

Increasing Interest in Local History

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Council to "provide, furnish, and equip such room or rooms in the Historical, Memorial and Art Building as may be deemed necessary" for the accommodation of the public archives; and "the room or rooms thus provided for shall be known as the Hall of Public Archives."

It is not so very difficult to interest men in museums and art galleries or even in books of history; but it is an almost hopeless task to arouse their enthusiasm over dry, dusty documents. And yet persistent effort and agitation on the part of the Historical Department has finally resulted in the passage of a law which provides for the establishment of a Hall of Archives in the new Historical, Memorial and Art Building which is now near completion. The establishment of the Hall of Archives will be recorded among the great achievements of the Historical Department. It will not only afford a suitable, secure, and permanent home for the public archives of the State, but it will make the archives accessible to students of Iowa history. This recognition of the value of the documentary materials of Iowa history and the establishment of the Hall of Archives may justly be regarded as the crowning accomplishment of the Historical Department. B. F. S.

INCREASING INTEREST IN LOCAL HISTORY.

There are many signs that local interest in local history, in the origins of local customs and institutions in our cities, towns and counties has increased with notable acceleration in recent years.

This is most gratifying to those who have so long urged the importance of preserving and studying the records of the life and deeds of the State's pioneers. Various causes have, of course, united to bring about the beginnings of this long-hoped-for consumation. Some of the causes are to be found in the evolution of social conditions that of necessity generate an interest in and demand for historical lore and records of the past. Another set of potent causes is to be discovered in the development of consciousness of kind. Other causes are

to be found in the direct efforts of historical students and organizations to arouse such public interest in local history and the methods of its making and its meaning. Some of these causes are worth brief consideration.

In the first place, Iowa has really become one of the old states of the Union. Her history, since the first formal settlement on the eastern border, covers the space of man's three score years and ten. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren have gone in countless numbers west and north and south, making potent elements in the populations of many new states. By their departure, our old-time residents have been forced to realize their own age and the growing age of the State. For two to three decades our early settlers have fondly dwelt in the happy and careless realms of reminiscence. Out of their reveries and recollections came the promptings that have resulted in the establishment and maintenance in nearly all counties of the State of "Old Settlers' Associations," with their periodic banquets, picnics and reunions. The camaraderie of such gatherings make them cherished and delightful events in the life of all communities convened. The days and happenings of pioneer life, their joys and sorrows, their customs and institutions, are regularly recalled and described. Formal addresses, letters, reports, resolutions, stories galore, exhibit the men and measures and things of days long since gone. Much of all this wealth of historic lore is preserved in the records of their proceedings in minutes and in the local press.

The second great cause has probably been the growth of what we may call business and social solidarity, namely, the development of a consciousness of community of class interests among many social groups. This fact in many lines of commerce and industry, and in philanthropic effort, has powerfully affected the growth of local and state organizations that have increased local interest in local and state history, and that afford great centers for the ingathering and preservation of historical data. The mere mention of the more noteworthy will suffice. There are the scores, indeed hundreds, of agricultural institutes and societies, the commercial clubs, and mercantile leagues and organizations. Equally numerous are

the church and religious associations and conferences, the secret lodges and orders and societies, with their local and state meetings and organizations. We have our bankers, dentists, druggists, court officers, lawyers and medical practitioners, with like organizations. There is the Park and Forestry Association, the League of Iowa Municipalities, the State Conference of Charities and Corrections, the State and local Academies of Science, and the State Teachers' Association. All of these organizations have their regular programs wherein local history is gathered together and studied. Many of them have halls and libraries that serve as repositories for their archives and precious records, and not a few publish their proceedings. All this reacts with great effect in developing local interest in local affairs and institutions past and present.

A third cause, unquestionably, has been the rapid increase of city and town libraries in the last fifteen years. The institution of a library in a community *ipso facto* stimulates interest in history. It is a store house for the preservation of the records of past time. The contents of its shelves compel men and women sooner or later to give heed to the history that is in the making round about them, and to gather into its garner the records that will enable them and their children to learn the lessons of their home and neighborhood customs and institutions.

The fourth great cause of the increased public interest in local history has doubtless been the work of our teachers of history, economics, political science and sociology, in our colleges and universities. During the past twenty years they have been directing the attention of hundreds of young men and women to the customs and institutions of the State. Especially of late they have been exacting detailed investigation into origins and development of township, city and county governments, and social life, with a view to the light which their results may throw upon the influences determining the evolution of our State government, laws and institutions. These young men and women have returned to the cities and towns as farmers, lawyers, merchants and school teachers. They have communicated the benefits of their class-room studies in local history to the residents of the communities

wherein they find themselves. They have no doubt been among the prime movers and most energetic workers in the investigation of local historical societies and study clubs.

The fifth cause that has been both coincident with and antecedent to those just given has been the publication of THE ANNALS OF IOWA, beginning with the first series in 1863, and continuing with some intermissions from that year down to the present; the issue of *The Iowa Historical Record* from 1885 to 1902, and of its successor, *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*. Organically connected with these publications have been the State Historical Society, at Iowa City, and the Historical Department, housed first in the capitol, and now in the Historical Building in Des Moines. These agencies have for many years been working to arouse just such local interest, and we may certainly say without presumption that they have been potent factors in producing the growth of local concern in communal history.

A PIONEER'S REMINISCENCES.

If one thing more than another has justified the career of THE ANNALS OF IOWA it has been the publication of journals, letters and memoirs of pioneers of Iowa. This fact is constantly impressed upon the mind of even the casual reader of the studies of our scholarly historians. The pages of THE ANNALS, 1st, 2d and 3d series, and *The Iowa Historical Record*, are replete with accounts of the early days of the State. They contain contemporary narratives by those who took part in the formation of the State, who controlled often the determination of the lines of public discussion, and the decisions of public authorities. They afford us much of the original material from which alone the historian to-day and in days to come can accurately reproduce the life of the past.

We are prompted to make these observations by the completion of a series of interesting and valuable sketches of pioneer life and times that have been contributed to THE ANNALS by Mr. George C. Duffield of Keosauqua. Mr. Duffield was born in Jefferson county, Ohio, May 13, 1824. In

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