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State Historical Society re-examines 1911 State Legislature

PIERRE, S.D. – The 86th session of the Legislature of the State of South Dakota completes its work at the State Capitol in Pierre on March 28. This year's session nearing an end prompted researchers with the South Dakota State Historical Society to re-examine the 12th session, from 1911.

The 12th session of the Legislature was held at the State Capitol from Jan. 3-March 3 of 1911. In total, there were 264 acts passed and one joint resolution, according to the State Historical Society-Archives at the Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre.

Office holders for the state in 1911 included: Gov. Robert S. Vessey (Pierre), Lt. Gov. Frank M. Byrne (Faulkton), Secretary of State S.C. Polley (Deadwood), State Treasurer George G. Johnson (Canton) and Attorney Gen. Royal C. Johnson (Highmore).

There were 42 Senate districts, comprising 45 Senators, and 53 House districts, comprising 104 Representatives. President Pro Tempore of the Senate was A. J. Lockhart (Clear Lake) and Speaker of the House was C. J. Morris (Sioux Falls).

Some of the Acts passed that year included:

- legalizing the incorporation of Letcher
- creating Ziebach County
- requiring the publication in official county papers of the list of adulterated or misbranded foods, beverages, candies, drugs, linseed oils, or other products
- the preservation, protection and propagation of antelope
- regulating the hunting of big game
- regulating the registration and service of stallions and jacks
- apportionment of State Senatorial and Representative districts
- amending session laws concerning Teacher Certificates and fees for certificates
- the manner for establishing election precincts
- penalties for interfering (destroying, defacing, disconnecting, etc.) with electrical property
- requiring fireproof construction "for any state buildings built for the permanent use and housing of human beings"
- providing penalties for the public practice of hypnotism without consent of minor's parents
- granting township supervisors the ability to regulate billiard halls and prohibiting those 18 years or younger from frequenting said halls
- fixing compensation of interpreters and translators in courts
- providing for the apprehension of livestock thieves
- making it unlawful to wear a uniform of the National Guard except when on duty
- requiring locomotives to be equipped with electrical headlights
- requiring voters to register and enroll for party primary elections
- statute regulating the construction of highways
- compelling saloons to close at nine o'clock each night
- relating to the construction of sewer systems in cities

Appropriation Acts included:

- repairing damage to the State Fair buildings in Huron from a July 30, 1909, storm
- per diem and mileage of officers and employees of the 12th Legislative Session
- maintaining and completing of the State House (State Capitol)
- building appropriations at various universities throughout South Dakota
- annual expenses for Firemen's Tournament

Another appropriation went to Howard Harper, who was reimbursed by the legislature \$300 for hospital and medical fees incurred after an injury sustained after "being struck on the head by the cover of the scuttle of the central building of the northern normal and industrial school (Aberdeen)," as a result of high winds blowing the scuttle off the roof.

The joint resolution was to amend Section II of Article XI of the Constitution. The legislation submitted the amendment to "a Vote of the People," to change language concerning the limitation of taxation.

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The South Dakota State Historical Society, an office of the Department of Tourism, is headquartered at the South Dakota Cultural Heritage Center in Pierre. The center houses the society's world-class museum, the archives, and the historic preservation, publishing and administrative/development offices. Call (605) 773-3458 or visit www.sdhistory.org for more information. The society also has an archaeology office in Rapid City; call (605) 394-1936 for more information.