

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ST. LOUIS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Attention was called in the BULLETIN for February, 1923 (see *ante*, p. 79), to the organization of the St. Louis County Historical Society and from time to time mention has been made in these pages of the activities of this new institution (see *ante*, p. 157, 242, 321, 393). The constitution of the society provides that an annual report is to be made to the Minnesota Historical Society. It is believed that portions of the first annual report submitted to the state society under this rule are of sufficient general interest to merit publication here. Local history activity is on the increase throughout the state and the following concrete statement of the achievements of one society will be useful to local history leaders in many communities. The exhibits and tables which accompany Mr. Culkin's report are here omitted.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE ST. LOUIS COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOR THE YEAR ENDING NOVEMBER 5, 1923

On November 25, 1922, this society was organized and adopted its constitution. Pursuant to adjournment it met on December 1, 1922, and the following persons were chosen to office for the year ending on the first Monday in January, 1924: William E. Culkin, president; W. A. McGonagle, Mrs. Julia M. Barnes, and A. E. Bickford, vice presidents; J. D. Mahoney, treasurer; and Mrs. Addie M. Mauseau, secretary. The board of governors consisted of Edward C. Congdon and W. C. Sargent of Duluth, J. C. Poole of Eveleth, Peter Schaefer of Ely, W. N. Tappan of Hibbing, and the president and vice presidents. Later Alice Lindquist was made assistant to the secretary for the reason that Mrs. Mauseau could not give her time to the work of the society at its headquarters.

MEETINGS

The society, pursuant to its rules, has held regular program meetings during this year on January 2, March 5, and May 31, all at Duluth, and also an annual summer convention extending over two days at Virginia on August 6 and 7. Another program meeting is to be held in Duluth on Thursday, November 22, at Memorial Hall in the evening.

These program meetings were not largely attended, as is usual with historical meetings, but the attendance was far more than fair. About twenty-five papers were presented dealing with all phases of historical affairs. The papers are preserved in the files of the society and cross-indexed in the manner hereinafter to be referred to.

In addition to program meetings there were several business meetings of the society like this one on November 5, at which this report is presented. There were also meetings of the board of governors and there will be at least one other meeting of the board during this year 1923.

MEMBERSHIP

The society now has on its rolls 108 members. Citizens have not been over-active to affiliate, but none the less they are quite universally in agreement with the aims and work of the society. It takes some pressure to get action because people, as a rule, are otherwise preoccupied. No doubt the membership will grow in a healthy way in the future. Dues are one dollar a year for regular members and fifteen dollars for life members. There are eight of the latter. It should be added that the personnel of the society is excellent. With the new year a move for new members should be inaugurated. Perhaps this is as good a place as any to say that the daily and weekly newspapers of the county are strong supporters of the society. They give agreeable publicity from time to time to its programs and its work.

FINANCES

When this society was organized its only source of revenue was the dues paid by its members. This was a small sum. But under the direction of the board of governors the society pooled

its expenses with the St. Louis County branch of the Minnesota War Records Commission, in reference to clerical work. The headquarters of this society were the headquarters of said commission. The clerk, or assistant to the secretary, is the clerk of both organizations. As their work is along the same lines there is no clash. This arrangement is good only for 1923, as at the end of this year the commission will be out of funds under the laws. The legislature of Minnesota for 1923 passed a law permitting St. Louis County to aid this society to the extent of twenty-five hundred dollars a year. The board of governors, represented by Mr. W. A. McGonagle, the Honorable W. A. Cant, and the executive, applied for aid to the county commissioners under the act referred to and the sum of sixteen hundred dollars was granted by the county for the balance of the year. About one-third of this sum was taken from the appropriation for the war records commission, it being estimated that it would not be needed.

After June 1, 1923, the executive, who works each afternoon at the headquarters of this society on historical work, received a regular salary from the society, by arrangement with the board of governors. The office is always open and historical work and planning have been and are proceeding daily. There have been other expenses, such as postage, stationery, outside copying, filing cases, historical books from the state society, personal expense of the executive, expense attendant on meetings, expense of state society officers at local meetings, and the like. But the funds have been administered with economy, and not only is the society free from debt, but its funds will be ample for the rest of this year. Any part of the county fund for any year not used reverts to the county and is lost to the society. Thus the society has two funds to use: first, the one in the hands of its own treasurer arising from dues or any outside contributions, and the other the public appropriation. Therefore, the writer has prepared two cash accounts; one showing the condition of its own treasury from the secretary's books, and the other showing the condition of the fund appropriated by the county. For the year 1924 the county commissioners have allowed in their advance budget for this society twenty-five hundred dollars. Thus for 1924 there

will be available at least twenty-eight hundred dollars, which will be sufficient to carry on the work of the society on the basis now existing. If these sources should dry up, other sources of revenue must be opened. But this is not likely to be necessary.

HISTORICAL RECORDS AND HISTORICAL BOOKKEEPING

Proper bookkeeping for any historical society is essential. The mere accumulation of any kind of written or printed documents, without useful classification, is not of very much immediate practical value. Such an accumulation without order might be of value to one or two persons who are very familiar with it, but all historical societies should have systems of indexing and bookkeeping so that their collections may be accessible on every subject possible. With these thoughts in mind the society is going forward and so planning its record.

The first important record is the general record book of the society. It is made up of reënforced pages carried in a loose-leaf cover. It has the records of preliminary meetings of the society, minutes of such meetings and of the board of governors, the constitution of the society, all the by-laws, list of members, legislative enactments, copies of important blanks, and other items. All these are arranged in order of time, so that a person reading this book would have before him the entire history of the society. This book is kept up.

A cash account is kept by the secretary, and shows clearly all items received and how paid out in regard to the private funds of the society. The public appropriation always remains in the possession of the county except as used. The society keeps duplicate copies of all bills against such funds, so that its financial standing is easily ascertainable at any time. There is also a secretarial account kept now by the secretary's assistant. What has just been said applies to the common routine of business.

But the important thing is historical bookkeeping. From the beginning the writer has been impressed with the thought that historical records were worthless to a great extent unless available, and his aim, therefore, is to make all records of value and accessible to those who seek them. He has invented a method of historical bookkeeping, which he has called by the name "The

St. Louis County Method of Historical Bookkeeping by Quadruple Entry." Under this system of bookkeeping historical events, documents, persons, and times are indexed, and by a system of cross-indexing any one who seeks any particular matter is led by what he knows to any knowledge on the matter inquired about in the possession of the society. If the inquirer knows only a year, or the name of a person, or a development, or an accession, he will find that item indexed and thus be led to a large field of relevant material.

This plan has been started in eight steel cases at headquarters. It begins to work well. The writer has submitted the plan to the state historical society recently and it is considering its advisability. At first it would seem that the plan would be difficult, but this is not the case. It is very easily kept up. It is, of course, much more difficult to go back in years and apply the system, but the writer thinks this a mere matter of time and labor. The society has a supply of stationery, printed receipts for members, certificates for life members, and other supplies used in inviting membership.

ACCESSIONS

The first branch of the local plan of historical work covers what is known as accessions. These are important papers, books, documents, or things, donated, purchased, or in any way received, under the control of the society. The accessions to date touch upon every subject of historical interest, and most of them are from high authority.

It is unpleasant to select any one of these accessions for illustration in this report, as there are so many of high merit. But accession number 44 may be first referred to. This is the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society in twenty-one bound volumes. The local society was able to purchase all these books from the state society for the total sum of thirty-one dollars. In fact a large number of them were donated along with the purchase of a few which were very rare and out of print. It is remarkable how much of interest about St. Louis County may be found in these twenty-one volumes. It is the intention of the society to make a careful examination of them and have proper references made to St. Louis County matter.

To illustrate this point it may be said that volume 5 of these collections, which contains the "History of the Ojibways," by William W. Warren, is made up almost exclusively of northern Minnesota matter, especially of interest to St. Louis County students.

Accession number 22 consists of the diaries and papers of the Reverend Edmund F. Ely, loaned by Mrs. Mary L. Ely of Eveleth. The opinion of the writer is that this group of papers is, taken all in all, the most valuable that exists in the state of Minnesota. It covers every field of activity from 1830 down to 1860 in this region. The papers are very illuminating and this society has copied them all excepting a few which cannot be copied. Thus this deposit becomes useful to the future historian.

SPECIAL FIELDS OF WORK

The society is preparing historical work and the following things should be borne in mind:

The headquarters of the society are always open and constitute an historical center for the people in the county. An interest in historical work is being gradually awakened.

The society sends copies of its papers to teachers in the public schools who ask for them, and in this way strives to awaken activity in the schools in this field. This is also the practice of the state society.

The society is preparing a map of the Old Vermilion Trail which is now practically complete.

It is preparing also an Indian map of the county, which will restore all the old Indian place names.

It is laying a foundation for histories of the fur trade, city building, early discoveries, and mining in the county.

It has begun the selection of papers and documents for the future documentary history of St. Louis County.

In short, it strives to do all historical work which may come to its hands in reference to St. Louis County.

PUBLICATIONS

There is necessity for the publication of some of the documents collected. Nothing of this sort has been done and there are no means available for such purposes. This is not so important just

now because full publicity is given to all the important records and discoveries of the society in the papers of the county.

But publication seems necessary and, when our work has reached a certain ripeness of development, publication will be essential. It need not be expensive.

At our various meetings a large number of excellent papers have been presented on historical subjects. The state society wishes some of them for its own publications and, of course, this society is ready to furnish them to it for that purpose. But the value placed upon our papers by the state society indicates to us, if nothing else does, the necessity on our part to use the printing press to perpetuate the historical writings in our possession.

CONCLUSION

The society should labor on. The simple plan of its organization is working well. True, it proceeds slowly, but then such is the nature of its work. A little well done every day soon mounts up in achievement. The ideals of the society are high. Its methods must be scientific. It is pleasant to add that it has had the full and kindly support of the state historical society in its work. Its accumulation of material bearing on local history not available locally is at our service. The state society has sent us copies of valuable documents at nominal expense. The superintendent of that society, Mr. Solon J. Buck, and his corps of assistants spare no pains to forward our work. For our part we do not fail to fully reciprocate its good will.

WILLIAM E. CULKIN, President



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