

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 italicized text/block quotes in this document are taken directly from historical publications with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

Examining the Firsts: The Fifty-First General Assembly

This year, the Ninety-first Iowa General Assembly began. 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, and Seventy-first General Assemblies, or observe interesting events that happened during those years.

The Fifty-first General Assembly convened January 8, 1945, and adjourned April 12, 1945, a 95-day session. The governor of Iowa during the Fifty-first General Assembly was Robert D. Blue. Lieutenant Governor Kenneth A. Evans presided over the Senate, and Harold Felton was the Speaker of the House.

There were 45 Republicans and 5 Democrats in the Senate, and in the House, there were 91 Republicans and 17 Democrats. In total, 158 legislators served during the Fifty-first General Assembly.



[Speaker of the House Harold Felton](#)



[Lt. Governor Kenneth Evans](#)



[Governor Robert Blue](#)

Preparing for a Centennial

During the Fifty-first General Assembly, Iowans were preparing for the state's centennial. Iowa became the twenty-ninth state admitted to the Union on December 28, 1846.

During his speech to the General Assembly in January 1941, Governor George Wilson called for a program for the centennial year and said that a committee of the legislature should make a study of this subject.

THE IOWA CENTENNIAL

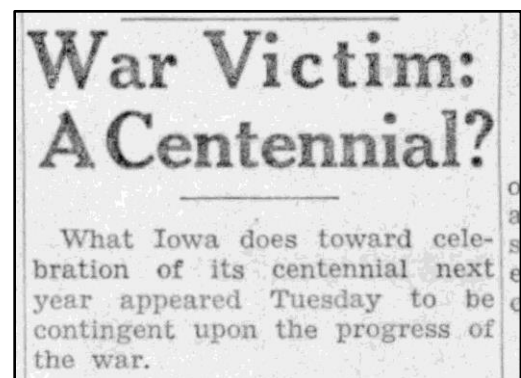
The State of Iowa is now in its ninety-fifth year of statehood. Three years ago the people celebrated the territorial centennial by a great variety of events, staged in cities in the State, all having the general purpose of reminding our people of the passing of history and the accomplishments of Iowa people in the past century.

The centennial of statehood is still more significant and it will afford a good opportunity to make our people history-minded and conscious of the greatness of their own state and its interesting and instructive story. We are engaged in preserving the source and materials for that history at the State Capitol and have accumulated a vast amount of the public records, not only for daily use but for reference by the historians, and all this should form the basis for a year of celebration five years hence. I respectfully call your attention to this and suggest that the time is here for starting on a program for our centennial year. Committees of the Legislature should make a study of this subject.

[Iowa House Journal](#), January 14, 1943

When the United States entered World War II in December 1941, a state celebration became more questionable. According to a February 4, 1943, report by the Iowa Statehood Centennial Committee, the anniversary of the State of Iowa is an important and worthy object in itself.

The committee noted that December 28, Iowa's official admission date, was inconvenient for three reasons: business activities are congested at the close of the calendar year; everyone is busy with



The Des Moines Tribune, February 27, 1945

holiday festivities and observation; and the weather is likely to be anything but favorable, certainly prohibitive for any outdoor program. Therefore, the committee suggested, all of 1946 should be devoted to widespread local observances.

In 1943, the legislature passed a joint resolution authorizing the governor to appoint a committee for preparing plans for a celebration and appropriating a total of \$1,000 to be used by the committee for stationery, postage, printing, and other miscellaneous expenses. Two years later, during the Fifty-first General Assembly, the legislature passed a joint resolution extending the time for celebrating Iowa's centennial to January 1, 1947, to ensure the previous 1943 joint resolution was properly carried out.

In December 1945, Governor Blue appointed 15 people to a Centennial Celebration Committee to prepare plans for the upcoming year.

A Centennial Group Picked

Gov. Robert D. Blue Monday appointed a committee of 15 to prepare plans for the celebration of Iowa's state centennial.

The committee will be aided by six ex-officio members, who were designated by Blue. One of them is Ora Williams, Des Moines, curator of the state department of history, who has been engaged in some preliminary plans for the celebration.

The other ex-officio members are Ethyl Martin, Iowa City, superintendent of the state historical society; Jessie Parker, Des Moines, state superintendent of public instruction, and F. E. Sheldon, Mount Ayr; Lloyd Cunningham, Des Moines, and John Mullen, Fonda, state fair board officials.

Regular members of the committee are Mrs. Robert Pike, Sioux City; Mrs. Myrtle Fellingham, Council Bluffs; Hugo Saggau, Denison; Homer Stephens, Clarinda; Mrs. R. R. Roberts, Britt; Lester Milligan, Mason City; Bert Stolpe, Des Moines; John W. Gannaway, Grinnell; Mrs. Mary Humeston, Albia; William Peterson, Iowa City; Clarence Moody, Burlington; Mrs. Celia Gernand, Volga; E. W. Williams, Manchester; Ralph Evans, Davenport, and J. N. Darling, Des Moines.

The committee was authorized and given an appropriation of \$1,000 in 1943. The authority for the committee and the appropriation was continued by the 1945 legislature.

Iowa was admitted to the union on Dec. 28, 1846.

Buy an EXTRA Victory Bond TODAY.

IN JUST 2 SECONDS

Outline Plans for Iowa Centennial Observance



The program committee of the Iowa Centennial commission confers with the commission chairman on plans for observing Iowa's one hundredth birthday as a state. From left are J. P. Mullen, Fonda; Ross Burman, Burlington; Lester Milligan, Mason City, and W. J. Petersen, Iowa City. Milligan is the commission chairman and Burman is head of the program committee. Mullen, president of the state fair board, and Petersen, an Iowa City historian, are members of Burman's committee.—STORY ON PAGE ONE.

The Des Moines Register, January 17, 1946

Celebrations took place across Iowa from parades and jamborees to commemorative coins and stamps. The June 23, 1946, article from the Des Moines Register lists the schedule of celebrations in Iowa communities throughout the summer and fall months.

Schedule of Centennial Celebrations in Iowa Communities

FETES CONTINUE INTO OCTOBER

Centennial celebrations featuring everything from historical pageants to whisker contests will be held this summer in scores of Iowa communities.

Some already have been held, but a majority are scheduled for the remainder of the summer and early fall.

Set for the last week of June, and the months of July, August, September and October are the following:

WEBSTER CITY—Concerts by U. S. Army band, historical exhibits, address by MacKinley Kantor, Webster City-born novelist, June 28.

KANAWHA—G. I. homecoming and centennial celebration, June 26, 27.

OTRANTO—Centennial celebration at Elkix Springs, June 27.

LITTLE CEDAR—Centennial celebration, June 28.

LENON—Centennial carnival, June 26-29.

MARSHALLTOWN—Parade and concert by U. S. Army band, June 28. A pageant depicting the development of religious activity in Marshall county, to be given in August, will revive the famous Marshall county Church and Bible School day.

TIPTON—Victory church in character with centennial observance honoring returning veterans of World War II, June 28, 29.

ELDORA—Hardin county American Legion centennial celebration, June 25, 26; Concert by U. S. Army band, display of U. S. Army equipment, baseball, dancing.

CEDAR FALLS—Iowa centennial week, June 27 through July 6; June 28—Unveiling of historical window display; June 29—Open date; June 30—Religious pageant, featuring 300-voice community choir; July 1—Historical exhibits at Woman's club house; July 2—All American-Iowa frolic; July 3—Historical pageant; July 4—Celebration and parade.

DES MOINES—Centennial jubilee, June 27 through July 6.

WATELLOO—Centennial celebration, June 26-30; June 26—parade and concert by U. S. Army band; June 29, 30, air circus; June 29, crowning of Centennial Queen; nighty rodeo.

IOWA CITY—Johnson county centennial celebration, June 30 through July 4; baseball games and fireworks featured on the Fourth.

Hope's Glamour Department



Bob Hope's show at the state fairgrounds July 3 will have plenty of glamour as well as gags. One of the beauties making up the glamour department will be Laura Corbelle.

July

GRINNELL—Centennial celebration, July 2-6; rodeo, horse show, \$3,000 fireworks display, parade, crowning of centennial queen, horse shoe tournament, old fiddlers contest.

OSCEOLA—July 4; centennial parade, July 5, 6; historical pageant by 4-H clubs. Window displays.

MUSCATINE—Centennial celebration, July 4-7; July 4—Parade, sports events; July 5—Soup hot derby; July 6—Merchants program; July 7—Motor boat regatta. Crowning of a "Button Queen."

NEWTON—Jasper county G.I. homecoming and centennial celebration, July 3 and 4; parade, speakers, window displays, historical pageant, fireworks, presentation of centennial queen.

CASS COUNTY—Centennial celebration at Lewis lake, July 4 through July 4; baseball games and fireworks featured on the Fourth.

FERRY—Centennial celebra-

tion and Farm Bureau picnic in conjunction with Adel, July 4.

SIOUX CITY—Centennial celebration, July 4, 5.

ELKADER—Centennial celebration, July 3, 4.

LOGAN—Centennial celebration, July 4.

MISSOURI VALLEY—Centennial celebration, July 4.

KOKUK—Centennial celebration, July 4.

GOWRIE—Historical parade featuring costumes, drum, bugle and life corps, old and new war tunes, July 4.

ST. ANSGAR—Centennial celebration, July 4.

LAMON—Combined centennial and old-fashioned Fourth of July celebration, July 4; historical parade and pageant.

CLARION—Homecoming centennial celebration, July 16, 17.

ALGONA—G.I. homecoming and centennial celebration, July 10, 11.

MANNING—Centennial carnival, July 19, 20.

FORT MADISON—Centennial

celebration, July 24.

EDDYVILLE—Centennial celebration and veterans day, July 29, 30.

CARROLL—Carroll county homecoming, parade, band concert, July 29.

BUSSEY—Centennial celebration and welcome to service people (date not set).

BELLE PLAINE—Centennial celebration, July 23; parade, barbecue and fireworks.

STORM LAKE—Buena Vista county centennial celebration July 4. Parade, recognition of veterans of World War II, soap box derby, stage show, athletic events, Northwest Iowa Trail Riders demonstration.

EMMETTSBURG—Palo Alto county centennial celebration, July 3, 4; old settlers campfire; parade. Center club demonstration, whisker marathon, parade of barges, crowning of centennial king and queen, fire works, boat rides on Five Island lake.

STORY CITY—Centennial features, Fourth of July; horse show, Aug. 16.

WAPELLA—Lousia county centennial and annual homecoming, July 16-18; historical parade and pageant, centennial parade, horse show and races, kiddies parade, educational projects in all schools.

DONNELSON—Lee county celebration in conjunction with county fair, July 24.

OEIWEIN—Centennial celebration, July 28 through Aug. 3.

ROCK RAPIDS—Centennial dedication, airport and army air show; joint church services; July 29—pageant parade, free acts, and fireworks; July 30—dance in honor of World War II veterans; July 31-Aug. 3—sports and athletics.

PISGAH—Play day, July 29.

August

STOCKPORT—Van Buren county centennial celebration, Aug. 2, 3.

CLEAR LAKE—Governor's week end, Aug. 2, 4.

HURLINGTON—Des Moines county centennial celebration 11 to 9, Aug. 4-10; Aug. 4—Model airplane contest; union church service, Aug. 4, 5, 6—Historical spectacle by cast of 600. Aug. 7, 8—4-H show; horse show, Aug. 9—Homecoming for veterans and former residents, with Maj. Gen. Phillip B. Flemming, federal works administrator, as speaker; army plane show, army and navy exhibits; parade.

OSKALOUSA—Centennial observance in connection with Southern Iowa Fair, Aug. 5-9.

FORT DODGE—Fall festival and centennial observance, Aug. 6-8.

KEOSAUQUA—Centennial celebration, Aug. 7-9.

WAVERLY—Centennial celebration, Aug. 10-15.

LEON—Centennial celebration and Decatur county 4-H show and

fair, Aug. 7; parade, whisker competition, old fiddlers' contest, band concert, style show, pageant.

CORYDON—Old settlers' meeting, Aug. 8-10.

CRESTON—Centennial celebration and annual horse show, Aug. 11-14; old settlers' picnic, Aug. 11.

ALBIA—Centennial observance, society horse show, sports carnival, whisker contest, Aug. 11-14.

RED OAK—Fall festival and centennial celebration, with 4-H club show and Farm Bureau picnic, Aug. 12; carnival, whisker contest, old-time style show.

CEDAR RAPIDS—Centennial celebration in conjunction with All-Iowa Fair, Aug. 13. Chamber of Commerce will honor one Iowa farm family from each of 26 eastern Iowa counties.

SHOENEY—Farm Bureau picnic and centennial celebration, Aug. 13; picnic, sports festival, evening program, dance, speaker.

STATE CENTER—Centennial celebration and G.I. homecoming, Aug. 14; address by Gov. Robert D. Blue, baseball game, band concert, dances, historical window decoration contest.

WOODBINE—Centennial celebration and horse show, Aug. 14; baseball games, speakers, family picnics, dance.

BLOOMFIELD—Centennial celebration, Aug. 14-18.

ROCK RAPIDS—Lyon county centennial, Aug. 14 and 15.

DECORAH—Winneshek county fair featuring centennial motif, Aug. 15-18.

CHARLES CITY—Centennial jubilee, Aug. 15-17.

ADEL—4-H achievement show and centennial celebration, Aug. 15-17; rides, fireworks, whisker contest.

EARNEST—Centennial celebration, Aug. 19, 20; dedication of new airport, air show, parade, carnival, ball games.

ELDON—Wapello county fair,

JUNE 23, 1946. DES MOINES SUNDAY REGISTER H-9

September

DEINSON—Old settlers' picnic, Sept. 2.

VILLISCA—Jubilee and centennial celebration, Sept. 4-6.

SIBLEY—Sibley's Centennial celebration and diamond jubilee, Sept. 13, in connection with Osceola county fair, Sept. 11-13.

LE MARS—Floyd county centennial pageant with a cast of 400, Sept. 15-17.

OTTUMWA—Centennial parade, pageant, dance, window displays, Sept. 17-19.

CLARINDA—Pioneer day, veterans day, school day, Iowa farm day, Sept. 18-21.

AUDUBON—Centennial celebration, Sept. 25, 26 (tentative).

FAIRFIELD—Centennial celebration, Sept. 25-28. Veterans' day to honor veterans of World War II.

UNIONVILLE—Historical pageant (date not set).

CENTERVILLE—Historical pageant by school children, window displays, Sept. 27-27.

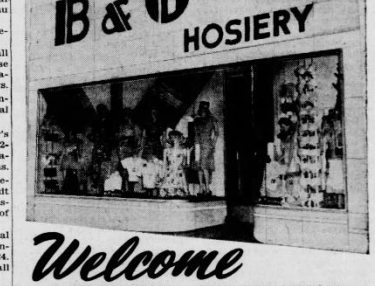
SPENCER—Clay county centennial fair, Sept. 2-7.

October

EAGLE GROVE—Centennial celebration and annual school homecoming, Oct. 10, 11.

Communities which already have observed Iowa's centennial year with ceremonies are: Garden Grove, Storm Lake, Jefferson, Dubuque, Mason City, Harlan, Atlantic, Guthrie Center and Spencer.

Celebration will end today in Davenport, Creco and Charles City.



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in Des Moines
JUNE 27
THRU JULY 6

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[Smithsonian, National Postal Museum](https://www.smithsonian.com)

The Des Moines Register, June 23, 1946



Iowa Centennial half dollar
[United States Mint](https://www.usmint.gov/collect/commemorative-coins-and-medals/iowa-centennial-half-dollar)