

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 11, 2015

THIS WEEK:

Iowa's Sesquicentennial Celebrated

BACKGROUND:

The 76th General Assembly convened for the first year January 9, 1995, and adjourned May 4, 1995—a 116-day session. The second year of the General Assembly convened January 8, 1996, and adjourned May 1, 1996—a 115-day session. There were 150 legislators. In the Senate there were 27 Democratic members and 23 Republican members. The House of Representatives had 36 Democratic members and 64 Republican members. Those numbers changed in the House for the second year of the General Assembly due to a special election. In 1996, there were 37 Democratic and 63 Republican members in the House of Representatives. Leonard Boswell was the President of the Senate. Ron Corbett was the Speaker of the House. Terry Branstad was Governor, having been inaugurated January 14, 1983, at the age of 36. The federal census of 1990 showed Iowa's population at 2,776,755—a decline of more than 137,000 from the previous census in 1980.

Iowa's Sesquicentennial Celebrated

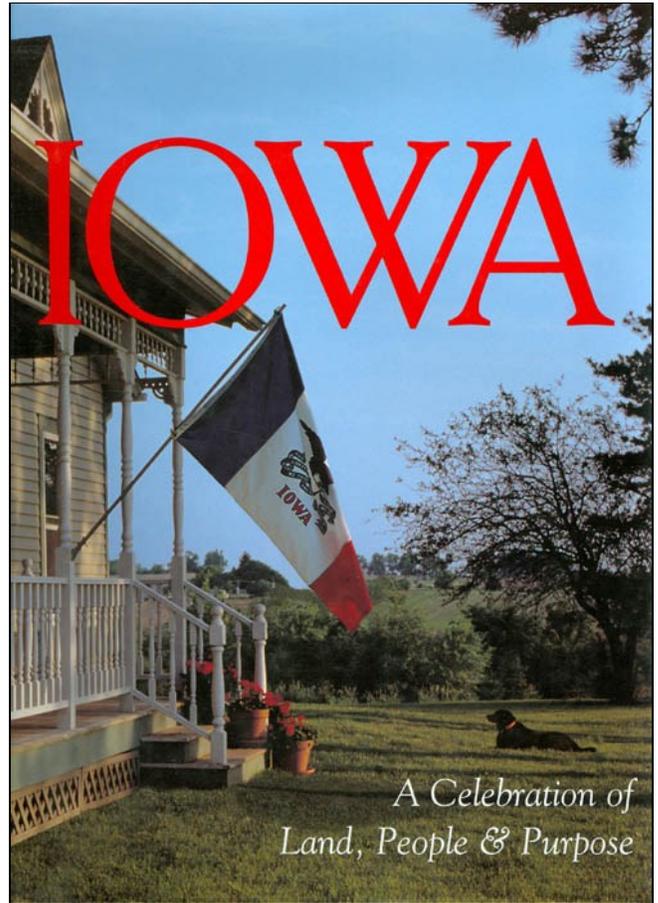


The Sesquicentennial Commission was formed in 1991. The Commission's responsibilities were to plan, coordinate, and administer programs relating to Iowa's 150th anniversary of statehood. The sale of sesquicentennial license plates was to be the primary source of funds. There were also



grants, corporate partnerships, and merchandise sales, including a commemorative book.

The Smithsonian Institution's Festival of American Folklife on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., featured Iowa in June and July of 1996. Iowa's portion of the Folklife Festival was restaged on the State Capitol grounds in August 1996. There were musicians, storytellers, craftspeople, cooks, and countless other Iowans participating in the four-day event. To the east side of the State Capitol, the grounds were filled with tents and stages. There were nightly fireworks



Iowa Sesquicentennial Book

displays. The Capitol and Historical Museum were open for visitors. There were 85,000 who attended the Folklife Festival here in Iowa and an estimated 1.2 million who visited the Iowa portion of the Smithsonian Institution's Festival in Washington, D.C.

On December 28, 1995, Old Capitol in Iowa City hosted the kickoff event and on December 28, 1996, the celebration culminated with a daylong celebration at the Iowa State Capitol followed by fireworks set off from the south lawn over Walnut Street in Des Moines.

Every Iowa county had a local Sesquicentennial Commission to plan local celebrations and to highlight the local areas that contributed to the history and culture of the state.



Iowa's Sesquicentennial Stamp