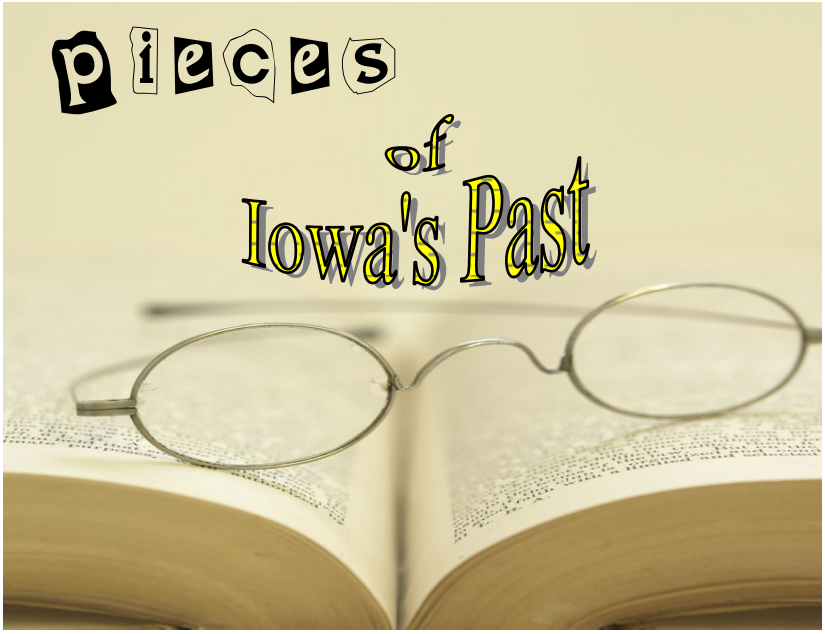


Pieces of Iowa's Past, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the legislative session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All historical publications are reproduced here with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar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

March 5, 2014

THIS WEEK: **Governor Clarke Speaks to the Pioneer Lawmakers' Association in 1913**

BACKGROUND:

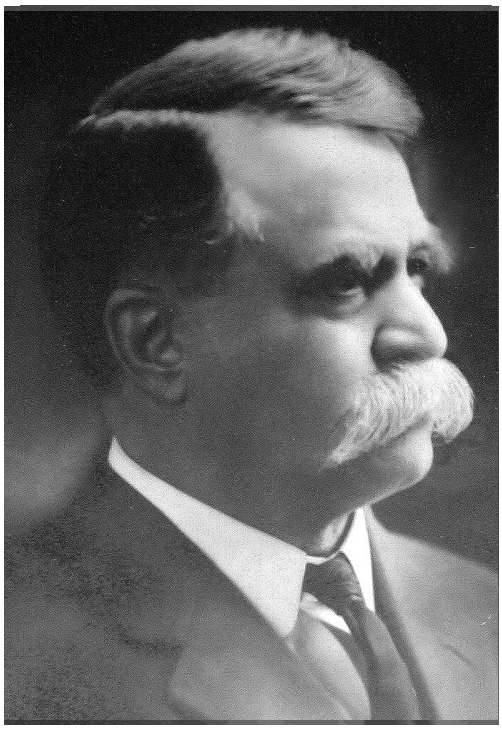
Judge Chester Cicero Cole was born in Oxford, New York, in June of 1824. He graduated from Harvard Law School and came to Iowa in about 1857. He was appointed to the Supreme Court by Governor Stone, serving from 1864 to 1876, serving as Chief Justice for one year. In 1865, he and George Wright founded "The Iowa Law School." After this school moved to Iowa City, Cole and Wright founded "The Iowa College of Law" in 1875. This would eventually become Drake University Law School. Cole died in Des Moines on October 4, 1913, at the age of 89.

Governor Clarke Speaks to the Pioneer Lawmakers' Association in 1913

Speaking on the changes Judge Cole, the then President of the Pioneer Lawmakers Association, had seen in his lifetime and the challenges facing the legislature at that time.

ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR.
Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Iowa Pioneer Lawmakers' Association: I made some notes of some things I thought I might with propriety say here today shortly before I came over here. They are reflections that naturally come to one

on being called into a presence like this; into the presence of the Pioneer Lawmakers' Association of Iowa. The pioneer is the man who goes ahead; he is the man who has gone before; who has marked out the way. In other words, he has prepared the way; he has laid the foundations. Naturally, one begins to think when he is about to speak to a company like this of the days that are gone; of the days that have passed during the lifetime of the men who are here today. I understand that the president of this association is Judge Cole, who cannot be with you today. I know something of the age of Judge Cole. He is approaching eighty-nine years of age, and when I think of the stretch of life over the last eighty-eight years I am impressed with the fact that he has lived in a wonderful time, and one begins to think of what has happened, or what the conditions were when such men were young men; what the conditions in this country were when you were boys, when you were children. I do not know that I could do any better today than simply to call attention to some of the conditions to indicate to us how far we have traveled and how wonderful has been our progress.



Governor George W. Clarke

Think of the work of seventy-five years in this country! The work of the last seventy-five years in all the world! If what has been accomplished for mankind could be summed up in all the centuries gone before the last it would not begin to equal what has been done and accomplished in the last one hundred years, or perhaps within the lifetime of you men who are here today. When some of you were children, we had no such means of transportation as we have now. We had no better means of transportation then than they had three thousand years ago and more—had not made any progress at all so far as the question of transportation is concerned. When the president of this association was born Chicago was not on the map. Several years later there were only about ten cabins where now sits on the shores of Lake Michigan one of the greatest cities of the world, all this within the lifetime of some of the members of this association. There was not any such thing as telegraph or telephone. Nothing of that kind. There was not a sewing machine in the world when some of you were boys; nor a

Judge Chester C. Cole

friction match. If the fire happened to go out you borrowed fire from your neighbors. There was no such thing as a reaper then in the world. The old method of harvesting grains which had existed for very many years was in vogue at that time. There were no such guns as we have now—there was the old flint-lock gun. Nobody had ever seen or thought of the wonderful machine guns that we have now. There was not a cook-stove in the world when a man now eighty years old was born. When you think of the hundreds and hundreds of uses that rubber is put to now and realize that it was not then thought of or even discovered at all, how wonderful! Go into our homes and you do not find anything there that was in the homes of the people when you were boys. There were no such carpets as now, or a piano.

Houses were not lighted as now. When you think of it, there were few American books when you were boys. The fact is the literature of America has all come since you were children. Think if you can of any American names of any particular consequence, except perhaps two or three, that have adorned the literature of this country that have not come within the lifetime of many of the men who are here. There was Fenimore Cooper, among the first. Then there were Irving within your lifetime, Hawthorne and Lowell, Whittier and Longfellow, and Bryant and Emerson, and Prescott and others. The fact is there was no literature in this world, American or English, of consequence compared with the literature that we have now. I know of the Shakespearean age and of Milton, but when you come down to literature in its abundance and in the greatness of its width and scope, by much the vaster part of it has come within the lifetime of men who are now living. If you take the writers in the domain of science, Tyndall, Huxley, and Darwin, all of these names, these investigators in science, have come within the lifetime of men who are here today.

You go into the religious thought of the world, we haven't anything at all in that line as we used to know it and understand it and read and sing about it. We don't sing the songs we used to sing. Our religious thought and emotions are expressed in quite a different sort of songs. I speak of these things simply to indicate the kind of world we have been living in, and the wonderful progress we have made. It is absolutely marvelous to me when I think of it. And the progress goes rapidly on. A train of twenty-five years ago will not compare with one of our transcontinental trains. Even in my lifetime I can remember the old stage coach, the ox team. We have gotten away from all of that, and live in a new world. Coming to the growth and development of the state of Iowa: When the war broke out there was not a telegraph line that reached a single city in Iowa, unless perhaps on the Mississippi. There was hardly any railroad mileage in the state at that time. The railroad had reached a little beyond Iowa City. In 1866 the cars reached this city, and soon afterward the locomotive appeared on the banks of the Missouri river at Council Bluffs. Think of the thousands of miles of railway in Iowa now, and all within that time.

The foundations of this state so far as lawmaking is concerned were laid within the time I have spoken of, and were laid wisely and well. I said the pioneer is the man who goes ahead, marks out the way, and lays the foundation upon which the superstructure is built. What a grand superstructure has been built upon the plans laid by the pioneer lawmakers of Iowa! This superstructure rests on the work done by the pioneers and lawmakers of the state.

I sometimes wonder as we go about our work today what you would have done if you had had to meet what we have to meet; have wondered if you had the difficulties in those days that we have now; wondered if you were opposed at every step of your progress in the legislation as we are now. I take pride in the foundation you laid, and the example you set, and the wisdom of the laws you enacted. But I can hardly think of you with every kind of commercial interest swooping down upon you and opposing every single thing you proposed as is done in this day. Now everything is reduced to a commercial basis. Everything is so dependent on every other thing. So interwoven and interdependent are all things that it seems impossible to take up or discuss any question of legislation at all without touching some other related interest. So that you come in contact with every sort of interest in opposition to every single proposition or reform. We have a complex civilization. We have, I think, a new civilization. I believe that we have passed from the old days I have just been talking about and that we are in a transition period, that we are passing into a new day, an entirely new day, and that our lives are to be lived and our work to be done under entirely new and different conditions than those under which you did your work in the early days. I think that is true, and that these new conditions that have been so wonderfully developed in the last seventy-five years have presented entirely new questions; questions never thought of when the foundations of this state were being laid; never even dreamed of. Not a man here seventy-five years old, or any one else, dreamed be would ever live to see the conditions under which we live today. And, when you think of it, we have come to a condition or situation when the interests of these states are all interwoven with each other.

The interests of Iowa, the interests of Illinois, Nebraska, Minnesota, and the other states, are so interwoven that you cannot touch any question of general legislation where that fact ought not to be taken into consideration.

Whatever the proposed legislation may be, if it touches business it meets opposition, whether directly or indirectly. Now, I cannot think that when you were legislating you met with these difficulties to such an extent. I don't know that you did, but I do not think that conditions were such then as would lead to the opposition that legislators now find in their way all of the time. But I said we are coming into a transition period. I think the state has passed out of its pioneer period and is coming into a greater and broader and a deeper civilization. I believe that the conditions that have heretofore existed will not do for the future.

Take, for instance, our schools. Everybody is dissatisfied with the conditions that exist now, although they were founded in wisdom. The laws with reference to them were wise, and we expended millions and millions of dollars upon them, but everybody now agrees that there ought to be some change. And our legislative difficulties reach to another reform—taxation.

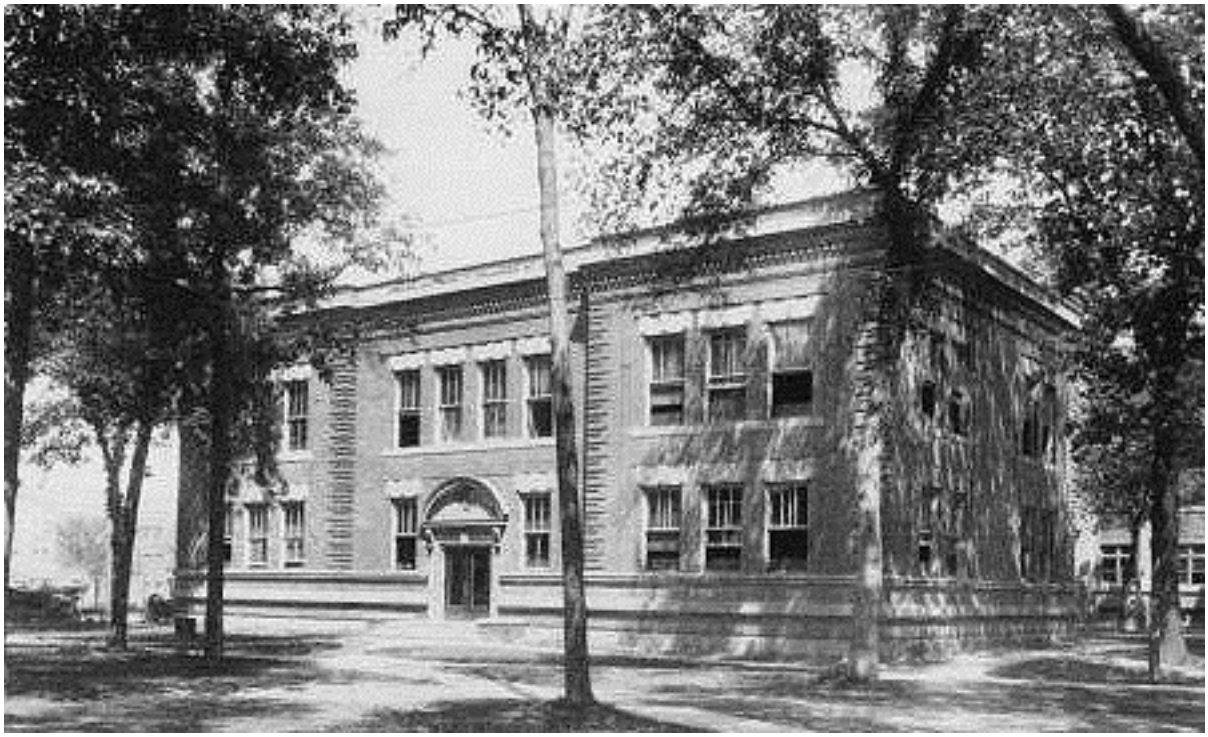
And there is the public utilities question with which you did not have to deal, because you did not live in the complex civilization in which we do.

But I have talked long enough. I want to add one other thought, however. When we speak of a pioneer we think of men who lived some time ago, but we are

always to have pioneers. The day will never come when we will not have pioneers along some line. There will be the pioneer in science in days to come; the pioneer in some reform in the days to come. New questions will arise on account of our civilization. There will be the pioneer who will lead the way with reference to these new questions—new questions not only so far as legislation is concerned, but in many other directions, so that we shall always have the pioneer with us.

I can only add a word or congratulation that so many of you are here to talk over and enjoy reminiscences of days that are gone; of the days with reference to early Iowa, of which I have already spoken. It must bring to you a peculiar pleasure. It must be satisfying to you to contemplate this great state in which you live and that you have seen develop from the wilderness to the state of tremendous wealth that it now is, and to the citizenship that now characterizes its people. I say it must be with a sense of gratitude and of pride that you come together and contemplate these days. I only wish that you may come again and again. I congratulate you upon the work you have done for this state, and I express to you my sincere welcome, if I may do so, to this gathering and to the capital city. I thank you. *(Applause.)*

Note: Both Governor Clarke and Chester Cole served as Dean of Drake Law School.



Cole Hall, 1914

Named for Chester Cole, the founder of Drake University's Law School, Cole Hall was built in 1904 and served as the Law College.