

Inaugural address

of

Urban A. Woodbury

As it appears in the

Journal

of the

**JOINT ASSEMBLY**

**BIENNIAL SESSION**

**1894**

**Thursday, October 4, 1894**  
**Inaugural Address**

*Gentlemen of the Senate and House of Representatives:*

Pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution we the stewards and servants of the people, have assembled here to perform the several duties which are therein prescribed for us. If we have an adequate conception of our obligations to our fellow citizens it will be shown by wise legislation in their behalf. We meet under circumstances which call for great thankfulness. During the past two years the people of our beloved State have been spared from wasting pestilence, from the ravages of fire and flood and other providential inflictions. The labors of our people have been fairly rewarded and contentment and plenty are in our homes. We have been largely spared the sufferings with which many of the people of our sister States have been afflicted; sufferings which were caused largely by a threatened and finally accomplished change in our National industrial policy. It is my duty as well as my privilege to bring to your attention matters which are important for your consideration.

The reports of the several officers and boards are comprehensive and complete, and I think it would be a wearisome and useless repetition for me to detail to you what they show. I have made a few deductions from the Treasurer's and Auditor's Reports which may be of interest and value to you.

FINANCES.

The report of the Treasurer shows that the State is as usual in a good financial condition. Its only funded liability is the Agricultural College fund represented by registered bonds of the State of.... \$135,500.00

Expenses of the State for last biennial term, were .....	920,397.48
For preceding biennial term, .....	1,031,710.92
The average for seven biennial terms, .....	722,740.90

There should be added to the expense of the last biennial term the unpaid bills of the Vermont State Asylum, accrued before July 1, 1894, say,.....	18,000.00
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Which properly belonged to that term, making the total expenses for the term, .....	938,397.48
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It is possible that there are other deferred payments probably chargeable to the last term.

It is estimated by the Treasurer that there be available for the expenses of the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1895, was,.....	489,655.09
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Deducting from this the amount of unpaid bills of the Vermont State Asylum accrued before July 1st. of .....	18,000.00
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Would leave .....	471,655.09
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The estimate of the Treasurer of the amount available for the fiscal year ending June 3, 1893, was .....	428,822.48
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Showing available funds of .....	42,832.61
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More for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 1895, than there were for the year ending June 30th, 1893.

If our Grand List is as large as that of 1893.....	1,751,745.23
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a tax of 15 cents in addition to the corporation taxes ought to pay the expenses of the State for the next biennial term including the special appropriations which I have hereinafter recommend.

The expenses of the State are controlled largely by the Legislative Branch of the Government, The Executive is directed by the Constitution to see that the laws are faithfully executed and it is his duty to control the expenditures within the limits of law. He can also have influence as to the expenditures of the various institutions, commissions, etc., but however much he may or can do the responsibility rests mainly, as it was intended by the fathers who framed our wise Constitution, with the legislative branch.

### TAXATION.

The report of the Tax Commissioner indicates that the corporations generally have very promptly and willingly paid their taxes. Our system of taxation is probably as nearly equitable as it can be made at present. The amount of corporation taxes collected has constantly increased during the ten years the law has been in force, from..... \$ 186,698.51

In 1883, to.....	343,090.54
In 1893. These taxes, with the license taxes, furnished the last biennial term, 72½ per cent, or .....	692,151,18
of the money raised for State expenses.	
The State tax of 15 cents, yielded 27½ per cent., or.....	261,000.00
Of the corporation taxes the savings banks paid 38 <sup>8</sup> / <sub>10</sub> per cent., or .....	268,916.16
The railroad corporations paid 31 <sup>8</sup> / <sub>10</sub> per cent., or.....	220,034.47
The trust companies paid 12 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>10</sub> per cent., or .....	85,632.46
Life and fire insurance companies and other corporations, 17 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>10</sub> per cent., or .....	117,568.09

I believe that no personal property in the State pays a greater tax than do the funds of savings banks and trust companies. No attempt is made at concealment and every dollar is taxed.

### SAVINGS BANKS AND TRUST COMPANIES.

It will be seen by the report of the Inspector of Finance that our savings banks and trust companies are in a healthy condition. It is a source of great satisfaction that during the financial panic of '93, which caused the suspension and ruin of so many banking institutions in the United States, that not one of our savings banks and trust companies were seriously injured. They stood the test completely, which may be attributed to the wise laws by which they are governed, the integrity and wisdom of their managers, the wise counsel of the Inspector, and the common sense of a majority of the depositors. Although there was \$1, 329,364 withdrawn from them in July and August, 1893, it has all been returned and with it \$703,920.77 more, making on deposit, July 1st, 1894, \$27, 966,855.46, with total resources of \$30,512,449.

I do not think it wise to make many, if any, changes in the law pertaining to these corporations. The interests of the people seem to be well guarded and permanency in laws is always desirable. I will say however, that it will be unwise and unprofitable to multiply savings banks and trust companies in the State. In most sections the ground is well covered now.

### STATE AUDITOR'S REPORT

I invite your attention to the comprehensive report of the State Auditor. It discloses to whom the money which has been raised by taxation has been paid, and it will be a help to you in correcting any abuses that may exist.

You will notice that Court expenses are increasing quite materially. It will be your duty to inquire into the reason of these increased expenditures and ascertain whether any changes in our existing laws are necessary to reduce them and still do justice to the Officers of the Court and other interested parties.

## STATE PRISON AND HOUSE OF CORRECTION.

The report of the Directors of the State Prison and House of Correction shows a prosperous financial condition of these institutions, During the last biennial term the Directors of the House of Correction have made quite extensive repairs and alterations in that institution, which were not contemplated at the close of the session of the Legislature of '92. From quite a thorough examination which I have made of this institution I am of the opinion that the directors were justified in making the alterations and additions they have, I do not well see how they could have done otherwise under the circumstances. The institution is now entirely inadequate for the proper custody and care of its inmates. More cell room is imperatively demanded. The number of inmates has increased so materially that the cell room is now but little over one-half of what is required. It is to be deplored that but little reformatory work is being done on account of the crowded condition of the institution.

The Directors and Superintendent are evidently men of good business capacity and are conducting the institution upon business principles.

## REFORM SCHOOL

The report of the Trustees and Superintendent of the Reform School will furnish you a complete history of this institution for the last biennial term. They appear to have discharged their duties with fidelity and ability. The school is doing a good conscientious work for the boys and girls committed to it, and the results are highly beneficial. The cost of maintenance is large, and may be thought unnecessarily so, but an inspection of the work being done and an examination of the expenditures do not disclose any extravagance. The value to the State and to the individual in bringing many of these boys and girls into respectable citizenship is worth the cost it involves. The State Board of Health has condemned the system of sewerage and it should be remodeled to prevent unfavorable results. A great saving of fuel could be made by enlarging the boiler capacity of the heating apparatus.

## BRATTLEBORO RETREAT.

The report of the Board of Supervisors of the Insane shows that the insane of the State are properly cared for both in the Brattleboro Retreat and the Vermont State Asylum. The only question in connection with the Brattleboro Retreat is whether the price which the State now pays for the care of the insane in that institution, should not be decreased, Considering the relation the State bears to this institution and its present strong financial, condition and the material decrease in cost of supplies, it may be well for you to inquire if the cost to the State cannot be equitably reduced.

## VERMONT ASYLUM FOR INSANE.

I recommend to your careful perusal the report of the Trustees and Superintendent of this institution. This report fully sets forth its condition and, needs. I think that it would be wise to make an appropriation of \$100,000 for the construction of a new wing and putting in heating and lighting apparatus and furnishings. The benefits to be derived from this enlargement are great. The administration building, which includes the chapel and kitchen the laundry, the steam plant and electric light plant are sufficient for the use of the enlarged structure. It would accommodate two hundred more patients and, from the information I have obtained from the Superintendent, I estimate that the cost per week per person of keeping these two' hundred additional patients would not exceed \$1.75. This would be about \$ 1.15 per week less than the cost of keeping the present patients. This is \$2.00 per week per patient less than the State is paying the Brattleboro Retreat. This would make a total saving of \$400 per week or \$20,800 per annum to the State by transferring two hundred people from the Brattleboro Retreat. Should you think it wise to appropriate all that the Trustees recommend, all the patients could be moved from Brattleboro and the saving increased to \$26,000 or more per annum.

This appropriation would require a tax of about six cents or three cents each year for this biennial term. I believe it would be true economy, as well as humanity, to do the work. Although we could hire the money at about 3 ¼ per cent., I cannot advise doing so, believing we are able to pay as we go.

The Trustees and Superintendent are performing their duties ably and faithfully.

## STATE BOARD OF HEALTH. . .

The report of this Board indicates that it has done a large amount of important work during the last two years, which should be continued.

### RAILROADS.

The able and interesting report of the Railroad Commissioners shows among other things that the physical condition of the railroads in this State is excellent in the main. The railroads have suffered severely during the past eighteen months on account of the general depression in the business of the country, and it is much to their credit that they have not materially lessened their service to the public during these trying times.

Railroad corporations are the creation of the State and properly may be supervised by it, but they are intimately connected with our business prosperity and are necessary for our convenience, and, so long as they properly perform their duty to the people, should be looked upon with favor. When they do not they should be corrected and controlled.

### FISH AND GAME.

I invite your attention to the comprehensive report of the Commissioners of Fisheries and Game for a detailed account of their work and its needs. The establishment of a Fish Hatchery by the State as well as one by the United States, coupled with the energetic efforts of the Commissioners of Fisheries and Game, and of the Fish and Game League, have excited an interest is not confined to this State. I am confident that in the near future the results of their work will be of great financial value to us. Good hunting and fishing are great attractions for people in the large cities and are appreciated by many of our own citizens. I believe this work deserves encouragement within reasonable limits.

### SOLDIER'S HOME.

This institution is a monument to the patriotic generosity of the people of Vermont. From 1861 until the present time the people of this State have never been found wanting in generosity to those who risked their lives in defense of the Union and for the honor of Vermont. This institution is in fact a "Home" for veterans who are without homes elsewhere. The expenditures are necessarily quite large, but are not extravagant, and are closely scrutinized by the competent and faithful President and other members of the Board of Trustees, who serve without compensation. For a detailed account of this institution and its future requirements I refer you to the report of the Trustees which will soon be placed, before you.

### NATIONAL GUARD.

Our regiment of Militia and Light Battery, or National Guard as it is called, exists by virtue of the requirements of our Constitution. The report of the Adjutant and Inspector-General, and the very able and comprehensive report of Captain H. E. Tutherly, U. S. A., to the War Department, show that the National Guard is in excellent condition. It is well officered and deserves your favor. Every member of it is rendering patriotic service and practically without compensation, I commend to your consideration the recommendations of the Adjutant-General that a permanent camp be established near Fort Ethan Allen This would be an economical measure, and it seems to me give conducive to the efficiency of the National Guard, which is the paramount object to be borne in mind. If it can be done, I advise that existing laws be changed so that my successors in office will have the privilege of appointing the Adjutant and Inspector-General, the Quartermaster-General and the Judge-Advocate-General. The Governor is commander-in-chief of the forces of the State, and should have the privilege of appointing all of his staff officers. This is the method adopted in many, if not all other States.

Since the last biennial session the United States Government has established a Military Post upon land ceded to them by this State, near Winooski and Essex Junction. This establishment will be of much benefit to our State in many ways. The location of this post, called Fort Ethan Allen, in Vermont, was obtained largely through the efforts of Senator Redfield Proctor.

## EDUCATION.

Education is the basis of the morality, happiness and prosperity of a people, and consequently is of the first importance to the State. While the present school law may need some amendments, the consensus of opinion seems to be that it is the best law we have had, and the best adapted to this age. I think it should have a thorough trial before its essential features are changed. The normal schools appear to be doing their work in the usual satisfactory manner, though I think it would be very desirable and much less expensive if we had but one school of the proper proportions. The report of the State Superintendent indicates activity and honest effort in his work.

## OUR COLLEGES.

The University of Vermont and State Agricultural College is constantly increasing its advantages for students of all classes, and the educational and agricultural interests of the State are being more benefited by its work than ever before. The influence of the agricultural department is being manifested in many lines. I think the time has passed for severe criticisms as to its usefulness.

The Norwich University and Middlebury College are both extending their spheres of usefulness. All of these institutions deserve your continued favor.

## BOARD OF AGRICULTURE.

The Board of Agriculture and the Dairymen's Association are each performing a good work in their spheres. The benefits of these organizations are manifested by the increased value of the products of agriculture and the dairy, and are deserving of continued moral and financial support.

## THE MARY FLETCHER HOSPITAL.

This institution, located in Burlington, is doing a most beneficent and great work for suffering humanity. The report of the Trustees which will be placed before you shows that they treated 664 patients during the last year, of which 6 per cent were charity patients, reckoned by the length of time they were in the institution. The paying patients, however, did not pay the cost of their care into \$2.65 per week, each. The whole income of this institution is dedicated to the relief of suffering humanity, and it is managed by able and benevolent men.

## FIRE MARSHAL.

Insurance men of this State desire the office of Fire Marshal to be created, whose duty it shall be to investigate the causes of fire so that punishment may be meted out to incendiaries. They claim where this method has been adopted in other States losses by fire have been materially decreased. This result would not only benefit the insurance companies but every person who insures property, as the cost of insurance is based upon former losses. The expenses of this office, if created, should, I think, be borne largely or entirely by the insurance companies.

## THE AUSTRALIAN BALLOT.

Considerable dissatisfaction is being manifested at the working of this system of voting. It is claimed by many of our citizens that the system is too elaborate and expensive and quite unnecessary for such a State as Vermont. There is a manifest disinclination upon the part of quite a large per cent, of voters to be subject to the requirements of this system of voting. From representations made to me I am inclined to believe that from five to ten per cent, of the voters of the State are practically disfranchised by reason of their disinclination to submit to such an elaborate system. I think that no one, however intelligent, goes into a booth to vote without experiencing some trepidation for fear that he will make a mistake.

I recommend that you investigate these causes of complaint and decide whether the law should not be less modified. I will only bring to your attention one out of many of the modifications of the law proposed to me. It is suggested that ballots be prepared as now, but detached from each other leaving off the square at the top and placed in the booth. The voter could then go into a booth and select and use the ballot as prepared, or prepare a ballot to suit him; he could erase names from the ballot as prepared and insert other names if he chose. Inspectors could see that only one ballot of each kind was deposited and the secrecy of the ballot and freedom of the voter would not be destroyed.

## OUR FORESTS.

The owners of timber lands in our State are pursuing a ruinous policy in the method used in harvesting their timber, There is no more valuable crop produced from land than timber, especially spruce timber. By the preservation of spruce trees of ten inches in diameter and under, when the large timber is cut, a good crop can be cut every fifteen years, at least. Every decade will see timber more valuable, and it is of great importance to the owners of timber lands, as well as to the State as a whole— for what increases the wealth of a class increases the wealth of the State some measure should be adopted to lessen the wanton destruction of our forest. The value of our water powers and the attractiveness of our scenery and preservation of game and fish also call for reform I invite your earnest attention to this subject.

## GOOD ROADS.

I thoroughly believe in good roads. They are necessary for the comfort and profit of our citizens, and as a means to attract to us people from other States. I do not feel sure that the five per cent. State tax has been wisely expended. In most towns it has been put to the same uses as the town highway tax, and in many cases the towns have raised five per cent, less tax than they would had they not received the State tax. Many believe that the distribution of the tax is unjust and think that each county should have the benefit of the tax levied upon it.

There does not seem to be any good reason why a county in one part of the State should send several thousand dollars per annum into a county in another part. If the county plan of distribution were adopted the money raised should be expended, in my opinion, in what would be called permanent improvements, under the directions of a Commission composed of say one from each town in the county. Addison, Bennington, Caledonia, Franklin and Washington Counties would not be materially affected by the change. Chittenden and Rutland Counties would be benefited, while Essex, Lamoille, Grand Isle, Orange, Orleans, Windsor and Windham would suffer loss.

Each county is particularly interested in good roads in its own county, but only interested in a general way in the roads of other counties. The large towns in the several counties are interested in having good roads in the small to as the trade and traffic of small towns are tributary to them and therefore they might in justice be required to bear a share of the burden of maintenance of their roads. If any change in the distribution of the tax is made it should be done solely because you believe it to be just.

## THE PROHIBITORY LAW.

For forty-two years this law has been one of the most important in our Statutes. It may not have accomplished all that its friends hoped, but that it has been a powerful instrument for the prevention of intemperance and crime during these years but few people will deny. The administration of the law, especially in larger towns, has been severely criticized of late, and it must be confessed that the criticisms are largely justified. The friends of the law cannot afford to make light of these criticisms; they should frankly admit them and endeavor to correct the abuses specified. The law itself is not weak, in that it is not severe enough. If I were to recommend any change it would not be toward greater severity or more restrictions.

It is absolutely necessary that there should be a friendly public sentiment to ensure the enforcement of this or any law.

Too great severity tends to create adverse sentiment. There is, however, no doubt, that the sentiment of the people of this State is strongly in favor of the present law and its honest enforcement. If it is ever modified or repealed it will be done by temperance men and in the interest of temperance. Some people, especially those living in larger towns, seem to be discouraged because the law does not absolutely prohibit, but they should bear in mind that no law against the commission of crime prohibits, but only restricts in proportion to its enforcement.

The prohibitory law is a stringent, restrictive measure. In some other States some other restrictive laws may be better; but for our State the present law is unquestionably the best at this time. According to the Audit office's report the amount of fines and costs paid during the last two years on, account of violations of the law, exceeded the Court expenses incurred in enforcing it by \$25,000 per annum.

## REVISED LAWS.

One of the most important matters that you will be called upon to consider, will be the revision of the laws of the State. A commission, composed of three eminent lawyers appointed under the act of 1892, have spent several months in the work assigned to them, and will present their report for your action. This work of revision will be one of the most important and laborious of the session, and should be commenced at the earliest possible moment. The committee having it in charge should, in my opinion, have no other work to do so that it may report to you in a reasonable time. The utmost energy will have to be used in this work or the session will be prolonged and expensive.

## THOMAS CHITTENDEN.

In the little church-yard in the town of Williston, lie the remains of one of the fathers of Vermont, Thomas Chittenden. To no one man are we more indebted for the independence and formation of this State, than to him. He has been aptly called the George Washington of Vermont—the father of Vermont. As the first Governor for nineteen years he safely guided the affairs of State, and, with the Allens and others, by his wise counsel and statesmanship compelled recognition by Congress and gained for Vermont an enviable standing among the sister hood of States.

It seems to me that it would be a very proper thing for this State to recognize his services and perpetuate his memory by erecting over his grave a simple but suitable shaft. A Mr. Root, formerly a resident of Williston, has recently purchased a half-acre of land suitably located for the erection of the monument, and presented it for such use, I sincerely hope you will give this subject proper consideration.

## VERMONT.

It is impossible at this time to predict with accuracy the effect the recent tariff legislation will have upon the prosperity of our people, but with free wool and lumber and a material reduction of duty upon many of our leading products, no one can feel otherwise than apprehensive. I do not wish, however, to take a gloomy view of the situation, but believe in laying in a good store of courage and hope and faith in the future of the Republic and in the resources of Vermont. There is no better place for a Vermonter to invest money than in Vermont. If all our people for the next ten years would do what they have not done in the past ten years, invest their surplus earnings at home, Vermont would teem with new industries and our population and prosperity would materially increase. I predict that a substantial gain in our population will be shown by the next census. The western fever is abating. Few if any States in the union surpass ours in value per acre of the products of the soil, and none of equal size surpass us in value of quarries, in value and availability of water power, and none in beauty and variety of scenery, in purity of politics, in healthfulness of climate, in happiness of homes, in morality of people, in bravery of men and virtue of women. Being thus happily situated, why should not we be content.

The times admonish us to be very careful, though not parsimonious, in appropriations of money for the needs of the State.

The proper conduct of public affairs and the progress of improvement which will increase the value of property in the State, cannot be done without the use of money, but it should be wisely expended for the good of all people and not for any particular person or class of persons.

Too much legislation is not wise. It is better to do too little than too much. As a rule, laws should have age before they are changed, so that their true value may be ascertained. With a firm reliance upon Divine favor, without which we cannot hope to accomplish anything of permanent value to our beloved State, let us enter vigorously upon the work of the Session.

URBAN A. WOODBURY.