

Reorganization of State Departments

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EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

REORGANIZATION OF STATE DEPARTMENTS

One of the major tasks which the 48th General Assembly of Iowa pledged itself to undertake was that of reorganizing, and consolidating if possible, the various departments and divisions of state government which have arisen within the past quarter of a century or more, due to the gradual extension of the regulatory power of the state into ever broadening fields. While the full task is not yet completed, the legislature has effected a reorganization of those departments having in their care the historical and library services of the state, of which a brief mention is here made.

By provisions of the law, known as House File 174, which became a law February 16, 1939, the former twelve man board of trustees was reduced in numbers, though still granted the full charge of all historical, library, archival, and museum work of the old departments involved, departments which centered chiefly in the state historical building at Des Moines.

The new board of three members, organized with George A. Wilson, Governor, as chairman; Jessie M. Parker, Superintendent of Public Instruction, secretary; and Richard F. Mitchell, Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court to represent the court, has under its control the following departments:

The Iowa State Department of History and Archives

The Iowa State Traveling Library

The Iowa State Law Library

The Iowa State Medical Library

The Iowa State Traveling Library consolidates the work formerly done by the Iowa Traveling Library Commission, the general division of the Iowa State Library, and a major part of the materials of the economics and sociology division of that library. This merger of the three divisions greatly increases the field of the usefulness of the library by enlarg-

ing the number of available and useful books for state-wide circulation for rural and traveling library services.

The board of trustees appointed Blanche A. Smith of Indianola as head of the Iowa Traveling Library. Miss Smith has been for some time secretary of the state library commission in charge of the traveling library work under that commission, and has had training and long experience in library work.

The Iowa State Library from the very first has been one of the state institutions in which the people have taken great pride. The interesting story of its history from its establishment in the territorial capital at Burlington, through the aid of a congressional appropriation contained in the very act creating the Territory of Iowa, and the subsequent moves of the library, first to Iowa City, and later to Des Moines, has been well told by Johnson Brigham in the *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. X, pages 482-538, 590-628.

For the first time the law and the medical libraries are completely severed from the general state library, as the growing importance of their specialized collections to the two professional groups was recognized. The board of trustees appointed B. Bernard Druker of Marshalltown as first assistant law librarian. Mr. Druker is a graduate of the law department of the State University of Iowa and has been actively engaged in the practice of law. He also had experience as a student law librarian at Iowa City, and was on the editorial staff of the *Iowa Law Review*.

The State medical library, which has grown to great usefulness under Dr. Jeannette D. Throckmorton, will continue in her hands.

The Iowa State Department of History and Archives, or the "Historical Department" as it is known to all Iowa, is the product of fifty years of service and sacrifice on the part of faithful and devoted lovers of Iowa. Yet while it is appreciated by the many people of the state who regard it as a necessary part of the educational system of the state, it is only at the beginning of its usefulness, depending upon the support it receives from the people and their representatives.

The recent celebration of the centennial year of Iowa territory greatly stimulated interest in the work and importance of the department. The young people especially have for long patronized the department for study of the history of the state and its people, its physical features and natural resources, its wild life of forest and stream. All this fascinating story of Iowa's first century may be found in the priceless collections and exhibitions which the department preserves and displays as custodian of the history of Iowa.

The specialized historical library of the department has also grown in usefulness and importance. Its collection of materials for research in its particular field is one of the best in the country, though far from complete. The library is much consulted by patriotic and historical societies and federal agencies as an invaluable storehouse of reliable information of historical events and records, and of family genealogies.

The publication of the *Annals of Iowa*, now entering its forty-sixth year, is but another of the fruits of the historical activity of the department.

Although itself a medium for the preservation of historical materials, the growing importance of archival work was recognized by including the name archives in the new title of the department. Work in this division has increased far beyond the capacity of the department to find either storage room for the collections, or to be able to classify and maintain catalogs of the same, or even to keep the material in place for ready reference. The disadvantages of this situation is obvious.

A valuable amendment to the power of the Curator over the archives in his possession was granted by the new statute in permitting the Curator to destroy worthless papers and records after receiving the approval of the board of trustees, thus making it possible to keep a useful and workable collection of official records. The advantage of this in improving archival work is in the future, for the new state and federal laws of recent years have added an immense burden of work on this division for which no provision has been made.

The historical collections, including museum and natural history specimens, and the portrait gallery of Iowa citizens remain a part of the department.

As Curator of the Iowa State Department of History and Archives, the board of trustees elected Ora Williams of Des Moines. Mr. Williams has had lifelong experience in newspaper work in Iowa, and from the very beginning of the department has been greatly interested in its work, and has been a contributor to its publications.

The changes made by this new law were in response to a general demand for economy and for concentration and coordination of the historical and library work, to the end that these services may be of greater usefulness to the people of the state.

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