Iowa's Constitution

When the U.S. Constitution was ratified by the 13 original states, lowa was not a state. It became a part of the United States through the Louisiana Purchase in the early nineteenth century. The Territory of lowa was created in 1838. People who lived in the area voted down the proposition to become a state in 1840 and in 1842. They eagerly sought statehood, but opposed boundaries fixed by the U.S. Congress.

After people approved new boundaries, the first lowa Constitution (the Constitution of 1846) was written so that lowa could become a state. On December 3, 1846, in the Stone Capitol at lowa City, Ansel Briggs was inaugurated as first Governor of the State of lowa. A copy of the Constitution of lowa was sent to Washington, D.C. It was approved by Congress, and President James Polk gave his approval on December 28, 1846.

As the new state grew, the needs of its people changed. These new needs could not be met by the first constitution so a constitutional convention was called to write a new one.

No Money in Iowa

The main drawback of the first lowa constitution was that it did not allow banks that could print and issue money (these were called ' 'banks of issue"). Money in the 1840s was not like the money we use today. The United States government did not print paper money at all. Instead, it made gold and silver coins. Banks and businesses avoided this problem by printing notes (a kind of paper money) to use in place of gold or silver. In the 1840s and '50s, there were over 700

CONSTITUTION Jourd. WE, THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF IOWA gealiful to the Supreme Beine for the blysings hitherte micyed, and feeling our dependence in Hint for a continuation of the blos sings, de ordain and establish a free and independent government, by the name of the Male of Down, the boundaries, whereof shall be as follows . Beginning in the middle of the main channel of the Mis sissippi River, al a point due Cast of the middle of the menth of the main channel of the Ges Moines Mirer, thene up the mid the of the main channel of the said Der Merines River, to a point on said river where the Sorthern beandary line of the State of Meifsouri- as established by the constitution of that, Male_adopted June 12th. 1920_cropes the said middle of the main channel of the said Des Meines River ; thence Hestwar by along the Suid Northern boundary line of the Mate of Kis. souri, as established at the time aferesaid, until an estimated of said line intersects the middle of the main channel of the Meissouri River, thence up the middle of the main channel of the said Mipenie Mires to a print opposite the middle of The main channel of the Big Fines Mirer according to Sie. olletts . Haf : thenes up the main channel of the said this Theme Miver, according to the said map, until it is interventer by the parallel of forty three decrees and thirty minutes, less Valitude; thenes Cast alone said parallet of forty three degrees

and thirty minutes until Said parallel intersects the middle of

the main channel of the Mijor frippi River , thence down the middle of the main channel of said . Ripsippi time to the

banks in the U. S. Many of these printed their own notes. The value of the notes varied from bank to bank. It was impossible to know the current value of the notes of all banks. In Iowa, the Constitution of 1846 prohibited banks of issue. They had no official currency. At one time, over 300 kinds of money circulated in Iowa.

place of beginnine .

When the new Constitution of 1857 was adopted, a new bank with many branches was begun. This was called the State Bank because the state made the rules. The State Bank gave lowans money they could trust.

Courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa, "Iowa Constitution," The Goldfinch: Iowa's Constitution, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 6, February 1987