACATION OF TWELVE DAYS

**WILL ADJOURN TOMORROW AFTERNOON TO PERMIT REPAIRS ON HOUSE CHAMBER.**

**MAKES APPROPRIATION OF \$8,000 FOR TEMPORARY REPAIRS ON THE CAPITOL.**

Des Moines Jan. 13 – The legislature adopted a resolution to adjourn immediately following the inauguration of Governor Cummins tomorrow, until January 26th, and appropriated \$8,000 for the temporary repair of the house chamber.

[excerpts from Governor's Message to joint assembly]:

### **The Capitol Commission.**

The work of the capitol commission is commended and the governor says it is not surprising that many things were found to be done that were not expected and that the expenditures required were in excess of the estimate. It is recommended that immediate action be taken to put the balance of the appropriation at the disposal of the commission, or the late fire necessitates a change and improvement of the building, a sum sufficient to discharge liabilities already created, should be made at once available.

### **The Late Fire at the Capitol.**

In regard to the fire which damaged the hall of the house of representatives the governor says that the executive council after examining under oath every person who had any knowledge of the subject, so far as it could ascertain, arrived at the conclusion that the fire originated in an air shaft near the southeast corner of room No. 5, and that it came from a lighted candle left in the shaft by one of the electrical workers engaged in equipping the building with electric lights.

A most careful examination of the structural iron and walls shows that they have suffered little injury. The governor states that the temporary repairs on the hall of the house can probably be completed in 10 days, but that the providential contingent fund has been exhausted and he recommends the immediate appropriation of \$6,000 for temporary repairs.

# THE IOWA RECORDER.

GREENE, BUTLER CO., IOWA

Wednesday, January 13, 1904

## FIRE IN IOWA CAPITOL

THE STRUCTURE DAMAGED TO AMOUNT OF \$500,000.

**Entire Northwest Wing of Building a Mass of Charred Ruins – Regular Legislative Session Not to Be Postponed – Governor as a Fireman.**

Fire ruined the Northwest wing of the Iowa State capitol in Des Moines Monday, with an approximate loss of \$500,000. The chamber of the House of Representatives is a charred mass of ruined debris and cannot be fixed up in time for the approaching session of the Legislature.

The fire gained great headway before it was checked. It started about 10 o'clock and at noon it was thought the entire building was doomed and Gov. Cummins ordered the contents of all the offices removed. However, it was finally confined to the wing of the capitol in which it originated and by 6 o'clock was practically extinguished. The executive council of the State, consisting of Gov. Cummins, Secretary of State Martin, State Auditor Carroll and State Treasurer Gilbertson, held a brief session in the evening and announced that the convening of the Legislature would not be postponed. Arrangements will be made so that the sessions can be comfortably held.

The origin of the fire is a mystery and Gov. Cummins has ordered an immediate investigation. It started near a shaft in committee room No. 5 and spread upward and all around the ceiling of the House chamber. The fire department was unable to fight the flames effectively, the height of the building and elevation at the capitol site making pressure impossible. The only thing possible was to cut off the progress of the flames.

The gallery of the House chamber fell with a crash, portions of the debris slightly injuring two firemen and endangering the lives of several. The crash and scattering of the burning debris made the saving of the building seem impossible. Gov. Cummins gave up hope and State Architect Liebbe was also of the opinion that the building was doomed. The valuable volumes of the State library, located near the fire, were hastily removed and the State offices were quickly emptied. The funds of the State Treasurer were hastily loaded on a wagon, supposed by those not in the secret to contain books, and carried to a downtown bank for deposit. Gov. Cummins laid aside gubernatorial dignity and, clad in rubber boots and rough coat, engaged in the work of fighting the fire.

At night the beautiful State capitol presented a scene of desolation. The marble staircases are covered with ice, the floors are flowing with water and offices under the burned part of the building are flooded. Many beautiful frescoes in the chamber of the House can never be replaced. The Iowa capitol is one most beautiful in the United States. It is built along the lines on the capitol at Albany. It has been the pride of the State and of the city of Des Moines and



was erected twenty years ago at a cost of \$3,000,000. The State capitol commission appointed for this purpose had just completed the restoration and repair of the building at a cost of \$125,000, most of which it been expended in the chamber which is ruined.

The building was supposed to have been fireproof, but the use of several false ceilings in the House furnished excellent material for the flames.

Gov. Cummins said that the House chamber could not possibly be repaired this winter. The estimates on the loss are varying, Gov. Cummins placing it at \$300,000, but the majority of estimates place the loss at \$500,000 to \$700,000.

# Marble Rock Journal.

Thursday, January 14, 1904

## CAPITOL OF IOWA PARTLY BURNED

Fire Destroys the Interior of the  
North Wing of the State's  
Beautiful Building.

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Chamber of the House of Representatives a Charred  
Mass of Ruins – Gov. Cummins Has the  
Contents of All Offices Removed – Loss Is Estimated at \$300,000.

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Des Moines, Ia., Jan. 5. – Fire gutted the northwest wing of the state capitol yesterday with an approximate loss of \$300,000. The chamber of the house of representatives is a charred mass of ruin debris and cannot be fixed up in time for the approaching session of the legislature. The fire gained great headway before it was checked, starting about ten o'clock, and at noon it was thought the entire building was doomed, and Gov. Cummins ordered the contents of all the offices removed. However, it was finally confined to the wing of the capitol in which it originated, and by six o'clock was practically extinguished.

### Scene of Desolation.

The beautiful state capitol presents a scene of desolation. The marble staircases are covered with ice, the floors are flowing with water and the offices under the burned part of the building are flooded. Many beautiful frescoes in the chamber of the house can never be replaced. The Iowa capitol is one of the most beautiful in the United states. It is built along the lines of the beautiful capitol at Albany. It has been the pride of the state and of the city of Des Moines, and was erected at a cost of \$3,000,000. The state capitol commission, appointed for this purpose, had just completed the restoration and repair of the building at a cost of \$125,000, most of which had been expended in the chamber which is ruined.

### Carries No Insurance.

The state of Iowa carries no insurance on any of its property. It believes the better policy is to carry its own insurance. The loss of the building is therefore total.

The executive council met and turned the matter of the repair of the capitol over to the improvement commission, which is composed of the Hon. A. B. Funk, of Spirit Lake; J. H. Shoentgen, of Council Bluffs, and Prof. C. A. Cuning, of Des Moines.

### One Man Killed.

Supervising Engineer C. L. Linley fell 40 feet to his death while making an inspection of the wing ruined by fire. A burned floor gave way with him, precipitating him to the floor of the chamber of representatives. His skull was crushed and he died almost instantly. Linley was unmarried and 25 years old. He lived in Chicago and was employed by the capitol commission during the work of improvement.

### Responsible for Fire.

Des Moines, Ia., Jan. 8. – H. Frazee, an electrical worker, is found to be responsible for the \$250,000 fire at the state capitol. Frazee is found to have dropped a lighted candle near the locality where the blaze was first discovered. He will not be prosecuted.

# THE MILFORD MAIL.

Milford, Iowa

Thursday, January 21, 1904

## THE IOWA LEGISLATURE

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### MONDAY'S SESSION.

Des Moines, Ia., Jan. 21.—The thirtieth general assembly of Iowa was called to order at 10 o'clock this morning. The recent fire which gutted the house chamber necessitated the house occupying the senate chamber and the senate meeting in its largest committee room, temporarily.

E. D. Chassell of LeMars was chosen temporary chairman of the house, and appointed a credentials committee, which reported no contest. The work of permanent organization was then quickly effected. George W. Clark of Adel being chosen speaker and B. F. Cummins of Marshalltown, speaker pro tem.

The Democrats made no nominations and all the house offices were filled by acclamation.

Lieutenant Governor Herriott presided in the Senate, and there were no contests. Senator Jas. A. Smith of Osage was chosen president pro tem.

## GOVERNOR SENDS IN HIS MESSAGE

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### Capitol Fire.

Concerning the late capitol fire the governor says:

As all of you know, a fire occurred in the capitol on Monday, January 4, 1904, which substantially destroyed the entire finish of the hall of the house of representatives, wrecked some of the committee rooms in the north wing, and the water used in extinguishing it damaged to some extent the ceilings of the rooms and offices opening from the north corridor upon the main floor.

The executive council made an immediate investigation for the purpose of ascertaining the origin of the fire, and after examining, under oath, every person who had any knowledge of the subject, so far as it could ascertain, it arrived at the conclusion that the fire originated in an air shaft in the southeast corner of room No. 5, and that it came from a lighted candle, left in the shaft by one of the electrical workers engaged in equipping the building with electric lights.

Fortunately the disaster was not so great as at one time it was feared it would be, and a comparatively small sum will be required to repair the injury. A most careful examination of the structural iron, and walls, has been made by the most competent experts that could be employed, and it has been ascertained that they have suffered little injury. For the temporary repairs hereafter mentioned, a few splices and bolts are all that will be necessary, and for the permanent repair the substitution of a few beams, girders and rods.

Under the informal advice of a caucus of the members of the thirtieth general assembly, the executive council empowered the capitol commission to go forward, clear away the debris and put the hall of the house of representatives in order for use during the present session. So rapidly has this work been dispatched that it is now believed that the hall of the house of representatives can be ready for occupancy at the close of the coming week.

As I have already reported, what is known as the providential contingent fund, put at the disposal of the executive council by the twenty-ninth general assembly, was entirely exhausted in repairing the fire losses occurring at the school for the deaf and dumb at Council Bluffs and the Iowa College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Ames. We are, therefore, without any available money to defray what may be termed the fire expenses, which consist of the payment of men employed on the day of the fire for various things which it is not necessary to mention, and to pay for the temporary repair of the hall of the house of representatives, which is now being carried on. I have not been able to secure precise information as to the outlay which will be required for these two purposes, but inasmuch as the obligations created must be discharged immediately, I recommend that an appropriation be at once be made of \$6,000. What remains can be carried into the providential contingent fund, which undoubtedly will be created later in your session.

With respect to the permanent repair of the injury caused by the fire, I have three suggestions to make:

First – I believe that the capitol commission already in working order, should be charged with the duty of repair, in connection with the completion of the plan provided for by the twenty-ninth general assembly.

Second – I believe that the material used in reconstruction should be as nearly fire-proof as possible.

Third – I believe that adequate water supply should be installed in the building.

The providential contingent fund of \$35,000 has been entirely expended for repairs, etc., followed fires and disasters at state institutions.

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## FIRE STILL BURNING.

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### Smouldering Embers in Iowa State House Cause Another Panic.

Des Moines, Ia., Jan. 12.—At considerable peril workmen sealed the northeast dome of the state capitol this afternoon and removed the copper sheathing in injected chemical from a Babcock fire extinguisher. The result of the efforts to put out the flames was in doubt at 3:30, although it is believed to be successful.

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Des Moines, Jan. 12.—The state capitol is still on fire, and a startling appearance of smoke in the Northeast dome of the Capitol causing consternation. After smouldering for a week, the fire, which destroyed the house chamber of the building, is still creeping on in its work of destruction.

The smoke continues to come out of the top of the dome, but it is impossible to reach the flames, and they will have to burn themselves out of material. The supposition is that wooden ribs in the dome are burning.

Governor Cummins notified State Architect Liebke of what was going on, but Mr. Liebke was unable to devise any means of extinguishing the fire. There is no anticipated danger that the fire will extend to other portions of the building. The only possible damage it will do will be to the dome itself. In company with E. R. Truax, the custodian then went through the attic and over the roof to the dome from which the smoke was coming. They found that the wooden ribs of the arch between the concrete and the copper were burning slowly; probably the fire had been eating its way here ever since last week. These wooden strips are laid around the dome over the concrete to support the corrugations in the copper which compensate for the expansion and contraction of the metal. There was no possible danger from the fire as everything inflammable in that section of the capitol had been burned out a week earlier. To attempt to reach it by tearing away the copper would only endangered the building by giving access to the air, and the metal sheathing at present furnishes effective prevention of any communication of the fire by burning brands.

The announcement that fire existed created considerable excitement among the members of the legislature, and many of them visited the governor's office in search of information. A force of men was put on last night whose special duties were to watch the hidden and unapproachable enemy. The danger of the falling in of any part of the dome is not anticipated.



# IOWA COUNTY ADVERTISER.

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PARNELL, IOWA COUNTY, IOWA.

Friday, January 22, 1904

## *Excerpt from Message of Governor Cummins*

### **The Fire in the Capitol.**

As all of you know, a fire occurred in the capitol on Monday, Jan. 4, 1904, which substantially destroyed the entire finish of the hall of the House of Representatives, wrecked some of the committee rooms in the north wing, and the water used in extinguishing it, damaged to some extent the ceilings of the rooms and offices opening from the north corridor upon the main floor.

The executive council made an immediate investigation and arrived at the conclusion that the fire originated in an air shaft near the southeast corner of No. 5, and that it came from a lighted candle, left in the shaft by one of the electrical workers engaged in equipping the building with electric lights.

With respect to the permanent repair the injury caused by the fire, I have these suggestions to make:

First – I believe that the capitol commission, already in working order, should be charged with the duty of repair, in connection with the completion of the plan provided for by the first Twenty-ninth General Assembly.

Second – I believe that the material used in reconstruction should be as nearly fire-proof as possible.

Third – I believe that adequate water supply should be installed in the building.

*Section Six*  
**Capitol Commission Report**

SECOND  
AND SUPPLEMENTAL REPORTS  
OF THE  
CAPITOL COMMISSION

March 10, 1906

MADE TO THE  
GOVERNOR OF THE STATE

PRINTED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE BY ORDER OF  
THE THIRTY-THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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DES MOINES

# Capitol Commission Report

## *Iowa State Capitol Fire of 1904*

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

DES MOINES, IOWA, March 10, 1906.

*To the Honorable Albert B. Cummins, Governor of the State of  
Iowa.*

DEAR SIR:

On the 4th day of January 1904, extensive damage was done to the north wing of the capitol by fire. The Commission and the public will probably never know exactly how the fire originated, but it was probably due to the careless use of a candle in an abandoned air shaft wherein workmen were installing an electric conduit.

The law originally authorizing the building of the capitol, provided for fire proof construction, and it was generally assumed that no such extensive injury could occur to the capitol building by fire. Fire proof construction so-called, thirty years ago, was

by no means what it is today, and it could not have been foreseen that such calamity might occur. Had adequate fire protection been provided, the loss would have been inconsiderable, but from the fact that water had to be carried a distance of about 1,500 feet. the nearest available hydrant, in hose winding about the building to the point of need, by friction, so reduced the pressure as to make the flow entirely inadequate to subdue the flames. The fire burned itself out when no more combustible material was within its reach. When the system of fire protection now in course of installation shall be completed, it is believed that no such calamity can occur in the capitol.

Had the work of restoration been performed in the same manner as the original construction, the loss could not have reached the sum of \$100,000.00, but the Commission having been ordered by the legislature to adopt fire proof methods in reconstruction, the amount expended in repairs to the building and to furniture and fixtures is approximately \$120,000.00, the amount expended to date being \$108,410.22.

An emergency appropriation of \$8,000.00 was made by the General Assembly to cover the cost of temporary repairs necessary to the occupancy of the hall of the House during the session about to open. Of this sum, the amount of \$6,956.35 was expended, the balance having been returned to the State treasury.

After investigation on the part of a joint legislative committee, and upon estimates furnished by the Capitol Commission, the Legislature appropriated the sum of \$126,000.00 for the restoration and repair of the property destroyed or damaged by fire, and for the purpose of providing additional fire protection for the building.

The original appropriation for capitol improvement and repairs was \$250,000.00. This appropriation was based upon recommendations of the Capitol Improvement Commission created by the Twenty-eighth General Assembly, for the purpose of investigating and reporting as to the needs of the capitol building along this line. This report was submitted in December, 1901. Between that date and the period in which contracts for improvements were made, the price of materials and labor had increased to such an extent, as to materially effect the finances of the Commission. Furthermore, the preliminary Commission being without funds, necessarily based its estimates upon hasty and incomplete calculation. Then it was found in proceeding with the work, that changes involving much additional expenditure, were absolutely demanded in the interest of the State. Changing the location of the fire proof warehouse,



made necessary the adoption of a different style of architecture, and more expensive construction. Forced to abandon the recommendation as to a tile roof, the practical course left for the Commission was to make use of copper roofing, requiring an additional expenditure of about \$6,000.00. Numerous other changes of less importance were necessary as the work progressed.

For these reasons, the original appropriation could not be made to perform the service comprehended by the statute. Hence, the **Thirtieth General Assembly** upon investigation, made an additional appropriation of \$82,740.00 to cover the necessary excess of expenditure, and also the expense of additional improvements recommended by the Commission.

As soon as practicable after the adjournment of the Legislature, the Commission proceeded to the work of repairing the damage caused by fire. After thorough search on the part of Superintendent **J. R. Crawshaw**, who was a foreman of construction work at the building of the capitol it was ascertained that the existing file of original plans and detailed drawings was by no means complete. It was further found that as construction originally proceeded, important departures from working plans had been made, and no record of these changes had been preserved. Hence, competent architectural service was required in order to secure competition in bids for reconstruction and also to insure satisfactory results. The firm of **Hallett & Rawson of Des Moines**, was employed as architects. As soon as they could complete plans and specifications, the bids were called for, for the restoration of the hall of the House of Representatives, and the speaker's rooms and committee rooms damaged by fire. This contract was finally awarded to The **Grahl-Petersen Co.**, of Des Moines, and **F. Herman & Son**, of Council Bluffs, for the sum of \$62,407.00.

Elsewhere in this report will be found detailed description of the various branches of our work, together with tabulated statements of bids received for the whole, and sub-bids for various parts of the work.

This contract included only construction work, and materials therefor. The closest scrutiny of this work is invited. It is the belief of the Commission that the contractors performed their obligation with absolute fidelity, and that in every detail the interests of the State were well served. Materials are of the best quality, and workmanship is of unquestioned excellence. No competent critic could assume to say that the construction is not as nearly absolutely fire proof as practicable.

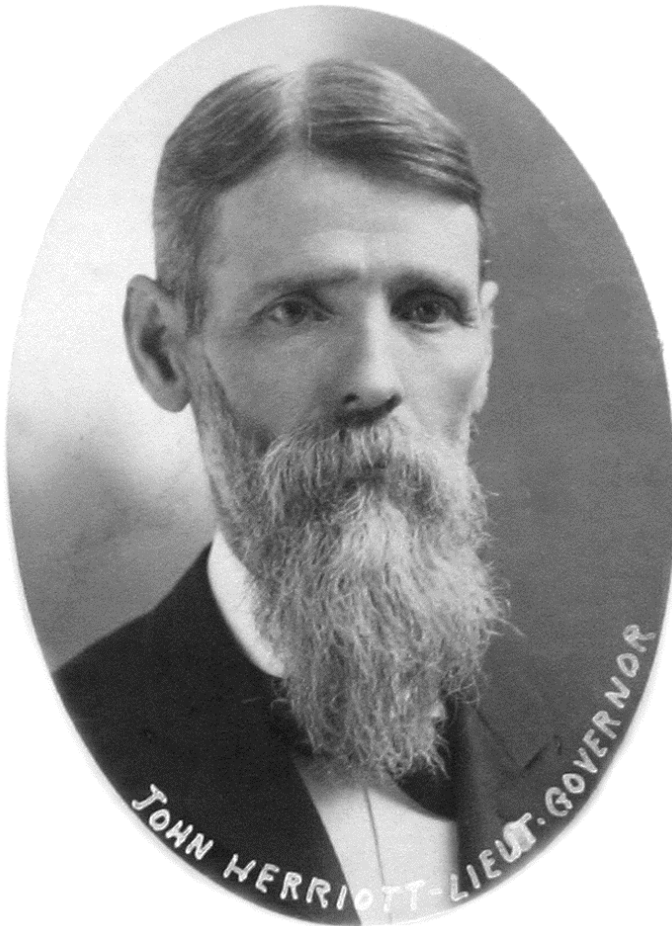
# **Capitol Commission Report**

## **1906**

### ***ACKNOWLEDGMENT***

The untimely and deplorable death of C.L. Linley, our consulting engineer on mechanical equipment, heating and ventilating, the day after the fire in the north wing, was a loss to the world, and a serious embarrassment to the work of the Commission. Appointed by Governor Cummins to assume charge of the wrecked House, in the absence of the Commission, he was on a tour of inspection in the energetic discharge of his duties when he fell from the attic to the House floor, meeting almost instant death. The Commission feels that his heroic and thoughtful conduct at the time of the fire, by crawling on his hands and knees in a dense smoke through an air duct in the attic, and closing a connecting door, had much to do with confining the fire to the north wing of the Capitol. His services to the Commission had been invaluable because of his splendid professional equipment, and his deep interest in the unusual problems involved, and his death came at a most unfortunate period for the reason that it was found most difficult to take up the work where he had laid it down, and carry to completion his plans for the installation of important systems.

## Thirtieth Iowa General Assembly Leadership 1904

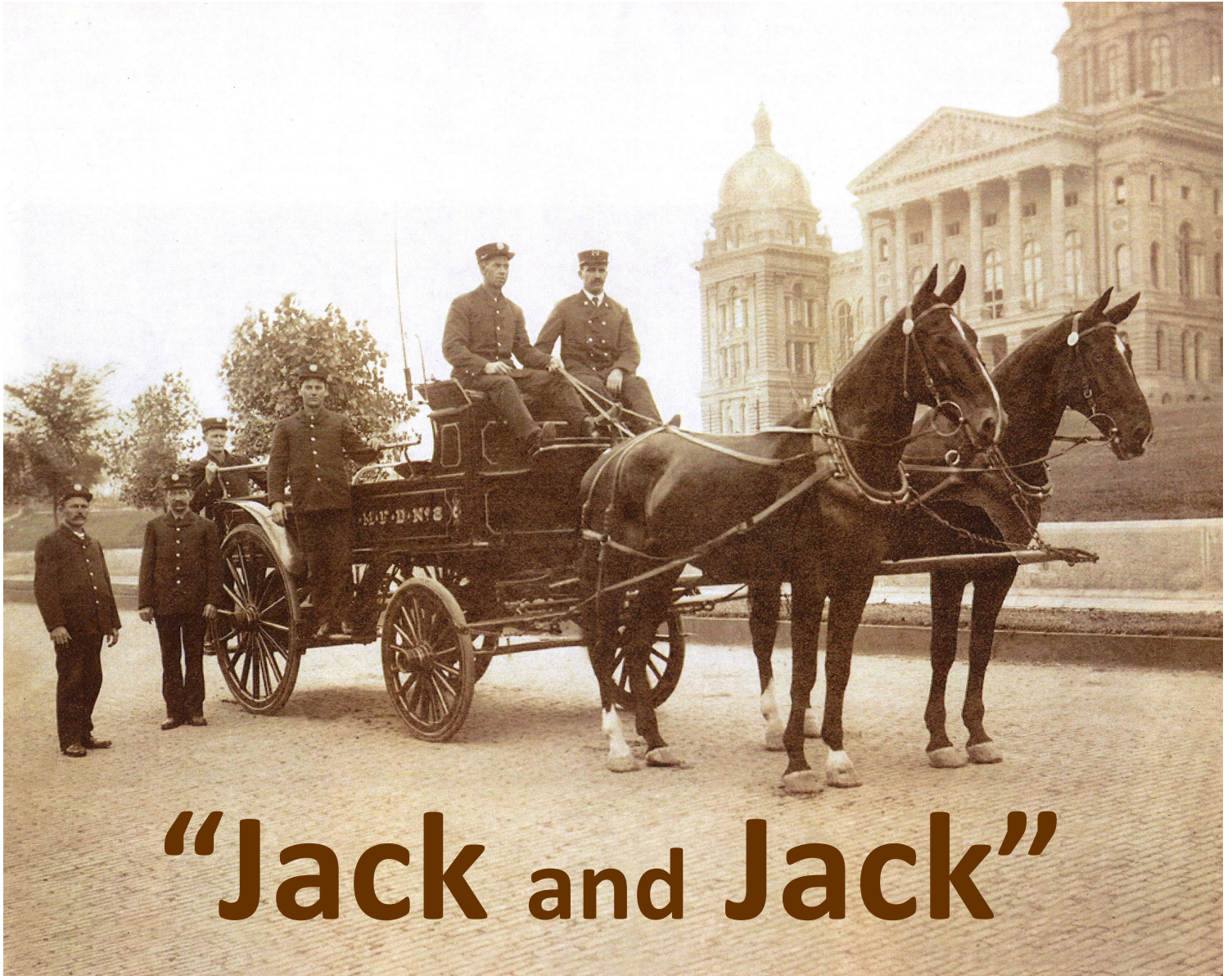


**Senator John Herriott**  
**Lieutenant Governor**



**Representative George W. Clarke**  
**Speaker of the House**





# “Jack and Jack”

Day in and day out for many years, Jack and Jack darted in and out the doors of the East Des Moines Fire Station, answering the call of duty. The famous pair led an exciting and adventurous life and were on hand to fight the Iowa State Capitol Fire of 1904. Both horses were of good bloodstock and developed great speed. In 1903 they won their first race at the state firemen's tournament. For years, the team won the best prizes at tournaments. In 1904 at Council Bluffs, Jack and Jack won first place, which entitled them to be known as “World Champions.”

**\$3.<sup>00</sup>**    **Code 89**