

How Pennsylvania Saved Her History

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HOW PENNSYLVANIA SAVED HER HISTORY.

Up to the year 1851 the archives of the Keystone State, connected with the colonial and revolutionary periods, were "in an extremely exposed and perishing condition," wrote Gov. William F. Johnston, in his Annual Message to the Legislature. He said:

These records are worth preservation, as containing authentic information of the action of our fathers in the struggle for national existence. In the capital of Pennsylvania and with the sympathies of her patriotic people, was independence matured and declared. Her soldiers were most numerous around the standard of the nation, and there were more battle-fields on her soil than in the same area elsewhere. *Every memorial of those days of devotion and trial should be faithfully preserved.* There exists a single copy in manuscript of the minutes of the Revolutionary Executive Council, a document by far too valuable to remain longer within the reach of accident or mutilation.

The Senate appointed a select committee to consider the subject, the chairman of which was Hon. H. A. Mullenberg—an honored name in that commonwealth and in our revolutionary annals. The committee considered the subject, and reported at length, saying among other things:

The importance of the subject to which the attention of your committee has been directed, can scarcely be exaggerated. In it is involved the decision of the question, whether the history of Pennsylvania shall be preserved and made public, or whether it shall remain liable to all the accidents and risks incident to the preservation of manuscripts, which may at any moment be destroyed, and which the hand of time is slowly but surely effacing. Should that prove to be the case, the early authentic history of this great State will be irrevocably gone, and *our descendants, at some future day, will bitterly execrate the parsimony of their ancestors, who, to spare a trifling expense, which could easily have been borne, have condemned them to remain in ignorance of the authentic history of their native State.*

There is much more to the same effect. The legislature took prompt action on the subject, and because it did, Pennsylvania is now the proud possessor of the materials of her early history in printed books, so precious that many sets are extant, one of which may be found in our State Library. South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama, are preserving their war history with the same conscientious care. So are Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas and Nebraska. Who will contend that the history of Iowa is less worthy of preservation than that of any other State in the Union?

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