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February 25, 2015

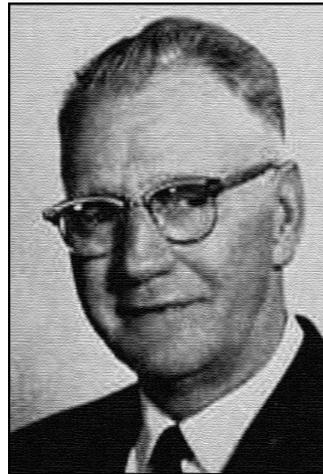
THIS WEEK: The 56th Iowa General Assembly Welcomes the Governor of the Virgin Islands

BACKGROUND:

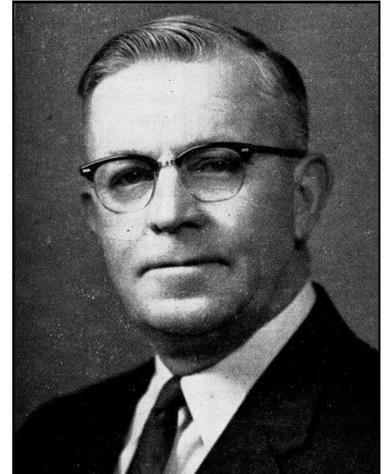
The 56th General Assembly convened January 10, 1955, and adjourned April 29, 1955, a 110-day session. Lieutenant Governor Leo Elthon,



Governor Leo Hoegh



Lieutenant Governor Leo Elthon



Representative Arthur Hansen

presided in the Senate, and Arthur Hansen was the Speaker of the House. There were 158 members in the Legislature. The Senate was comprised of six Democratic members and 44 Republican members. The House of Representatives had 88 Republican and 20 Democratic members.

Leo Hoegh served as Governor from 1955 to 1957. He was inaugurated January 13, 1955, at the age of 46.

JOINT CONVENTION

April 15, 1955



**Senator Charles
Van Eaton**

In accordance with the concurrent resolution duly adopted, the joint convention was called to order, President Watson presiding (*Senator DeVere Watson served as president pro tempore during the 56th General Assembly*) President Watson announced a quorum present and the joint convention duly organized.



**Senator DeVere
Watson**

Senator Van Eaton of Woodbury moved that a committee of four be appointed to notify the Honorable Archie A. Alexander, Governor of the Virgin Islands, that the joint convention was ready to receive him.

The committee waited upon Governor Alexander and his party and escorted them to the Speaker's station.

President Watson presented to the joint convention the Honorable Archie A. Alexander, who addressed the joint convention. (*There is no legislative record of his remarks that day.*)

The 56th Iowa General Assembly Welcomes the Governor of the Virgin Islands



Archie Alphonso Alexander

In a time when racial inequality flourished in America, Archie Alphonso Alexander refused to let racial barriers prevent him from becoming a successful engineer and presidential appointee. Alexander owned his own business, won large contracts, became a wealthy engineer, and was a highly respected Iowan.

Alexander was born in Ottumwa, May 14, 1888, the son of a coachman who moved his family to Des Moines when Alexander was 11 or 12. As a boy, he attended Oak Park Elementary and Oak Park High, graduating in 1905, and then Highland Park College and Cummins Art School, both in Des Moines, before enrolling at the University of Iowa in

1908, where he was one of the school's first African-American football players. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in 1912, and he worked for a bridge-building firm in Des Moines before launching his own business in 1914. He and his partner, George F. Higbee, formed a company in 1917—

Alexander and Higbee, Inc. Their company built freeways and apartments, airfields, sewage systems, power plants, and trestles. Alexander earned a degree in Civil Engineering from the University of Iowa in 1925. In 1946, he was awarded an honorary doctorate in engineering from Howard University. In 1947, the University of Iowa named Alexander one of 100 outstanding



**Archie Alexander biographical cartoon
by Charles Alston, 1943**

alumni among 30,000 graduates.

Alexander gained an international reputation when President Dwight Eisenhower appointed him Governor of the Virgin Islands. He served from April 1954 until August 1955. He and then partner Maurice Repass continued their construction projects, with offices in Des Moines and Washington, D.C. Alexander was a trustee for Howard University, where he also lectured.

Alexander died of a heart attack in Des Moines January 4, 1958. His wife, Audra A. Lindzy, survived him. Upon her death, the University of Iowa, Tuskegee Institute, and Howard University were beneficiaries of his will and each received \$105,000 in 1975.