

*Pieces of Iowa's Past*, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the legislative session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All historical publications are reproduced here with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

**February 8, 2012**

**THIS WEEK:** **The Resolution Granting a Festival for the Citizens of Des Moines**

**BACKGROUND:** The following comes from a journal entry in the *Pioneer Lawmakers' Association of Iowa, Volumes 1-14, 1896-1913*. The journal entry is from the Third Annual Meeting of the Pioneer Lawmakers—Reunion of 1892. The president, Charles Aldrich, called the meeting to order February 10, 1892, in the assembly rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association. Governor Cyrus Carpenter gave the address.

Cyrus Carpenter was born November 24, 1829, and died May 29, 1898. He served in the Seventh General Assembly in 1858. This was the first general assembly to meet in Des Moines in the newly constructed Brick Capitol. Carpenter was Iowa's eighth governor since becoming a state in 1846. He was inaugurated in 1872 at the age of 42. Carpenter also served in the Iowa Senate during the 20th General Assembly in 1884.

# The Resolution Granting a Festival for the Citizens of Des Moines

*(Following story excerpt is as actually printed in the journal)*

## **PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD REUNION.**

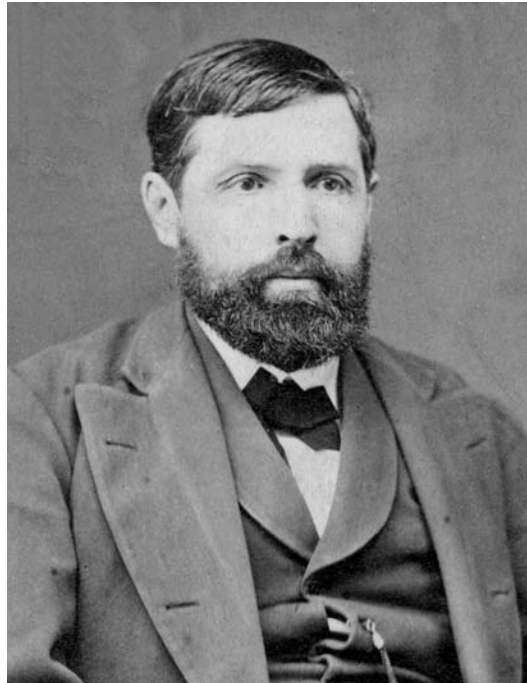
The Third Annual Meeting of the Pioneer Law-Makers was called to order February 10, 1892, in the assembly rooms of the Young Men's Christian Association, by the President, Charles Aldrich.

7:30 P.M., February 10<sup>th</sup>, 1892.

The meeting was called to order by the President.

Song: "A Thousand Years," Quartette.

Address by Gov. C.C. Carpenter:



**Governor Cyrus C. Carpenter**

(b. November 24, 1829 – d. May 29, 1898)

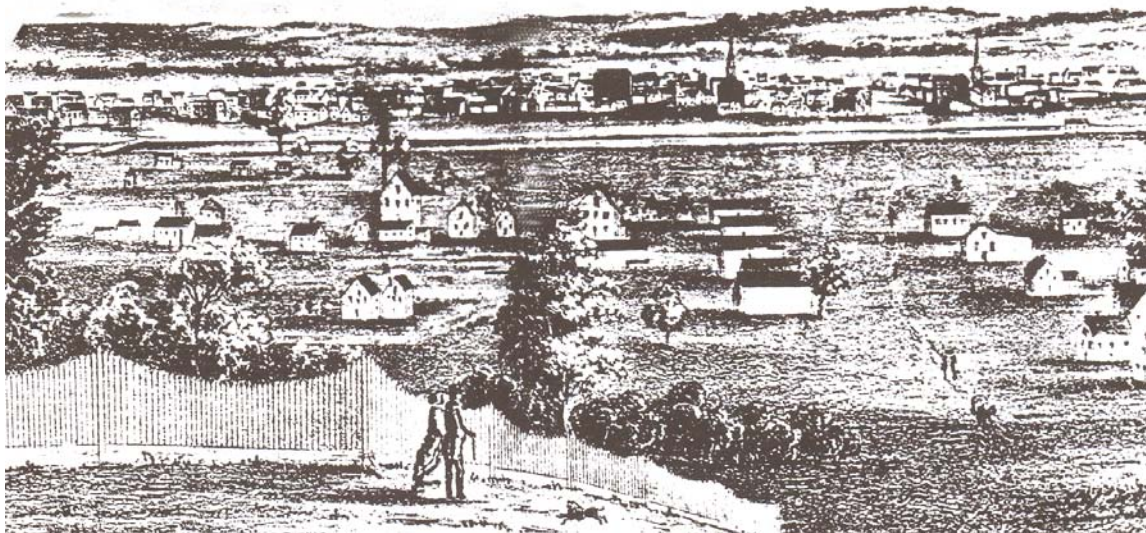
## **REMINISCENCES OF THE WINTER OF 1858 IN DES MOINES.**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> day of January, 1858, this General Assembly came together at Des Moines. It was the first General Assembly that had met in this city. The people of the city were much elated at what they regarded as their good fortune in securing the re-location of the Capitol, and were correspondingly rejoiced at the first assembling of a legislative body in their midst. We were therefore welcomed with a hospitality and friendly warmth that could not

well be repeated. I came here two or three days before the time of assembling, traveling by stage down the old State road leading from Fort Dodge to Des Moines, staying over night at **Boonsboro**, and arriving in the city the evening of the second day.

Des Moines was then a town of about **3,000 inhabitants**, as two years thereafter at the Federal census; it only had a population of about 3,900. It was literally a city of "magnificent distances."

The site of the Capitol was then a wooded hill occupied by the old (then new) Capitol building, and perhaps some twenty-five or thirty family residences scattered here and there in the openings of the timber. The bottom intervening between the foot of the hill and the river was a low muddy flat, comparatively unoccupied and unimproved. In this connection I remember an incident which shows the character of the bottom during much of **that winter**. On the day fixed for the election of State Printer, Binder, etc., Will Porter, who was the Democratic caucus candidate for printer, started with a friend in a buggy to come over from the west side to witness the proceedings of a Joint Convention. Their horse and buggy stuck in the mud and they were detained until the State Printer, **John Teesdale**, had been elected. Will laughingly said on his arrival, that if his horse had not failed him he would have broken the Republican slate. The east bank of the river was fringed for half a mile along the main front with residences, a few shops, a mill and a woolen factory. The west side of the river comprised of the larger portion of the population and business. There were then but a few residences which to-day would be regarded as equal to second class, and all business was confined to the street fronting the river and Second Street.



**Des Moines in 1857 (the year "Fort" was dropped from its name and the city was incorporated)** From *Iowa's Forgotten Statehouse* by Philip G. Hockett, printed in the spring 2001 edition of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*

The bright editor of the *Boone County News*, **Luther Sanders**, came down during the winter to see the town and look in on the Legislature; and upon his return described his trip and gave impressions of the city. He said (I quote from memory) that when he came out on the wooded heights northwest of the city and caught his first view of it, "he just fell off into it."

I have said that a Legislative Assembly was a new thing to the population of that day, and that on every hand was manifested courteous and generous hospitality. The houses of her citizens were not large, but the doors were wide, the hinges swung towards the interior, and the Legislators who had time, and were given to the social amenities, were everywhere generously entertained. During the winter almost the entire population united in giving a reception to the General Assembly. The festivities occurred in the Sherman Hall, situated, I think, at the corner of Third Street and Court Avenue. It was a whole-souled western "blow-out."

The lamps (literally) shone over fair women and entranced Legislators until after the midnight hour, and the dance and promenade still went on.

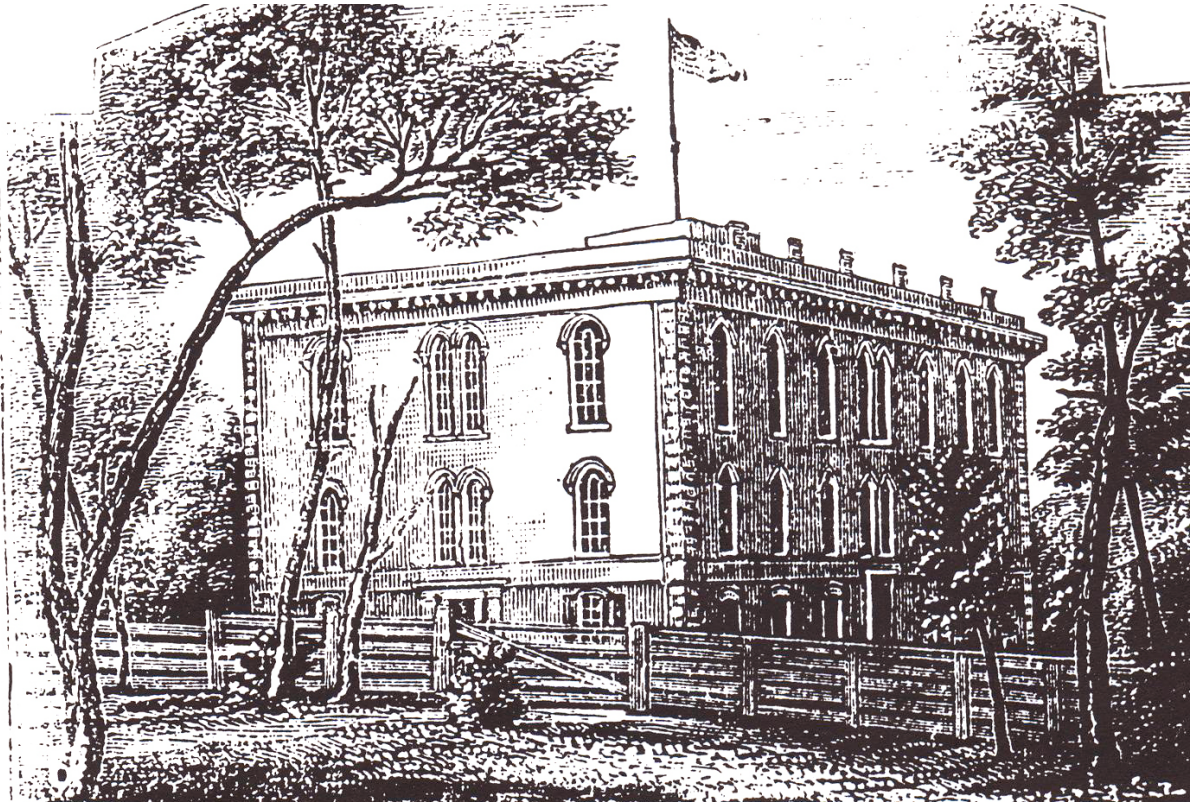
The General Assembly was not to be outdone by the good citizens in the social amenities. So on March 12<sup>th</sup> the two Houses adopted the following resolution:

*Resolved* (If the Senate concur), That the use of Hall of the House of Representatives, Senate Chamber, Supreme Court Room, and Library, be given to Messrs. Coolbaugh, Kirkwood, Patterson, Edwards, Lundy, Jackson, and Clune, on Thursday evening, March 16<sup>th</sup>, for the purpose of giving a festival to the citizens of Des Moines.

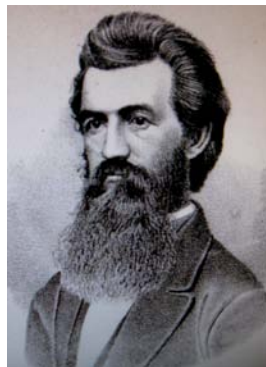
A little discussion sprang up upon the passage of this resolution. One moved to strike out "Library," and another "Supreme Court Room," expressing a doubt as to the constitutionality of using rooms which had been set apart for these purposes for such an affair as a festival. But the imagination of the entire Assembly snuffed the aroma of the forthcoming spread, and before their eyes flitted the beauty and intelligence of the city, so all constitutional scruples were silenced and the resolution passed unanimously.

At that day a donation of ten dollars by each Legislator was sufficient to furnish a generous entertainment for the entire city. In fact, at that time, the one hundred and fifty\* Legislators, with the officers of the two Houses, and the usual quota of lobbyists and visitors which such an assembly calls together, made a very appreciable addition to the population of the city, and the whole thing was thoroughly enjoyed by all the people.





To mark the end of the first legislative session held in the new building, in 1858, and to thank Des Moines citizens for their warm welcome, lawmakers arranged a "grand ball and festival" in the statehouse. As B.F. Gue recalled, "Desks and carpets were removed from the floor of the house, fine music provided, and an elaborate feast spread in the supreme court room. The gay festivities were kept up until near morning." From *Iowa's Forgotten Statehouse* by Philip G. Hockett, printed in the spring 2001 edition of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*



**Benjamin F. Gue, writer**

(*Iowa Representative 1858-62, Senator 1862-66, Iowa's sixth Lieutenant Governor 1866-68*)  
(b. December 25, 1828 – d. June 1, 1904)

# Afterword

## **Boonsboro and Luther Sanders**

The first newspaper was co-established in Boonsboro, Iowa, by Luther C. Sanders in July of 1856 and named the *Boone County News*. Sanders also served as editor during this time. The newspaper still exists today as the *Boone News Republican*. In 1865, the majority of citizens from Boonsboro began to move to the neighboring city of Montana. At that time, Boonsboro, as the old county seat, changed its name to Boone, thus becoming a suburb of Montana. (From *History of Iowa from the Beginning to the . . .*, B.F. Gue)

## **1858 Population of Des Moines at 3,000**

U.S. Census for 2010 lists the population of Des Moines at 203,433. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010)

## **Winter 1858 Temperature**

The temperature for the months of December 1857 and January 1858 – especially January – was exceptionally mild. While February 1858 was a few degrees colder than usual, March was about average. (Iowa State Climatologist Harry Hillaker)

## **State Printer, John Teesdale**

In 1856, John Teesdale moved to Iowa City, purchased the *Iowa City Republican*, and was elected State Printer. When the Capital was moved to Des Moines in 1857, Teesdale made that city his home and purchased the *Iowa Citizen*. Soon after, he changed the name to the *Iowa State Register* and converted it into a daily. He was an able editor and a radical antislavery man. Teesdale was a friend of John Brown and one of his trusted agents on the Underground Railroad in Iowa. (Paraphrased from *Genealogy.com*)

\*Governor Carpenter's recollection was incorrect when he stated there were 150 legislators in 1858. There were 108 total.