

Building the New Capitol

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BUILDING THE NEW CAPITOL.

Our leading article is a faithful record of the erection of the New Capitol, from the pen of Hon. Peter A. Dey, one of the State's chosen commissioners after the first board was superseded. The first board, consisting of eight members, in addition to the Governor, who was *ex officio* president, and included some of the most eminent men in the State, was found to be too cumbrous, and the next legislature provided for a commission consisting of the Governor and four practical men. It was wisely provided that the board should be a non-partisan body, a conclusion which met with universal approval. Messrs. Peter A. Dey and Maturin L. Fisher were the democratic members; Messrs. Finkbine and Foote, republicans. Mr. Finkbine was an architect by profession, and Mr. Foote a business man whose methods invariably led to system and exactness. Mr. Fisher, then a farmer, was a man of thorough education, a graduate of Yale college, a former superintendent of public instruction, than whom no one stood higher in public confidence. Mr. Dey was an educated engineer and had had many years of active experience, especially in the building of railroads, and thoroughly understood the nature and value of such materials as would enter into the construction of the new State House. The qualities needed in servants entrusted with such high responsibilities were most admirably proportioned. When their labors finally culminated in the completion of the edifice it was proudly and justly claimed that not a single dollar had been diverted from its legitimate purpose. The people of Iowa were proud of the New Capitol, and that feeling has never suffered any abatement. Commissioners have come

from other States to admire the edifice and hear the story of the processes whereby such desirable results were achieved.

In Vol. IV, pp. 241-246, we gave Hon. John A. Kasson's admirable paper on "The Fight for the New Capitol." In that contest Mr. Kasson was the chosen leader of that large portion of the people of Iowa who desired the erection of a new capitol in place of the insufficient pioneer structure which was already lapsing into decay. It will doubtless seem strange to many readers that there could have been any opposition to a work of such obvious necessity. But the opposition was bitter, wide-spread, and led by some of the ablest men in the State. The causes which inspired opposition were various. Some good people may have honestly believed that the State could not afford the contemplated expenditure of money; others may have hoped for the removal of the seat of government to a different location; while something like demagoguery doubtless inspired the action of others. Common consent pointed to Mr. Kasson as the one available and competent leader in this sharp contest. How it was fought to a successful conclusion in the legislature he has told in his own admirable style, and his paper will remain the final word on that subject as long as it shall interest our people.

Mr. Dey sets forth with great clearness and entire truth, the qualifications of his associates. Those who still survive from that time will agree with us that a more competent board, or one which could have inspired a higher degree of confidence, could not have been found in the State. So far as the personnel of the board was concerned, there was no complaint on the part of the press or the people. Its members enjoyed the largest measure of public confidence from the beginning to the end of their labors, and a most generous estimate of the value of their services still exists throughout Iowa and neighboring states. The historical papers of Messrs. Dey and Kasson leave nothing further to be said. They complete the history of the movement for the New Capitol.

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