

March 1, 1982

SPEAKER MARVEL: It is my privilege now to introduce Marvin F. Kivett who is the Director of the Nebraska Historical Society. Mr. Kivett offers remarks about history and significance of the Capitol.

MR. KIVETT: Mr. Speaker, Governor Thone, members of the Legislature, I was told that I should speak on the art and architectural significance of the Capitol. I'm not an authority in that area. There are many excellent publications available on the subject. I think the fact that the Capitol Building is on the National Register of Historic Places, a national landmark, recognized as something significant that should be preserved on the national level. You have the art around you and I think that you are fully aware of that. I would like to comment very briefly on what I would consider the wonderment of it all. How did we build a building such as the State Capitol? I think there are many unsung heroes in this role. Growing up as a younger person I remember clipping the clippings relating to the Capitol, the erection of the sower and so forth. So I looked up to see just what other action was necessary. On February 20, 1919, the Legislature passed an enabling act, rather generously it seems to me in terms of today's restrictions, appropriating an amount not to exceed \$5 million for the Capitol Building. This set up a competition whereby a committee had rather full rein to decide on the type of building, size and so forth. As you'll see later they also had considerable latitude on the budget. This procedure went along well and I think we were particularly fortunate in having people like Thomas Kimball, people like George Johnson who became the devil's advocate you might say, on this committee. The building extended over the term of four governors, all who gave considerable support obviously. By 1925 the Legislature was requested to raise the appropriation to \$9 million. Considering following World War I we were in a brief period of prosperity, the ground had been broken in '22 and we were headed for a magnificent structure. But it has always been a little amazing to me that we could have a 100% increase in the budget. When it was finally passed, the total cost from 1919 to 1934 was \$10,210,836.69. This was a building that the original budget had been criticized in the amount of \$5 million. There is no evidence of very much outcry on the citizens. I think this is the significant thing about the Capitol. We all feel that we have a part of it. It is a part of our life. It is a part of our interest. Certainly no other building has that distinction. There were people like Colonel Cunningham who followed Bertram in his good hue and in his design. We seldom hear of Colonel Cunningham. He took over on the death of Bertram and faithfully