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### HISTORY AT HOME<sup>1</sup>

THE COMMUNITY is a world in miniature. Every thought the human mind ever entertained was conceived within a local setting. Every deed that was ever done was performed within the limits of some neighborhood. The world is the sum total of its communities. It inevitably follows that local, community history embraces everything that ever happened. Within a community it is conceived, written, read, and understood. The local historian writes the history of a church, a racial group, a fraternity, a school, or even a cemetery. In so doing he encompasses a more or less complete entity which in turn is related to larger entities. In spite of this obvious fact, in spite of the irreducible fundamentals included within local history, its nature and importance have not always been recognized. And paradoxically enough, it has all too frequently been the historian himself who has failed to realize the value of history at home.

Let us see how the orthodox historian, the writer who encompasses large areas and periods, has sometimes regarded local historians. The orthodox historian has frequently assumed an air of superiority, a benign, but nonetheless, deliberate condescension toward local subjects and local writers. He has tended to identify the local historian with antiquarianism, ancestor worship, pseudo scholarship, promiscuously gathered relics, a blindness to obvious sources,

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and a tainted connection with exploiting publishers. He accuses the local historian of loving andirons, fire tongs, bed warmers, and walnut furniture for their own sake rather than for their value as artifacts of a past period. He accuses the local historian of undue respect for uncles, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers. According to the orthodox historian, the local historian tries to gloss a pale and ineffectual scholarship with civic pride and social prestige; he shuns the laborious task of examining deed books, census returns, and official documents, and ignores the monographic literature. The local historian has even been accused of ignoring the proprietary rights indicated by inverted commas.

The local historian is furthermore charged with considering a mere segment of our national life. It is alleged that he is unconcerned about diplomacy, foreign trade, and war, and quite inattentive to Congress, the president, and the national political parties. He sometimes narrows his vision and excludes the national and even the state government from any vital connection with his local compilation. Since the part is less than the whole, the historian of the part is less important than the historian of the whole.

As exemplifications of these faults the orthodox historian sometimes cites the wave of county histories which swept over the Mississippi Valley between the Civil War and the World War. The random pages that were valuable and the few meritorious volumes that did appear scarcely atone, in the opinion of the orthodox historian, for all the sins that were committed in the name of history. Many of these county histories were indeed poor. According to the accuser, the typical one of this period consisted of a brief summary of American history which could be used unaltered throughout the trade area of the publishing company. Next there appeared a condensed account of state history, which could be used in all the county histories issued within a given state. The third section was devoted to a few

general statements about the settlement, organization, and government of the particular county. The fourth section varied greatly but frequently contained directory lists, quotations from newspapers, lists of officers, election returns, or even some social and economic data. The last four-fifths of the book were reserved for a series of biographies of citizens, nearly all of whom were living at the time of publication and a surprising number of whom had attained eminence.

So runs the indictment of local history and local historians as drawn by the orthodox historian of what we hope is now a past generation. The indictment sounds as though the local historian were being charged with capital crimes. Before the verdict is returned and sentence pronounced, however, let us examine the situation and take into account whatever extenuating circumstances the defense may allege. The evidence for the defense involves a brief analysis of history and a description of some of its evolving characteristics. We shall then see that nearly all the evils of which the orthodox historian complains were the result of following the models that he himself furnished.

Having noted what the orthodox historian thinks of the work of the local historian, let us see how the typical citizen regards the work of the orthodox historian. In the popular mind, history seems to be respected in proportion to its distance from local actualities. The scholarly account of a group, event, or situation far removed in time and space is readily acknowledged as acceptable history. Such treatments receive popular approval and remain unread. This attitude of respect and neglect is evidence of the survival of what might be designated as *royal history*. A large percentage of the public still believes that the vast bulk of history is not for them, that valuable as it may be for rulers, presidents, and lawmakers it has only incidental utility for themselves. The explanation of this attitude can be found in historiography.

The oldest specimens of extant history demonstrate its royal origin and nature. The inscriptions on the tombs, temples, and monuments of ancient Egypt illustrate the royal desire to announce, publicize, and record official achievements. The votive inscriptions of Babylonia, Assyria, and Persia prove that the rulers of those kingdoms were equally solicitous that knowledge of their deeds should not perish. The author of the book of Chronicles observed: "Now the acts of David the King, first and last, behold, they are written in the history of Samuel the seer, and in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the history of Gad the seer" (I Chronicles, 29: 29). In each of these illustrations history was serving royalty.

The royal strain of history was continued and expanded by the Greeks. In the hands of Thucydides it was broadened to include diplomacy, war, and politics. Thus politics, which henceforth became the main thread of history, is not different from but an integral part of royal history. And it must not be supposed that this kind of history is necessarily dull or colorless. In fact, the ancient historian made good use of dramatic incidents and labored diligently in order that his hero might deliver a creditable oration whenever the occasion required, and sometimes when the occasion did not seem to require it. In addition to dramatic incidents and fabricated speeches the royal historian sometimes, perhaps quite unwittingly, included incidents and data that have great social significance.

The history of Christianity has, for the most part, been written in line with the royal tradition. Whatever was authoritative, established, and traditional in either doctrine or practice was upheld by the vast majority of writers in this field. Even the Reformation did not alter this fact; it merely meant that the historian had a choice as to what authority he would support. The writings of the early church fathers, such as Origen, Eusebius, and Augustine,

the numerous lives of the saints, and the latest denominational histories illustrate this trend.

A long list of Roman historians who upheld the royal tradition of history could be mentioned. Polybius, Caesar, Sallust, Dio Cassius, and Tacitus are outstanding. While they added little that was new to the royal conception, they multiplied examples and upheld the tradition. One interesting example of royal history in the first person is the famous *Ancyranum monumentum* of Augustus.

During the course of the Middle Ages and modern times royal history continued to flourish. A large number of historians endeavored to broaden the concept and expand the scope, but now and then a fundamentalist arose who recalled the basic principles of royal history. Such a person was Philippe de Comines, who not only wrote history but drew from his study of the subject and from his experience guiding principles that were useful for royalty. For example, he declared that the rulers of friendly countries should never meet. Such occasions were fraught with danger because one ruler would inevitably be better looking or have a more impressive retinue than the other. On-lookers and servants would naturally make comparisons and remarks. Ill will, envy, and misunderstandings would thus be generated. Comines' *Memoirs* are filled with beatitudes for rulers. For example, "A wise ruler must always endeavor to have some secret friend or friends about his enemy and beware his enemy have not the like about him." No detail of statecraft was beneath his notice; he gives advice concerning ambassadors, dress, presents, entertainments, deception, honesty, chastity, and taxes. So useful was this guidebook to royalty that the Emperor Charles V is said to have carried a copy with him continually, and Francis I was deeply chagrined over the publication of what he probably regarded as guild secrets. Machiavelli, a contemporary of Comines, may also be regarded as a writer of royal history in its most literal meaning.

Royal history in its most extreme form is outlined by Basedow, an eighteenth-century educator. According to his plan, history for a prince would discuss revolutions, law, politics, population, finance, diplomacy, and morals. It would contain a special section describing rulers who were lazy, industrious, miserly, spendthrift, cruel, brave, ungrateful, and intolerant. These instructive pages were to be written, but not printed, for the history which was good for a prince might not be good for a subject.

In more recent times royal history has remained dominant, at least until late into the nineteenth century. While its scope was expanded to include national, legal, constitutional, parliamentary, and administrative matters, and its techniques of research were vastly improved, its central tendencies remained unaltered. Of the many who might be mentioned as upholders of the royal tradition, Gibbon, Milman, Stubbs, Maitland, Carlyle, Mommsen, Winsor, Bancroft, Von Holst, Rhodes, and Freeman are outstanding. In fact, Freeman's remark about history being past politics, in spite of violent denials, does epitomize the modern manifestation of history. The observation deserves criticism not because of its inaccuracy as a description of prevailing practices but because of its inadequacy as a description of what should be. Royal history has persisted into our own day and has found its way into most textbooks and reference works.

The long line of historians who in their varied ways contributed to the development of royal history were ably supplemented by an equally long line of royal biographers. While these biographers did not deal exclusively with kings and emperors, they may justly be regarded as contributing to the development of royal history. The first of these, Plutarch, set a high and perhaps unequaled standard, but others such as Suetonius, Einhard, Asser, and Carlyle, have maintained the tradition. Such series as *Heroes of the Nations* and *American Statesmen* are additional examples.

Carlyle was so emphatic in his devotion to regal heroes that he almost denied the existence of society and the possibility of social history.

The writer of royal history is, wittingly or unwittingly, a believer in Gestalt psychology. According to this system of psychology, the learner perceives and apprehends the whole before he is aware of its parts. He may obtain a general, and possibly correct, though limited, understanding of the whole organism without ever studying its component elements. The writer of royal history too frequently endeavors, not only to perceive and understand a whole country, a whole century, or a whole revolution, but to describe it, to explain it, and to teach his findings to others without taking the trouble to examine the local parts that constitute the whole situation.

This survey, brief and impressionistic as it is, explains why the local citizen is somewhat indifferent to much of the prevailing history. Fortunately for him and for the cause of history, there is another aspect to it. Alongside the royal strain there developed a broader, a more inclusive, a more democratic history. While there is no one term that seems elastic enough to encompass its full range, it may be conveniently labeled as social history. Though later in origin, slower in development, less definite in content, more difficult to unify, and less amenable to scientific techniques, social history has all but absorbed the royal strain.

The nature of social history can best be indicated by its contents. Social history means the inclusion and consideration of education, industry, commerce, agriculture, architecture, finance, social organizations, religion, philosophy, science, literature, art, migrations, occupations, and whatever may be of interest or value to human beings. One may correctly observe that social history would then include all that is valuable in royal history, and such has come to be the case. The two strains have at last blended into one. Royal history has become socialized.

No definite date can be assigned for the beginning of social history. The bards, poets, minstrels, and jesters preserved and transmitted stories, songs, and traditions of the common people. Literature, overcoming the royal tradition far earlier than history, served as a reservoir of social data. In fact, literature has always had the advantage of being able to deal with the particular, the concrete, the specific. It has never been compelled to hasten to general trends, inclusive conclusions, great generalizations, sweeping movements, and universal laws. To a considerable extent one is justified in saying that social history emerged from literature, and has in recent years rejoined its complement, royal history.

There are faint glimmerings of social history in Homer, the Old Testament, Herodotus, and Tacitus, more clearly discernable elements in Comenius, Voltaire, Guizot, Comte, and Burckhardt, and a host of fully developed examples within recent years. In 1768 Justus Möser wrote his history of Osnabrück, a work that is sometimes described as the first community history. In the United States the shift toward social history can be clearly observed by recalling the changing characteristics of three great co-operative series, which have appeared since the turn of the century. The *American Nation* series, published about 1905, is largely, though not wholly, political, constitutional, diplomatic, and military. Two of the twenty-eight volumes are devoted to the Civil War, and chronology and political administration are the dominant bases of organization. The *Chronicles of America*, published about 1919, is, to a considerable extent, organized on a topical basis that is only loosely related to chronological and political factors. Occasional volumes maintain the thread of political narrative. Separate volumes are devoted to such social aspects as agriculture, commerce, education, railroads, finance, inventions, and immigration. The third series, the *History of American Life*, now nearly completed, is devoted wholly to social

history. While no one would regard this series as a complete history of the United States, it does present the homely aspects of everyday life among the common people. Its publication is an unmistakable symptom of the senility of royal history.

Another instance of the trend toward socialized history is furnished by the titles of books. In 1874 John R. Green published his history of the English *people*. In 1883 McMaster started his history of the *people* of the United States. In 1896 Eggleston began his history of the colonial period and included in his title the phrase "with special reference to the life and character of the people." The words "economic" and "social" have occurred repeatedly in titles during the last twenty years. Economic, financial, tariff, agricultural, industrial, labor, religious, educational, literary, and cultural histories of the United States have been written. The trend has been carried over into the field of textbooks, and such words as "people," "our," "we," "rise," "development," "making," "building," "story," and "exploring" are incorporated into titles in an effort to show the wide scope and the socialized nature of the textbooks.

While social history was winning its battle over royal history, local and state historical societies were being formed in the United States. A state historical society was started in Massachusetts in 1791, a dozen more had been organized in as many states by 1830, and by 1850 there were thirty state and regional societies. One writer has declared that the organization of local and state historical societies was characterized by "vivacity of inception, apathy of progress, and prematureness of decay." In view of this generalization we should be mindful of the early and energetic origin, the steadfastness of development, and the permanency of the society under whose auspices we are assembled.

These historical societies encouraged the study and writ-

ing of state history. The results were at times disheartening. Writers tended to regard the state as a miniature nation and were too conscious of the national models furnished by the writers of royal history. State historians thus tended to emphasize, not the life, the personality, or the characteristics that were peculiar to a particular state, but merely its contribution to the history of the nation. They included the episodes which had been selected for inclusion in national histories. For example, the high spots in the history of Kentucky were Daniel Boone, the Wilkinson-Burr conspiracy, and neutrality during the Civil War, plus fervent attention to the log cabin near Hodgenville. In the history of Missouri the points of emphasis were the fur trade, the Missouri Compromise, the river trade, and the Civil War. In Kansas, the civil war of territorial days, the Santa Fé Trail, and the cattle trade became the focal points. While these episodes may be the most dramatic aspects in the histories of these states, their selection for major or even exclusive treatment shows a subserviency to national models. In brief, state history had not become state history, much less local history. Those who scorned state history because it was local should have scorned it because it was *not* local.

Fortunately there are abundant signs of change. State historical societies have established their spiritual independence. They have had the courage to study, not only Michigan in the nation's history, but Michigan itself, and Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and not only the state but its cities, counties, regions, resources, and people.

Along with the founding and rise of state historical societies there developed numerous county, city, and even village societies, and societies for the development of the history of occupational, religious, and social groups. These tended to become in reality local societies. As they began the study of their particular problems and realized their larger ramifications they started out into wider fields, and

met the state historical societies as they were coming down from the national plateau. Thus local history became state history and state history became local. These trends have been enormously accelerated by improved communication and transportation. The local community has actually become bigger and the state smaller. History has at last arrived at the very doorstep of our homes. History has something that is valuable and pertinent for the home, and, equally important, the home is ready to receive it.

Local history was not only important in the growth of social history—it was indispensable. Royal history can be written on a grand scale. The movements of armies, the deeds of emperors, the debates of parliaments, the results of elections, and the decisions of high courts can be described in general terms over a period of years and throughout a wide area. Royal history need not be localized. On the other hand, social history must have a local habitation; it must deal with rather specific places, groups, and situations; it must be focused upon a particular aspect or problem. A description of houses, furniture, and food must be limited to some particular period and area. The industrial situation must be described in terms of some local industries. The problem of disease must be studied in local areas before it can possibly be translated into national terms. It is significant that the life expectancy tables of insurance companies grew out of the study of a local community. Before such tables were reliable, the statistician had, of course, to study many communities. Social history, at least in its early stages, must inevitably be local history.

Local history has served another important function in the development of the whole field. It was the catalytic agent which hastened, if it did not actually complete, the absorption of royal history by social history. This influence is easy to understand. The most royal strains of royal history, when applied to a local community, tend to become

socialized. For example, elections are usually regarded as one of the typical centers of royal history. In a certain election one township, inhabited chiefly by people of German descent, gives a large majority to one party; an adjoining township, inhabited chiefly by Irish, gives an equally large majority to the opposite party; another township, in which tenants and laborers predominate, rejects both and casts its vote for a third party. These election returns, when compiled at headquarters, are merely so many votes; when studied in their local origin they indicate far more than they tell. The tariff is usually regarded as a national or international problem, but it is in reality the local problem which General Hancock, perhaps unwittingly, declared it to be when he was a candidate in 1880. The presence or absence of a tariff may mean the difference between prosperity or depression for the farmers of Mower County or of the Red River Valley. The declaration of war is easily one of the most dramatic episodes on the pages of royal history. The warnings, threats, ultimatums, and oratory may very properly cover pages and pages. When one studies war at home, however, it loses its dramatic and spectacular qualities. It means one less hand on the farm, more work for the women, and anxiety for all. On a local scale, war loses its royal aspects and becomes a sad, stupid, social reality. Local history thus tends to deflate royal history. The community translates the elevated, remote, and highly generalized strains of royal history into the basic elements of everyday living.

Having traced the growth of royal history, the development of social history, and the rise and expansion of local history, let us examine more fully the contents of local history and its utility for the typical citizen. What are some of the questions and problems in the life of the citizen on which local history can shed light? It should be admitted at the outset of this examination that the answers to many of these questions will require appeals to national and even

world history, but a study of the local manifestations and local materials will go far toward equipping the reader for this wider excursion, and the necessity of going beyond the immediate community simply demonstrates its world-wide connections. Just as the local community has expanded until we have identified it with the state, so in many of its aspects we have to admit that the community transcends even the nation. In fact, the church rituals, many social customs, the architecture, the legal forms, and dozens of other local phenomena are not local in any geographic sense; they are merely local in their manifestations.

In considering for illustrative purposes a few questions and problems on which local history will shed light, let us start with a rural area. The farmer may be interested in the history of his farm. A brief search in the recorder's office will reveal the complete list of the previous owners. He will find in most states that the United States was the original landlord. A certain township is settled almost entirely by Czechs. The lone Yankee farmer wonders how it happens that all his neighbors are of that nationality. The state histories may furnish a start. Interviews with some of the older immigrants may yield information. The records of the colonization bureau of some railroad or of a construction company may furnish additional evidence. The immigrant who has preserved the letters which he received while in Bohemia from his friends in the township may furnish invaluable materials. The persistent Yankee can find the answer.

The town merchant who laments the increase of tenancy among his customers, with the consequent loss of trade, may find at least the local answer by a series of careful notes following interviews with owners and tenants. The farmer who wonders why he has to employ such unsatisfactory and irregular laborers during harvest may find some kind of answer by polling his fellow farmers and by a wide reading of the materials on industry. The steady, successful

farmer who wonders why so many of his neighbors' children move to the city may find the answer after a series of interviews and records. The farmer who wonders about the style of architecture which prevails in houses and barns will probably find the answer by studying the architecture of the region from which his neighbors came. The farmer who tries to borrow money may be irritated into a study of our whole national credit system. The boy who belongs to the 4-H Club may wonder when and how the breed of hogs was improved, and why the Chester White is becoming increasingly popular in a particular neighborhood. The answers to his questions may lead him far beyond the community, state, and nation. The country teacher who wonders why the textbooks emphasize the professions and city life may be led to a study of the relationship of the curriculum to the local neighborhood.

Let us shift the scene to the city. The Daughters of the American Revolution wish to erect a marker in memory of an early settler. They are confronted with the problem of finding dates and places. The park board wishes to know, for purposes of civic pride, who founded the system of parks. The newly arrived dweller wishes to know how it happens that the public utilities are owned by the city. A traveler wishes to know how it happens that a highly specialized industry is located in this particular city. The well-to-do families of a particular city make it a custom to eat their Sunday dinner at a hotel. What was the origin of the custom? Why are all the houses in one city made of brick or stone and the majority of those in another made of wood? Do country-bred people succeed in the city better than those born in the city? Why are there so many vacant lots close by highly congested areas? These questions are illustrative of many more that might be asked. The answers to them would be informative and useful. The sources for answers to them are perhaps more acces-

sible in the city than are the answers to corresponding questions concerning rural areas.

It may be pointed out that history alone would not furnish the answer to all these questions, that when one gets into social and economic surveys he is no longer in the realm of history. True as this may be, the local historian is in a position to furnish a background and an approach and a method that neither sociology nor economics supplies.

The preceding illustrations indicate the nature of some of the content of local history. They seem to imply that the typical citizen must become a historian. Desirable as that might be, the illustrations are intended to imply merely that the citizen who really wants to know the answers to particular problems may of necessity become a historian, at least to a limited extent. The most appreciative consumer is the one who understands production, and in education we teach that the best method of learning a science is the one that most nearly parallels the work of the scientist. Thus the potential or nascent historian is prepared to appreciate history.

The illustrations concerning content have indicated also some of the values of local history. Foremost among these values is that of making the community intelligible. Every inquiring mind sooner or later asks the when, how, and why of existing local phenomena. Local history will furnish satisfactory answers to most of these questions, just as a wider history will furnish the approach to an understanding of wider phenomena.

A second value of local history is that it tends to create an interest in and a love for one's own community. Just as national history has, perhaps all too successfully, centered the affection of American children upon its symbols and functions, so local history might, without any lessening of a desirable national patriotism, tend to create a local patriotism. The great mobility and widened range of everyday social and commercial living have weakened and in many

cases all but destroyed that highly desirable feeling of attachment to one's environment. The metropolitan newspaper, the national magazines, broadcasting stations, and picture films, and the expanding functions of the national government are immovable bulwarks against any intense degree of localism. Whatever dangers confront America today, local pride and intense community attachments are not among them. Good citizenship must rest upon something even more enduring and compelling than the bill of rights or the tax collector's demands. Emotional anchors must be grounded in the community, and in most cases this inevitably involves the community's past as well as its present and future. Respect for the founders of the community, an interest in its problems, and co-operative efforts to promote its development are necessary and desirable. Local history is designed to furnish a solid basis for the required attitudes and qualities.

Another value of local history is its usefulness in understanding state, national, and world affairs. The problem of the labor supply which confronts the farmer repeats itself on a larger scale in national history. The local strike illustrates all the forces which operate in nation-wide strikes. The story of local efforts to solve the zoning problem furnishes the basis for understanding the problem in other areas. The community is an epitome of the world, and an understanding of it is the best preparation and strongest assurance of an understanding of wider scenes.

A fourth value of local history is the vitalizing help which it furnishes in understanding the whole field of history. In the eighteenth century C. G. Salzmann declared, "History as it is ordinarily taught lifts the pupil out of the society of the living and places him in the society of the dead." The community approach to history is the surest way to guard against such an eventuality. The pupil who realizes that his own community has a history and that some of the citizens whom he knows are mentioned on its pages can never

assume that Greek gods, Norse heroes, and historical personages are somewhat synonymous.

Still another value of local history is its utility as a standard of selecting other history. The local history that is extant in a particular community has in most cases evolved in response to some local interest or need. These present needs and interests furnish sure bases of selecting additional history. In terms of the school, these present-day needs are the criteria for selecting the contents of the curriculum. In terms of the historian, these needs show what should be written, and in terms of the reader, they show what should be read.

There is one other value of history, local, social, or royal; it protects one against current events. The radio, the newspaper, the newsreel, and the school curriculum are endeavoring to prove that the road to an understanding of the world runs through contemporary divorces, murders, football games, accidents, and rumors of war. The study of history enables one to maintain some poise and to see that these phenomena constitute the problem rather than the approaches. An understanding of them is a desirable objective, but they do not necessarily furnish the most desirable curricular or reading materials. History furnishes the basis for an appraisal, and he who knows its lessons will not so easily mistake the ephemeral for the enduring.

Other values of local history could be listed and the particular application of the values of history in general could be applied to the community. The foregoing illustrations, however, will suffice.

We began by considering some rather disparaging remarks about local historians. Let us reconsider this much prejudged group. It would be easy to cite grievous errors, ill-planned treatments, myopic viewpoints, and gross ignorance on the part of local historians. It would not be any great labor, however, to parallel the list by an equally long one drawn from the pages of recognized historians. One

should not be surprised at the nebulous nature and undefined patterns of local history. If, after more than two thousand years, the writers of royal and social history continue to produce unsatisfactory accounts, it should excite small wonder that the vastly more intricate and complex subject of local, social history should be so poorly developed after a mere century and a half. And it may be that these rambling, undigested materials will prove useful in the rewriting of local history. Instead of belaboring these humble writers, we should perhaps be grateful that they have preserved something.

A re-examination of local historians will lead us also to a reconsideration of those county histories. While no one would seriously maintain that they are satisfactory or adequate, they do contain materials of great value. And ironically enough, one of the most useful parts is that devoted to the biographical sketches of humble citizens. From these sketches and from the occasional directory lists one can frequently secure such data concerning the people as native state or country, previous and present occupation, educational training, age, names of wife and children, party affiliation, church membership, membership in fraternities, and other miscellaneous information. Historians of national standing have already acknowledged their indebtedness to the biographical sketches contained in county histories.

Fortunately all local history does not stand in need of defenders. Much of it deserves praise and imitation. For example, who would alter Howe's *Historical Collections of Ohio*, with its quaint drawings made in 1846, paralleled by photographs of the same scenes as they were forty years later? What if the author, Herodotus-like, did repeat what others told him? He thereby gathered priceless materials. And who would scorn the history of Shakopee or Galesburg, merely because it deals with a little town? Numerous state, county, and city histories of very creditable quality have been written, especially within recent years.

Our own Minnesota Historical Society has sponsored, aided, and guided local and county societies. No fear of duplication, suspicion of quality, or envy of results has marred its vigorous and helpful leadership of these local organizations. The cause of local history, especially in Minnesota, has every reason to expect a fuller and richer development.

The local historian needs no apologist. He is dealing with universal actualities in their local manifestations. Let him who would understand Nineveh, Athens, Rome, or London begin with the study of his own community. Let him who would understand the Asiatic empire of ancient Egypt, the far-flung provinces of Rome, or the globe-encircling members of the British Empire begin with an examination of the articles which are brought into and sent out from his own community. Let him who would understand ecclesiastical hierarchies, royal families, or entangling alliances observe and study their local counterparts. History begins at home. It is written at home, and at home it finds its greatest utility.

The understanding of the local contemporary scene is the prime objective of all educational endeavor. Local history is one of the surest roads to this understanding. Equipped with some insight into local problems, we journey into far countries and past centuries. On the basis of local experience we are prepared to gain a clearer grasp of Athenian democracy, Roman imperialism, and enlightened despotism. The past becomes intelligible. Enriched and stimulated by our increased understanding of the past, we focus our attention once more upon the local community. It is, in truth, no longer so local; it is now recognized as an epitome of the world and of the past. Thus local history involves a round-trip journey. We start with some knowledge and some understanding; we set out to gain greater insight, and with this illuminated understanding of the past we return to our own community. Local history is the beginning and the end of our historical efforts. The local community fur-

nishes the occasion for the writing and for the reading of all history.

Royal history maintained its lofty flight over wide areas for two thousand years. Its royal glances did now and then fall upon some local center, and the results were transformed into social history. Local history, feeble, untrained, and inept, was graciously rescued and lifted up by state history. And in seeking to aid its weak fledglings, state history was itself rejuvenated and reconstructed. History has arrived at home.

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
MINNEAPOLIS



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