

The Utah State Capitol Commission

by Richard Tholen

In 1909, acting as president of the duly authorized Capitol Commission, Utah's Governor William Spry issued the proclamation naming the commission members who would ultimately preside at the 1916 ceremonies opening the Utah State Capitol.

The proclamation began: **“WHEREAS, Under the provisions of Section 1, of Chapter 64, Laws of Utah, 1909, the Governor is directed to appoint a Commission to be known as the Capitol Commission . . .”**With that preamble, the governor announced the other members of the seven-man Commission:

- Secretary of State C.S. Tingey
- Attorney General A.R. Barnes
- Apostle John Henry Smith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and president of the Utah Constitutional Convention in 1895
- Mr. John Dern, banker and leading Salt Lake businessman
- Mr. C.E. Loose, Provo banker and a owner of mining and industrial companies
- Mr. M.S. Browning, vice president of Ogden's Browning Arms Company

The Commission appointed John K. Hardy, the governor's secretary, as "Acting Secretary." David Mattson, the newly elected Secretary of State, succeeded C.D. Tingey, and Anthon H. Lund was appointed to fill the vacancy created by the death of John Henry Smith. Upon his release as a member of the Commission Mr. Tingey was named its secretary Acting Secretary John K. Hardy.

Beginning in May of 1911, the Commission met regularly for the next seven years to oversee numberless studies and proposals, the selection of an architect and other contractors, the contracts for all participants, and enough acrimonious disputes to satisfy even the most feisty politico. For example, only four months after the first meeting the Commission published a Program of Competition for the selection of an architect.

The Commission served at its own expense with the exception of their secretary, who received a modest \$100.00 per month stipend. That amount was later increased to

\$150.00 per month. Secretary Tingey kept meticulous minutes of the meetings. The record provides a fascinating glimpse into history.

Just two and one half years from laying the cornerstone the Commission was ready for a formal grand opening on October 9, 1916. In the evening a general public reception was held – the guests being received by the governor and members of the Commission in the State Reception Room. Estimates of attendance at the festivities put the number at thirty thousand guests were received.

The Capitol Commission met for the last time on December 29, 1916, and Secretary Tingey, presented its biennial report." Copies of the last annual report, dated January 4 1917, (when the Legislature convened) were to be bound, prepared and delivered to the members. The minutes of that late December meeting are the last entry in more than 545 pages of commission minutes. They illustrate how diligently the Commission had worked. They were and were faithful overseers of every aspect of Utah's beautiful, new State Capitol.

