

THE 1935 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Fortunately for the success of the eighty-sixth annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society, which was held on Monday, January 21, historians are a hardy lot. The icy blast from the Canadian Northwest which kept the temperature well below zero all day did not chill the interest in the society of members and friends of that organization and it failed to keep them away from the meeting.

The sessions opened with the fifteenth annual conference on local history work in Minnesota. When it was called to order in the auditorium of the Historical Building by Senator Victor E. Lawson of Willmar at 10:00 A. M., nearly fifty people, including representatives of at least a dozen county societies, were present. Senator Lawson remarked upon the progress of local history work during the past twelve years, and he called attention to a map of Minnesota illustrating the spread of this work that had been prepared for the meeting by the first speaker, Mr. Willoughby M. Babcock, curator of the society's museum. He took as his subject, "Preserving and Promoting Minnesota History: A Survey of Progress in 1934."

Mr. Babcock opened his survey by quoting from an editorial in the *International Falls Press* of October 11, which gave the local historical movement credit for developing "community pride with a sense of civic responsibility through a detailed study of the past." He noted, however, that students of local history must safeguard themselves "against provincialism by correlating the local with the national." The speaker then called attention to the organization in 1934 of six new county societies, in Murray, Washington, Lyon, Anoka, Koochiching, and Fillmore counties; and one regional society, the Lake Pepin Valley His-

torical Society, with headquarters at Lake City. By these additions, the total number of local organizations in the state is raised to thirty-eight county, two regional, and four town societies. At least six more counties recently have manifested an interest in historical organization. The activities of the local societies are becoming broader both in scope and in interest. Typical activities cited by Mr. Babcock are a plan in Murray County for the restoration of an early cemetery; work in Goodhue County looking toward the designation of the site of Fort Beauharnois as a national or state park; and the staging of a pageant and picnic in Marshall County, which attracted some seven thousand people and left the local historical society with a substantial cash balance. In closing, the speaker pointed out the need for closer correlation of the work of the local and state societies.

Senator Lawson then called on Mrs. Walter Hyde of Minneapolis for a paper on "Historical Source Material in the Federal Census of 1850." She explained that members of the Keewaydin chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, of which she is a member, are copying and indexing the Minnesota schedules, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society, for the census of 1850. Onto mimeographed forms, arranged like the printed forms used by the original census taker, Mrs. Hyde and her co-workers are clearly transcribing the information compiled in the year after Minnesota became a territory. She mentioned some of the difficulties encountered in reading the writing of the original census takers, told of their inconsistencies in spelling, and pointed out the value that the transcribed and indexed schedules will have for the student of history, biography, and genealogy. She called attention to the fact that in these schedules there is information about every person living in Minnesota in 1850. "History names the men who rose to prominence," she continued, "but here are not only the governor of the territory, the chief justice,

the postmaster, the priest, but also the grocer, the farmer, and the powdermaker.”

In response to the chairman's suggestion that someone might undertake a similar piece of work for the census of 1860, Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, superintendent of the society, pointed out that the increase in population between 1850 and 1860 from about 6,000 to 172,000 made the indexing of the later census an enormous undertaking. He suggested, however, that each county would find useful the earliest schedules for its district. The local societies, he said, might obtain from the state society filmstrips or photostats of such schedules. Senator Lawson called attention to the usefulness of census and land records in the writing of local history and cited his own experience in the study of a single township. In this case he used the original pre-emption records on file in the land office at St. Cloud to determine the identity of the original settlers.

The next speaker was Mr. Arthur J. Larsen, head of the state society's newspaper department, who described the "progress and problems" involved in the preparation of a bibliography of Minnesota newspapers. He told of the society's mammoth project, which includes the making of an inventory of newspaper files in its possession, in other Minnesota depositories, in newspaper offices, and in private hands; the tracing of the history of each paper, with the changes in editorship, in policy, and in political affiliation; and many other problems. Research workers under the CWA and the FERA have made considerable progress in the project during the past year. Mr. Larsen told of the printed questionnaire sent to newspaper editors throughout the state, which brought a cordial response and resulted in the compilation of much valuable information. The speaker noted that this material is being used also, though in simplified form, for a "Union List of American Newspapers since 1820" that is in preparation under the auspices of the Bibliographical Society of America.

Progress in the work of "Preserving Local History in Nobles County" was reported by the fourth speaker, Mrs. Edwin J. Jones of Worthington. She told of the organization in September, 1933, of the Nobles County Historical Society, of which she is president; of its work in gathering and preserving records of interviews with pioneers; and of the local history essay contests that it is sponsoring in the grade and high schools of the county. The last speaker on the local history conference program was Dr. C. A. Duniway of Northfield, the president of another local historical society, that in Rice County. He discussed the subject of "Building Programs for County Historical Society Meetings," relating that in his county a program committee of five members works out a list of appropriate subjects and invites speakers to appear before meetings of the local society. Interest is stimulated by publishing the papers in the local newspapers. Dr. Duniway urged local societies to preserve copies of papers presented at meetings. In the discussion that concluded the conference, brief reports on local history activities were given by Mr. F. T. Gustavson of Crow Wing County, Mr. Burt Eaton of Olmsted County, and Mrs. A. Lowe of Murray County.

Dr. Duniway presided at the annual luncheon, which was held at the St. Paul Athletic Club at 12:15 P.M. and was attended by about a hundred and twenty-five members and friends of the society. As the first speaker he introduced Professor Lester B. Shippee of the University of Minnesota, who presented a paper entitled "A Northern Observer of the South in the Forties." The observer proved to be none other than Henry B. Whipple, who later became well-known as the first Episcopal bishop of Minnesota. A journal kept by the youthful cleric during a health-seeking journey in the South in 1844 was the basis of the paper. Like most Northerners, Whipple was particularly interested in slavery, but he viewed the subject dispassionately, appreciated the difficulty of the economic situation in which

the southern planter found himself, and was unwilling to condemn a Southerner merely because he was a slave owner. Professor Shippee called attention to the value of the journal for the study of social history.

"History and the Radio" was the subject discussed by the second speaker, Mr. Thomas D. Rishworth of St. Paul, educational director of radio station KSTP. He asserted that past history can be made "vivid and glowing" for radio listeners by the dramatization of events described in textbooks; and he suggested that an ideal program could be arranged if a historian selected the events to be dramatized, a dramatist wrote the script, and the members of a university dramatic organization presented the parts. Mr. Rishworth also advocated the bringing of current history into every home by means of the radio.

Dr. Duniway called attention to the large number of radio talks broadcast from Twin City stations during the past few years under the auspices of the historical society before introducing the third speaker, Mr. Jefferson Jones of Minneapolis. Mr. Jones told of some of his fascinating "Adventures in Minnesotiana" — adventures that have resulted in the building up of a substantial collection of early Minnesota books, pictures, maps, manuscripts, and other items. Much of this material, Mr. Jones asserted, has been assembled as a result of interviews or correspondence with pioneers and their descendants.

Mr. Roy J. Dunlap, managing editor of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press-Dispatch*, concluded the luncheon program with a talk entitled "A Newspaperman Looks at History" — the third in a series of professional and businessmen's views of history presented before the society. Last year Mr. Hugh Arthur of Minneapolis spoke on a businessman's relation to the subject, and in 1933 Judge Julius E. Haycraft of Fairmont discussed history from a jurist's point of view. Mr. Dunlap asserted that a basic knowledge of history is a necessity for the newspaperman; that history really is his

business, since he daily records what men are doing. He called attention to the value of newspaper files for the historian; noted the publication of historical feature articles in his newspapers; and expressed his appreciation to the historical society for the co-operation that it gives to newspapermen.

Mr. William W. Cutler of St. Paul, president of the society, convened the afternoon session in the Historical Building at 3:00 P. M. About fifty people listened to the reading of the annual reports of Mr. Everett H. Bailey of St. Paul, the treasurer of the society, and Mr. Blegen, the superintendent. The latter presented a detailed survey of the activities of the society in 1934, which is published elsewhere in this issue of MINNESOTA HISTORY. The chairman then introduced Mr. Charles M. Gates, acting curator of manuscripts for the society, who presented a paper entitled "Bridges Looking East." In this interesting discussion, which also appears in the present issue, Mr. Gates brought forth evidence to show that in pioneer days the residents of Minnesota's river towns were not isolated from the rest of the world, but were kept in touch with other parts of the nation by numerous "bridges" — that is, by economic, educational, cultural, religious, recreational, and professional ties. The visit to Minnesota of Henry David Thoreau, mentioned by Mr. Gates in support of his thesis, was the subject of the last paper on the afternoon program. This was presented by Mr. John T. Flanagan of the English department of the University of Minnesota. His account of the famous naturalist's health-seeking journey to St. Paul, St. Anthony, and the Redwood agency in the summer of 1861 is published in full in this magazine.

About a hundred and seventy-five people assembled in the auditorium of the Historical Building at 8:00 P. M. for the final session of the meeting. This was devoted to the annual address, which was delivered by Professor Albert E. Jenks of the department of anthropology in the Univer-

sity of Minnesota on the subject, "Recent Discoveries in Minnesota Prehistory." President Cutler introduced the speaker, who presented a scholarly survey of the discoveries made since 1930 in the field of Minnesota archaeology. The Minnesota man, the Browns Valley man, ivory artifacts, and archaic pottery were among the finds discussed by Dr. Jenks. Lantern slides of these objects were shown at the conclusion of the address, which appears with some of the illustrations displayed at the meeting as the leading article in this issue of the magazine. The session was followed by an informal reception for members and friends of the society in the museum rooms.

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