

Office of the Vermont Secretary of State Vermont State Archives

Statewide Referendum

1914: Construction of a Building for the Supreme Court, State Library and other State purposes.



Background: As government grew, and the workload and services increased, it no longer comfortably fit within the state house. In 1912 the state house held the general assembly, the supreme court, the executive branch officers, the state library, the state archives and the Vermont Historical Society.

Issue: To relieve the space crunch a \$300,000 new building, to house the supreme court and library, was proposed. The reasons why a referendum was resorted to are unclear, though may be related to the cost of the structure in a fiscally conservative environment.

Referendum: On February 21, 1913 the legislature enacted Act 13, "An Act to Provide for the Erection of a Building for the use of the State Library and Supreme Court, and for other State Purposes." It called for the appropriation of \$300,000 to locate, design and construct the building no later than September 1916. The referendum was set for town meeting in March 1914 and again voters were to choose between two effective dates for the act, July 1, 1914 or July 1, 1915.

The voters chose the latter date by a 19,284 to 16,820 margin.

Result: In accordance with the informal understanding that selection of the second date expressed voter rejection of the legislation, Act 8 of 1915, passed on March 31st, repealed Act 13 of 1912. The legislature, however, formed a study committee to revisit the need for a building. The committee re-affirmed that need (see *Journal of the Vermont House*, 1915, pages 802-806). A new bill was proposed, identical to the 1912 law, except reducing the amount from \$300,000 to \$200,000. After the house reduced the amount further to \$150,000 and rejected a senate measure to delay action, a new construction bill (Act 9) was enacted on April 2, 1915.

The new building, at 111 State St., was begun in May 1916 and completed in 1918.