

On March 5, 1989, Secretary of State Elaine Baxter presented the restored constitution to the people of Iowa in a Statehouse ceremony commemorating the 132nd anniversary of its signing. Special guests included direct descendants of the constitution's original signers who were reached through a search initiated by Secretary Baxter.

Visitors are welcome to view the restored constitution at the secretary of state's office, 1st floor of the Statehouse, from 8:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M., Monday through Friday.

WE, THE PEOPLE...

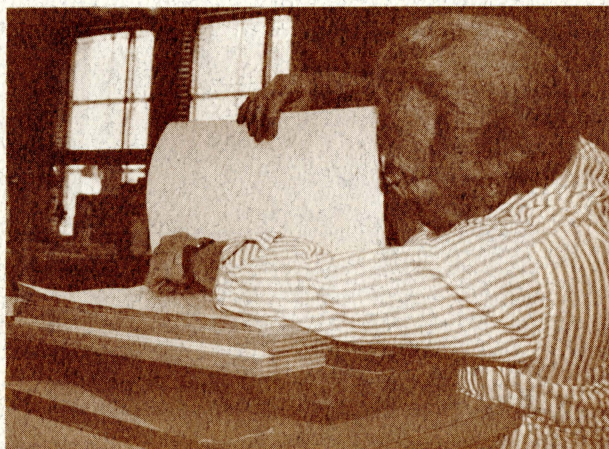
Conserving Iowa's Constitution

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Upon taking office as secretary of state in 1987, Elaine Baxter began the process to have the Iowa Constitution restored. It is the responsibility of the secretary of state to keep and maintain the Constitution of the State of Iowa. After examining the constitution, Secretary Baxter found the 130-year-old handwritten document to be visibly deteriorating. She could see that if deterioration was not halted, the constitution would never endure. Secretary Baxter was determined

to preserve the constitution for future generations of Iowans.

A search to locate a conservationist led to William Anthony, an internationally recognized conservator and book binder at the University of Iowa Library. The 72nd General Assembly approved a request from Secretary Baxter to appropriate lottery funds for the project. A contract between the University of Iowa and the state was drawn, and in April 1988 Secretary Baxter personally delivered the constitution to Anthony at the university's conservation lab for the restoration process.

Anthony determined that much of the constitution's deterioration was a result of an acidic glue used as a binding agent. To prevent further damage, Anthony removed, dry cleaned, and then washed each page in distilled water.

Next the fragile pages of the constitution were mended by using a special paper. The pages were sewn into sections; the sections were then sewn together and rebound in the constitution's restored leather cover.

From the beginning, Secretary Baxter had expressed a concern that the constitution's original display case did not adequately protect the document from humidity and ultraviolet rays. As a result, Anthony developed a secure, environmentally-safe and attractive display case for the constitution.

In October 1988, University of Iowa President Hunter Rawlings III presented the restored constitution to Governor Terry Branstad and Secretary Baxter at a ceremony at Old Capitol in Iowa City where the document had been drafted. The ceremony

marked the end of restoration, but a new beginning of pride and interest in this unique document.

Today, the Iowa Constitution rests proudly in its new case located in the secretary of state's office at the Iowa Statehouse. Viewed by Iowans and out-of-state visitors alike, the restored constitution stands as a public record of Iowa's history and a source of inspiration for future generations.

The constitution of 1857 is Iowa's third and final constitution. The first two versions were drafted for the U. S. Congress to enable Iowa to gain admission as a state. The first constitution was drafted in 1844, but it was rejected because of a disagreement with Congress over Iowa's borders. In 1846, a second constitution was drafted which defined the borders of Iowa as we know them today. Congress accepted this document, and in December 1846 passed an act admitting Iowa to the Union.

It was not long, however, before it became clear that there were problems with the constitution of 1846. In January 1855, the Iowa General Assembly authorized a constitutional convention. Two years later, 36 convention delegates were called to order in Iowa City, Iowa's first capital.

Many national issues influenced convention debate. Slavery, in particular, became a convention issue. Ultimately, this issue would shape an 1868 referendum which granted voting rights to Iowa black men.

Other decisions created a state board of education and the office of lieutenant governor. Resolutions were also

adopted which made it easier to amend Iowa's Constitution in the future.

On March 5, 1857 after 39 days of deliberation, the delegates signed Iowa's Constitution. In August, voters approved the constitution, and on September 3, the constitution went into effect by proclamation of Governor James W. Grimes.

Since then, voters have amended the constitution 42 times, but the basic document remains intact. One of the oldest state constitutions in effect, Iowa's Constitution continues to provide a strong framework upon which we, as Iowans, base "[the] liberties we prize and [the] rights we will maintain."

