

The Historical Department and the State Board of Conservation

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ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

THE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT AND THE STATE BOARD OF CONSERVATION

December 27, 1918-June 8, 1923

In the present ANNALS we conclude the abstract of the minutes of the State Board of Conservation for the period of the service on the Board of the Curator of the Historical Department. This retirement was with the favor and at the request of the Curator and was accomplished through a revision of the statutes enlarging and improving our laws for conservation.

The Historical Department of Iowa throughout its existence has worked to save areas in Iowa notable for their historic, scenic, scientific, or recreational qualities. Charles Aldrich and other prophets warned of the menace of waste and vandalism as early as 1860. Interest was augmented by dominant characters in our collegiate institutions, such as Samuel Calvin. Memorials and treatises in that generation advanced and crystallized thought upon the matter and were the basis of the Historical Department engaging in the next stage of progress toward state parks and conservation, with which these minutes deal.

At the beginning of legislation for conservation in Iowa the late Daniel Cady Chase was in the Senate. He had observed and grieved over the diminishing value for recreation of the Iowa forests and streams of his boyhood. He entertained pity and serious apprehension for the youth and man of the future who should be without the instinct or opportunity for that enlargement of spirit out of doors that had delivered into his own great soul its most exalted aspirations. There served with him in the legislative and executive branches of Iowa government many men resembling him in that respect. They approved our efforts by enacting our first conservation laws. Our first state parks,

now part of our public policy, are worthy monuments to these men. With their legislative contribution Iowa entered upon a program for conservation of natural resources, and of the natural instincts in our people to love and to use for play and study our waters and waste lands.

Initial law required half the proceeds of gun licenses to be laid out by the Executive Council for park areas and improvements. The selections and means of improvement, however, were to be first approved by a Board of Conservation of four persons. Of this Board one was by law the Curator of the Historical Department, the other three were appointed by the Executive Council. The Curator of the Historical Department was by the Board made secretary. Thereafter the Historical Department shared with the Board of Conservation the time and talent of the Curator, the office convenience and the clerical assistance of the department. The department laid out the extreme of its power toward the scientific introduction into Iowa public life of this new departure.

But the office of curator is inherently that of a trustee. It is wholly subordinate to its own Board of Trustees. It is not controversial. It is not concerned with creed, cult, party, or contention of any sort. It is inspired to discover and preserve such material and such evidence of enterprise as will, when appropriately administered, reveal the truth of history. It co-ordinates or allies itself with all instrumentalities in its own field. But it does not attempt to advance or degrade the good name, fame, or fortune of any man, except as truth preserved does so.

On the other hand the Board of Conservation was under law powerless to act except in unison with the Executive Council. Yet between December 27, 1918 and June 8, 1923 the first and last meetings of the Board of Conservation in which the Curator served, there were fifty-nine meetings of the Board of which seven only were with the Executive Council. All other business by the Board, certified by its secretary to the secretary of the Executive Council, was noticed or ignored according to the wisdom of the Council and the results usually communicated to the Board. Much business was done by the Council without the knowledge or sanction of the Board. There was neither co-or-

dination nor co-operation. The Council is, therefore, to be commended for the great good done. The Curator is aware of nothing proposed to it by the Board that was not good. Many good areas of scientific, scenic, historical, and recreational qualities recommended to the Council by the Board were not acted on, and we may thank the Creator for secreting those choice areas among the more remote and worthless lands within our boundaries where for a season they yet may be safe.

So by revising the law making one secretary to serve both bodies and to otherwise greatly increase the efficiency and power of this new arm of government, the Fortieth General Assembly wisely advanced state park interests and properly returned the Historical Department to its former status.

The Curator is especially in sympathy with the motives of the fathers of the conservation movement. He is in harmony with the purposes of his co-authors of the laws. He is especially pleased with the devotion, industry, and achievement of his associates on the Board and of the Executive Council during the period of his effort with them to contribute to this one of the most notable steps forward by the state.

These citizens of Iowa who were respectively members of the Executive Council and State Board of Conservation during the service of the Curator of the Historical Department, and whose contributions are to be judged from the minutes of their respective bodies are:

Board of Conservation	Executive Council
1918 to 1921	Governor
Dr. L. H. Pammel, Member and President.	W. L. Harding, 1918-1921.
John F. Ford, Member.	N. E. Kendall, 1921-1923.
Joseph Kelso, Jr., Member.	Secretary of State
E. R. Harlan, Curator, Member and Secretary.	W. S. Allen, 1918-1919.
1921-1923	W. C. Ramsay, 1919-1923.
Dr. L. H. Pammel, Member and President.	Auditor of State
Mrs. C. H. McNider, Member.	Frank S. Shaw, 1918-1921.
Willis G. Haskell, Member.	Glenn C. Haynes, 1921-1923.
E. R. Harlan, Curator, Member and Secretary.	Treasurer of State
	E. H. Hoyt, 1918-1919.
	W. J. Burbank, 1919-1923.
	Secretary Executive Council
	R. E. Bales, 1918-1920.
	R. E. Johnson, 1920-1923.

Outstanding and irrevocable work previous to July 1, 1923, was the acquisition of the following state parks:

Backbone, Delaware County.
 Lacey-Keosauqua, Van Buren County.
 Dolliver Memorial, Webster County.
 Farmington, Van Buren County.
 Theodore F. Clark, Tama County.
 Lepley, Hardin County.
 Ledges, Boone County.
 Oakland Mills, Henry County.
 Morehead Caves, Jackson County.
 Pilot Knob, Hancock County.
 Eldora-Steamboat Rock, Hardin County.
 Fort Atkinson, Winneshiek County.
 Jones County, Jones County.
 Lewis and Clark (Blue Lake), Monona County.

In process of acquisition July 1, 1923, are the following state parks:

Fort Defiance, Emmet County.
 Lost Island Lake, Palo Alto County.
 Devil's Backbone, Madison County.
 Silver Lake, Delaware County.
 Hamburg, Fremont County.
 Starr's Cave, Des Moines County.

Inspection and consideration were given some 200 other eligible areas.

In 1922 our state took high ground in a national council on state parks. Iowa was chosen by the Secretary of Interior on account of our leadership, as the best meeting place in the United States for the first national conference. Governor Harding rose to the occasion, and made it possible to set a high standard of co-ordination. Upon the Curator of the Historical Department was laid the secretaryship of that great conference.

We feel that in obedience to law and the traditions of our institution we directly contributed what we could to a remarkable conservation achievement, and we intend by courtesy to do what we can to continue and perfect the work.

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