The establishment of the fort was celebrated by a series of programmes embracing notable addresses by Dr. B. F. Shambaugh and Prof. W. C. Wilcox of the Iowa State University, Governors Cummins of Iowa and Van Sant of Minnesota, Dr. William Salter of Burlington, and Hon. J. D. M. Hamilton of Topeka, Kansas. Citizens of Fort Madison and Lee county have done many things toward fixing and perpetuating facts concerning historical persons and events, but in nothing have they accomplished more than in this celebration. The various pageants, exercises and addresses, splendidly handled by the newspapers, made the people acquainted with the earliest of civilized activities in that part of the State. A stimulation of patriotism and local pride and a dissemination of historical learning, especially to the younger generations has resulted. A purpose to rebuild the “lone chimney” or otherwise visibly mark the spot of the building of the fort was fixed in the public mind, and a fund almost sufficient to carry it out was left in hand.

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OUR COUNTY ARCHIVES.

Iowa has become conscious of the value of her State archives, and has done much toward expressing appreciation of these. She is pursuing a plan not only to preserve those of the past and present, but to make them and those of the future available to the public. An appropriation of six thousand dollars a year for two years to be expended for this purpose under the direction of the executive council was made by the last General Assembly. But of county statistical and genealogical matter not in current use less care has been taken. It may be shown in our recent experience.

The Historical Department discovered and secured “the old papers” of a modest Iowa citizen whose death occurred about 1880. He had resided in the State from its admission to the Union. He had held no public office and was unknown beyond his town. He had witnessed the removal of his county’s offices from room to room and from building to
building. He had shared anxiety with other substantial tax
payers over vital municipal, county, state and national issues,
and had gathered and preserved the written and printed mat-
ter assailing as well as supporting his views. These have a
value of their own. So far the collection which remained un-
disturbed for nearly thirty years can not be said to be un-
usual. But in the same receptacle were found original docu-
mentary records of his county as follows: Bonds of county
recorders, school fund commissioners, assessors and their de-
puties for 1846 and 1847; duplicates of all grocery permits is-
 sued in 1840; judge’s bar docket 1849; five hundred certificates
of labor performed on highways, being from each township in
the county, for 1880; annual reports of school district secre-
taries in each district, showing names of officials and teachers,
compensation, courses of study, &c., 1857; tax-lists of two
townships, 1856; poll-books of all voting precincts of 1841
to 1845 inclusive; estray records of county commissioners’ of-
fices, 1840 to 1855; census rolls of four townships, 1851;
county warrant stub books bearing autographs of payees, 1841
to 1849 inclusive.

Aside from the legal obligation on incumbents of office, the
moral obligation to sacredly preserve the records of their office
is equal to that of accuracy in making current entries. There
is no authority anywhere for the abandonment or destruction
of documents bearing official character. They are presump-
tively in existence ever after their creation, and their safe
custody is as much a part of the duty of the official as is any
other of his functions. If this is neglected, just so much of his
salary is unearned. If want of vault space is the explanation
he may resort to the courts with perfect assurance where
their court records are involved, and surely with the same de-
gree of assurance where other records are in jeopardy. Un-
certainty of the whereabouts of early county and municipal
records is absurd. In the older, and many of the newer
counties this is the case. It would seem quite within the
duties of the lawmakers of our State to take steps to retrieve
such materials and provide against their further confusion or
loss.
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