

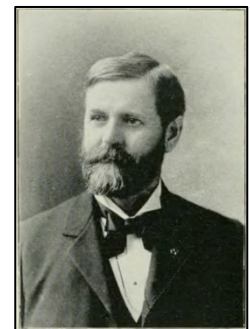
Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides monthly, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of State government. All italicized text/block quotes in this document are taken directly from historical publications with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

Examining the Firsts: Old Lawmakers Reunion

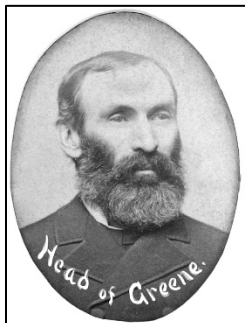
This year, the 91st Iowa General Assembly begins. Some of this year's *Pieces of Iowa's Past* articles will briefly examine the work of the First, Eleventh, Twenty-first, Thirty-first, Forty-first, Fifty-first, Sixty-first, Seventy-first and Eighty-first General Assemblies or observe interesting events that happened during those years.

The Twenty-first General Assembly convened January 11, 1886, and adjourned April 13, 1886, a 93-day session.

Among the 50 Senate members were 19 Democrat-Fusions* and 31 Republicans. Lieutenant Governor John A.T. Hull of Polk County presided over the Senate. He was elected Secretary of the Iowa Senate in 1872 and served to 1878. He was then elected Iowa Secretary of State in 1878, serving six years followed by his service as Lieutenant Governor beginning in 1885. Hull went on to serve as a congressman from the Seventh District from 1891 until 1911.



Lieutenant Governor
[John A.T. Hull](#)

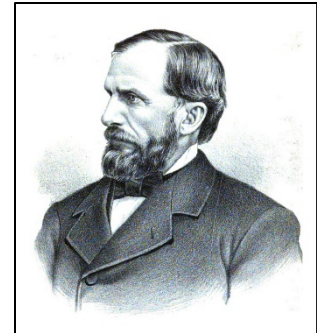


Speaker of the House
[Albert Head](#)

The House of Representatives had 60 Republican members and 40 Democrat-Fusion* members. Speaker Albert Head presided over the House of Representatives. The legislative website reads: "Captain Head was a prime factor in every movement of importance that occurred in Jefferson or in Greene county. He was a man of splendid business ability and soon became the

wealthiest man in Greene county, Iowa ... He was a man honored by every class of society, and whose brilliant career added luster to his county and state."

Governor William Larrabee served as the thirteenth Governor of Iowa from 1886 until 1890. His administration was noted for the firm stand he took in securing legislation to regulate the rates of railroad transportation and his rigid adherence to the principle of prohibition of liquor traffic.



[Governor William Larrabee](#)

*Since the start of the Civil War, Democrats had been in the minority across Iowa; electoral fusion with the Greenback Party represented the Democrats' best chance to get their candidates into office.

The First Old Lawmakers Reunion



The Pioneer Lawmakers' Association of Iowa had its origin in a reunion of old lawmakers that assembled on February 24, 1886.

[Norman Boardman](#), who was the senator from Clinton County in the Ninth and Tenth General Assemblies, from 1862 to 1866, first proposed a reunion of members of the early legislatures of Iowa.

On September 26, 1885, he wrote to [former Lieutenant Governor Gue](#) of Des Moines: "*I see by eastern papers that all the living members of the Vermont legislatures are to have a reunion in October, with very interesting exercises. Why cannot we have one in Iowa? In conversation with [John Scott](#), of Nevada, a few days ago, I found that he was heartily in favor of such a reunion, and I would like to have your opinion on the subject. Will you please confer with such of the old members as you may be able to see and let me know the result.* NORMAN BOARDMAN."

Upon this suggestion, many of the old lawmakers were consulted, and in January, the following call was issued and published in the papers throughout the state:

REUNION OF LEGISLATORS.

REUNION OF OLD-TIME LAWMAKERS.

At the suggestion of many ex-members of the early State Legislatures of Iowa, a call is hereby issued for a reunion of the members and officers of all the early General Assemblies, beginning with the First Territorial Legislature and extending down to and including all of the following Territorial and State Legislatures up to the close of the session of the Eleventh General Assembly, which met twenty years ago this winter. All the survivors of these legislative bodies are invited to a reunion, to be held at Des Moines on the 24th and 25th days of February.

According to the Des Moines Register, on February 19, 1886, "a joint meeting of the various committees in charge of the arrangements for the reunion was held with good attendance and interest in the upcoming gathering of the most notable body of men that ever assembled in Iowa. Responses have been received from about one hundred and fifty ex-member and officers of the old-time legislatures expressing their warm approval of the proposed reunion and accepting the invitation to be present and participate in its doings." The newspaper goes on below:

The following

PROGRAMME OF EXERCISES

was agreed upon :

Wednesday morning at 10 A. M., February 24 the Reunion will be opened at the Grand Opera House by a temporary organization. The rolls of the various General Assemblies will be called, beginning with the First Territorial Legislature and extending to the Eleventh General Assembly. A committee on permanent organization will be appointed, consisting of one member of each General Assembly represented. Report of committees and installation of permanent officers to be followed by the Address of the President. Addresses by Judge Edward Johnstone, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Territorial Legislature of 1840, Samuel Murdock, of the Eighth Territorial Legislature, John T. Morton, of the Third State Legislature, followed by volunteer speeches.

In the afternoon of Wednesday the members of the Reunion Assembly will meet at 2 P. M. at the Capitol building at the office of the Custodian, and proceed in a body to visit the Twenty-first General Assembly in session. The ex-Senators will first visit the Senate chamber and the ex-members will visit the House of Representatives. After a half hour the two branches of the Reunion Assembly will withdraw—the ex-Senators going into the House of Representatives and the ex-representatives going into the Senate chamber.

In the evening a reception will be given by Governor Larrabee, assisted by all ex-Governors in attendance, at the executive rooms in the Capitol, from 7:30 to 10 P. M. The State officers will be also visited, and the entire building will be illuminated. Admission to the reception will be confined to those having badges or tickets.

THURSDAY THE 25TH.

The Reunion Assembly will meet in Joint Convention at 10 A. M. at the Grand Opera House. Roll call of the members present will be the first order of business, to be followed by addresses by ex-Senator A. O. Patterson, Gen. M. M. Trumbull and ex-Senator John F. Duncombe, of the Seventh and Eighth General Assemblies, followed by volunteer speeches.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON.

The Reunion members will assemble at 2 P. M., at the Opera House, and receive a message from ex-Governor Kirkwood. Following this will be addresses by ex-Governor Carpenter, ex-Senators C. F. Clarkson and B. B. Richards. Closing and farewell speeches from the members generally.

RAILROAD RATES.

Arrangements have been made with some of the leading roads to return all members of the reunion free who have paid full fare to Des Moines, and it is expected that all other railroads will be as liberal. In any event, not more than one-third fare will be charged for return tickets.

HOTEL RATES.

The charges at the hotels will range from \$1 to \$2.50 a day. All ex-members are requested to come from the trains direct to Room No. 26, at the Aborn House, where the Committees on Arrangements and Reception will have their headquarters. All information as to hotel accommodations, badges, etc., can there be procured.

(Signed) B. F. GUE, Chairman Committee of Arrangements.

HOYT SHERMAN, Chairman Committee of Invitations.

I. M. GBIFFITH, Chairman Committee of Reception.

Pioneer Lawmaker Resolution

Be it resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa:

That as representatives of the people of Iowa here assembled, we extend to the survivors of pioneer territorial and State legislators now re-assembled here our sincere and hearty congratulations.

That we note with great pleasure the complete success of this, their first reunion, and hope it may be the precursor of many such for each and every one of them.

That we recognize in the members of this reunion the reliable and successful founders and builders of the grand system of wise and humane laws, which have contributed so much to the prosperity, character and greatness of our grand commonwealth.

That we refer with pride to their example as legislators and express the conviction that if we and our successors continue to build as wisely and as well as they began, the future contains a long vista of honor, wealth and happiness for our people that we will cherish this occasion of commingling with our old time leaders and legislators as a most happy incident in our lives.

That we devotedly invoke for them each and all continued enjoyment in this visit, and a safe return to their homes, a sunlit pathway for the remainder of their earthly existence, and finally the ineffable blessings of the life beyond.

N. B. HOLBROOK,
L. A. RILEY,
R. H. SPENCER,
House.

W. G. DONNAN,
JOHN S. WOOLSON,
W. J. KNIGHT,
Senate.

Four years later, the early lawmakers again assembled in Des Moines and organized a permanent society known as The Pioneer Lawmakers' Association of Iowa, which continues to meet to this day. Reunions are held at the Capitol building on the second Wednesday of February in the years that the General Assembly holds its regular sessions with membership open to all former state officers who served 20 years prior to each biennial reunion. The published proceedings of the several sessions of the Association now make more than nine hundred pages of valuable contributions to Iowa

history. The signature book of the Pioneer Lawmakers' Association can be found [here](#).

More Information:

[Pioneer Law-Makers Association of Iowa. A Brief History of The Organization, And Proceedings of The Reunions of 1886 And 1890. Published February 28, 1890.](#)