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February 4, 2015

THIS WEEK: Special Session to Revise the Iowa Code

BACKGROUND:

The extraordinary session of the 26th General Assembly convened January 19, 1897. Legislators recessed May 11, and then reconvened July 1, finishing this 165-day special session on July 2, 1897. This was the fifth time the Iowa Legislature had met in an extraordinary session.

Special Session to Revise the Iowa Code

Revising the Code of Iowa was a huge undertaking and required a special session in order to allow enough time for the legislature to complete this work. The recess from May to July was time needed for printing, binding, and annotating the Iowa Code. The Code Supervising Committee estimated "it would require 35,000 pounds of paper, the total cost of which was near \$5,000."

Governor Francis Drake's message to the General Assembly explaining why they had been assembled for an extra session included the following comments:

". . . you are assembled to pass in review the statutes of the commonwealth, and to put in concise form the laws which are to begin to have force substantially with the commencement of the state's second half century."



Governor Francis Drake

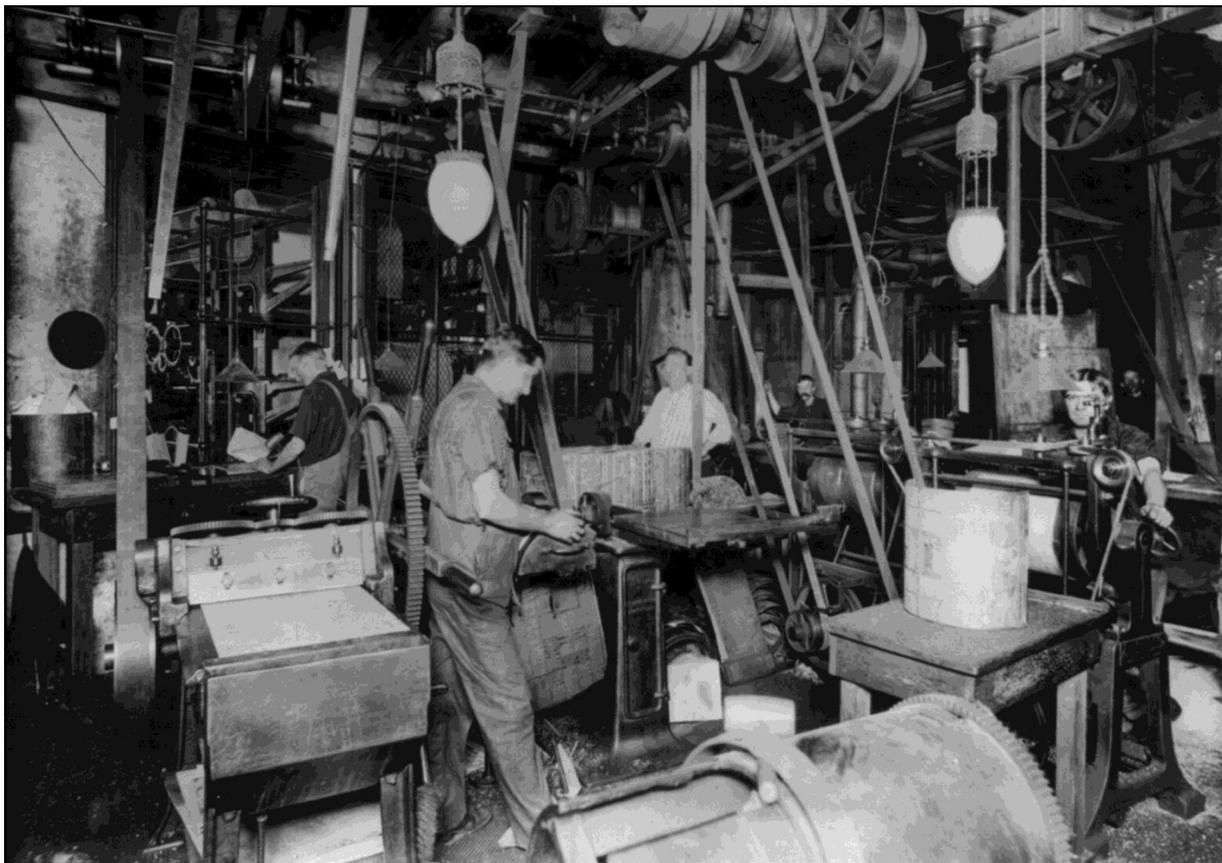
Governor Drake concludes his speech with this paragraph:

“It is unnecessary for me to remind the General Assembly that the people of the State are expecting the session to be of brief duration, and I doubt not that you are, as their representatives, in full sympathy with that feeling. Permit me to express the hope that your deliberations will eventuate in a Code of Laws that will give satisfaction to the people, while it will anew commend the legislation of this great Commonwealth to approval beyond our borders.” —January 19, 1897

A portion of the Journal entry from July 1, 1897, reads as follows:

The prefix consisting of Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Constitution of the United States, and State of Iowa, Naturalization Laws, Ordinance of 1787, Organic Law of Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, Admission of Iowa, and other matters numbering over one hundred pages has been electrotyped* and printed. Of the Code proper about one hundred and thirty pages have been set up, proof read and electrotyped.

Nothing remains for the editor to do but to make the index and have general supervision of the work of proof reading.



***Electrotyped refers to a process of covering type face with a thin layer of metal, usually copper, creating a mold that allows a page or document to be printed without wearing down the type face. This allowed for the efficient “run” of thousands of copies.**