

building. From my association with five members of the council to whom the museum and library are much indebted for their gifts and service, this brief address may fittingly end with my personal tribute to the Reverend Edward C. Mitchell and the Honorable Jacob V. Brower, from whom the museum received donations of very extensive archeologic collections; Professor Newton H. Winchell, who during his last eight years served the society in its department of archeology, preparing large and valuable publications; Josiah B. Chaney, who for twenty-one years had charge of the newspaper department in the library, being succeeded by John Talman during the last ten years; and David L. Kingsbury who was the assistant librarian through eighteen years. Their hearty devotion to this society in its work for the state, and the similar fidelity and good service of others who preceded them, are an enduring inspiration for us, their successors, to "make our lives sublime," as Longfellow wrote, by being useful to our fellow citizens, to all the people of Minnesota.

The afternoon session was then concluded with the reading of the following paper by Dr. Solon J. Buck, superintendent of the society:

THE FUNCTIONS AND IDEALS OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In every one of the states of the American Union there is a society or similar institution devoted to the preservation of the record of the state's past; and the majority of these institutions are state supported, at least in part. Why is it that the American people have seen fit thus to put history on a different plane from other branches of human knowledge, to regard it as a matter of public interest and worthy of public support? The answer is simple. History is of community, rather than merely individual importance because history is to the community what memory is to the individual. It is the foundation upon which everything of the present rests and upon which everything of the future must be built. A nation, without knowledge of its history, like a man without memory, would be helpless.

But why, it may be asked, do we concern ourselves so much with state and local history; is it not sufficient to know thoroughly the history of the nation as a whole? Again the answer is fairly obvious. A thorough knowledge of the history of the nation as a whole is impossible without an adequate conception of the history of the parts which go to make up that whole. The past of Minnesota is just as much a part of American history, as the record of a presidential administration or the story of the Pilgrim fathers.

There are other reasons why local history has special importance in this country. One of these is that, essentially, the American nation is a democracy, and therefore its history must be the history of the people. The most important thing to know in connection with any problem in this country, either past or present, is not the action of the government with reference to it but the attitude of the people toward it, and not merely the attitude of a majority of the people as a whole but that of the people of each section of the country and of each class of the population. This knowledge can be obtained only by a study of local history and conditions.

Even if we accept Freeman's definition of history as "past politics," it is apparent, therefore, that we cannot confine it to developments at the seat of government. But few historical workers today restrict their field to past politics, and those who do interpret politics broadly and recognize that, in modern times at least, politics is greatly influenced by social and economic forces. The student of social and economic history must study the past of the people in their local communities, their homes, farms, and factories, if he would achieve an adequate understanding of the subject, if he would know how things came to be as they are and whither they are tending.

Largely as a result of the work of Professor Turner, who is to speak to us this evening, it is now generally recognized that one of the most significant and influential phases of American history is the westward movement, the advance of settlement across the country, the occupation of a continent by civilized people. Every community in the United States has its place in that movement, has passed or is passing through the various stages from a wilderness inhabited by savages to a highly organ-

ized society; and it is only by an intensive and comparative study of the settlement and development of the separate communities, with their special circumstances and conditions, that this westward movement and its influence upon national development as a whole can be understood.

The importance of history naturally receives, as a rule, greater recognition in those countries or states whose development extends over a long period of time. Thus it happens that the nations of Europe preserve their archives much more carefully and subsidize historical work much more liberally than do either the United States or most of the individual states of the Union. Thus it happens, also, that the oldest historical society in the country is that of Massachusetts, established in 1791. This date, however, is 171 years after the first settlement at Plymouth. Had Minnesota waited a similar length of time, the establishment of this society would still be several generations in the future. Fortunately the men who laid the foundations of this commonwealth had not only vision for the future but appreciation of the past. Perhaps they realized also, that the best time to collect the materials for the history of a period is during that period itself. However that may be, only thirty years after the beginning of American occupation, in the year in which Minnesota became a political entity, the Minnesota Historical Society was chartered by the first territorial legislature. I know of no other state in which an historical society was organized so early in its career. The distinguished State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which has outdistanced us in so many respects, in part because of the more adequate support to be expected from an older community, was organized in the same year as our own, but this was thirteen years after the establishment of Wisconsin Territory and one year after the state was admitted to the Union. In the still older, richer, and more populous state of Illinois, state historical activity did not begin until 1889.

Other speakers this afternoon have told you something about the work of this society in the past and have given credit to the men who have made it what it is. As the superintendent of the society, charged with the administration of its affairs under the direction of the executive committee and council, it is fitting that I should say something of its functions and ideals.

The Minnesota Historical Society is distinctly a state institution, an association of people banded together for the purpose of assisting the state to perform its recognized duties in the field of history. Its library and other possessions are public property available to all for consultation and examination under such restrictions as are necessary to ensure their preservation. It is also a popular institution, in the sense that membership is open to all who are sufficiently interested in the work of helping the state preserve the record of its past to pay the nominal dues. It is dependent upon the people, not only indirectly for legislative appropriations, but directly for invaluable assistance in preserving material of the greatest importance which cannot be obtained by purchase in the regular way. The people are therefore entitled to know what the society is doing and what are its plans for the future.

It is impossible in the limited time available this afternoon to present anything more than an outline of the functions of the society. The first of these is the accumulation of material. Since there are five other large and growing libraries in the Twin Cities, two of which are also state supported, it would be unwise for us to duplicate their work by attempting to build up a comprehensive general or miscellaneous library. We should rather cultivate intensively a special field, and that field should be American history. Even here it is necessary to make a selection of the more important things; but in the restricted field of Minnesota material, we should procure everything available. This means not merely strictly historical material but everything bearing in any way upon the state or any of its subdivisions, institutions, or inhabitants. An attempt is made to procure not only all official publications, however insignificant, but also the publications of semipublic or private institutions, including churches, societies, and business houses. The ephemeral printed matter of the present day is enormous, but it is possible to make a representative collection of such things as handbills, posters, programs and advertising literature, which will be valuable to the social historian in the future. The newspaper, though in some respects notoriously unreliable, is nevertheless the best mirror of community life, and the society now receives every issue of over half the papers published in the state. The files are contributed by the

publishers but the society bears the not inconsiderable expense of binding them.

Much of the most valuable material of history is in the form of manuscripts, and of these the state archives are especially important. A survey made a few years ago under the joint auspices of the society and the public archives commission of the American Historical Association disclosed the fact that these fundamental records of the activities of the state and its various departments are not receiving and cannot under present conditions receive proper care. The law under which this building was erected provided that it should be for the "use of the Minnesota historical society and for the care, preservation and protection of the State Archives." It is to be hoped that a future legislature will empower and, by adequate appropriations, enable the society to take over the custody of the mass of noncurrent records in the Capitol, to provide for their proper care and classification, and to make them accessible to historical investigators. Of private manuscript material the society already possesses a priceless collection, particularly in the papers of men who laid the foundations of the commonwealth. But we should acquire much more material of this sort, especially material illustrating social and economic conditions and development, such as the records of lumbering companies, the files of manufacturing establishments, and the papers of ordinary men in the ordinary pursuits of life.

With reference to illustrative material it is possible to say only a word. Museum articles which help to visualize the life of the past are essential, and additions must be made to the society's already large collection of portraits and photographs. Even motion picture films and phonograph records are not to be scorned.

Great as is the task of assembling the sources of history, the task of arranging and caring for them is still greater. Books and pamphlets fall within the ordinary domain of library science, requiring only an adequate staff of professionally trained assistants to classify and catalogue them and make them available to the public. Manuscripts, however, require special treatment. Usually they must be cleaned, pressed, and arranged in a logical or chronological order, and then inventories and calendars are needed to enable the student to use them with facility. The

administration of the museum and picture collections presents special problems which still await solution.

Another activity, long recognized as one of the important functions of an historical society, is publication; and this should not be confined to reminiscences, addresses, and miscellaneous articles. The time has come when we should make a comprehensive plan for the publication of the significant sources for the history of Minnesota, in order that their preservation may be assured and that they may be available to students all over the world. This means the printing of a long series of volumes of *Collections*, arranged to cover all periods and phases of the history of the state. It will involve the search for pertinent documents in many libraries, archive depositories and private collections throughout the country and even in Europe, as well as the assembling of material from our own files and from the state and local archives of Minnesota. If the work is done thoroughly and critically it will be a slow process, extending over an indefinite period of time, but the results will be permanent and increasingly valuable.

If history is to fulfill its mission in a democracy, it must serve not only the student but also the general public. Not everyone has the time or inclination for historical research but everyone should have some knowledge of and interest in the history of his community. Without such knowledge and interest, good citizenship is impossible. It is a proper function of a state historical society, therefore, to popularize the results of scientific investigation, to present history to the people in a form in which they can and will assimilate it. There are many ways of doing this: books and pamphlets in popular and attractive form may be prepared and given wide distribution; illustrated lectures may be presented not only here in the building but throughout the state; special exhibits may from time to time be arranged in the museum; and the organization and activity of local historical societies may be encouraged and directed. The time will come, we hope, when all these methods will be in use by our society.

The completion and dedication of this building means increased opportunity for the Minnesota Historical Society to serve the state. Increased opportunity involves increased responsibility and this in turn necessitates increased expenditures. The annual appropriation for the maintenance of the society was increased by

the last legislature from twenty to twenty-five thousand dollars. Everyone knows, however, that the purchasing power of twenty-five thousand dollars is less today than that of twenty thousand four years ago and very much less than that of twenty thousand in 1905 when the society's appropriation first reached that point. Only by the most rigid economy, particularly in the matter of salaries, and by drawing upon the income from the permanent funds of the society, has it been possible to meet the increased expenses resulting from the occupation of this building. When the Wisconsin Historical Society dedicated its building in 1901, its annual appropriation from the state was twenty thousand dollars. Today it is over three times that sum. Now that Minnesota has invested half a million dollars in an historical building, it is confidently believed that the legislature will see the wisdom of maintenance appropriations such as will result in the greatest possible return to the people of the state.

Though it is upon state appropriations that the society relies and should rely for the greater part of its support, there is no reason why it should not receive private contributions. As has been pointed out by our president, our predecessors of an earlier generation gave liberally to the society; and we are now living in part on the fruits of their generosity. No donations or bequests of money have been received in recent years, however, partly perhaps, because the opportunity which the society offers for service of this sort has not been sufficiently emphasized. The opportunities are unlimited, however. A form of donation of especial value would be a fund the income from which should be devoted to collection, research, and publication in some field of special interest to the donor, such as the history of a religious organization, an element of the population, a profession, an industry, or even the history of Minnesota's participation in the great World War. What finer or more enduring memorial can be conceived than a unified series of publications, each bearing the name of the fund which made it possible. Some of the neighboring historical societies have received large endowment funds recently, one of them receiving over a quarter of a million dollars from a single donor. Contributions of this sort, whether large or small and whether for general or for special purposes,

will be welcomed by the Minnesota Historical Society and will be scrupulously used in accordance with the wishes of the donor.

In the hope and expectation that the citizens of the state will give to the society the loyal support so necessary if it is to make the fullest use of its new opportunities, we are now dedicating the building which will undoubtedly be its home for many years to come. This day will long be remembered in the annals of our society. It marks, however, not a culmination, but a beginning. We are standing on the threshold of a new epoch in the history of the world, an epoch in which democracy, having demonstrated by force its right to exist, will open the way for renewed progress in all the fields of human activity. The Minnesota Historical Society stands ready to play its part in the new epoch, to preserve the record of the past and of the ever advancing present, for the benefit of the future. This occasion is not merely the dedication of a building, it is also a rededication of the society and the state to the service of history, and through history, to the service of mankind.

At the conclusion of the afternoon exercises the entire building was thrown open for inspection, and hundreds of members and friends of the society, guided by members of the staff, made the tour through the offices, workrooms, book-stacks, reading rooms, museum and galleries. The delegates and invited guests were then entertained at a supper served in the museum. Since the reading room proved too small to accommodate the audience in the afternoon, the evening session was transferred to the House Chamber in the Capitol. Here a large audience heard the inspiring dedicatory address by Dr. Frederick J. Turner, professor of history in Harvard University, which is printed elsewhere in this number of the BULLETIN.

In concluding this account of the dedication exercises it is fitting that acknowledgment be made to the St. Paul Association of Public and Business Affairs and to Mr. Charles P. Noyes for their generosity in sharing with the society the expenses of the occasion. The arrangements for the supper

were handled by a committee of St. Paul women composed of Mrs. George R. Metcalf, chairman, Mesdames Charles E. Furness, Frederick G. Ingersoll, Gideon S. Ives, William H. Lightner, Charles P. Noyes, and Charles W. Williams, and Misses Lydia Ickler and Hester Pollock. The flowers were contributed by Mrs. Furness, whose father, the Honorable Alexander Ramsey, as governor of the territory, signed the bill establishing the society, and later served for many years as its president.



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