

## THE 1927 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The seventy-eighth annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society, held in St. Paul on January 17, was opened at 10:00 A.M. in the auditorium of the Historical Building with a session devoted to the seventh annual local history conference. The Honorable Victor Lawson of Willmar presided, and about thirty people, representing thirteen counties, were in attendance.

"The best way to stimulate an interest in history among the people of a community is to begin with the things close to them," said Mr. Lawson, in opening the meeting. Through fostering local historical activity, the state society, he declared, is effectively applying this principle.

The first speaker introduced was Mr. O. E. Smith, superintendent of schools at Anoka, who, after sketching in interesting fashion the story of Anoka County backgrounds, emphasized the need of a local historical society to take the lead in erecting markers, preserving old manuscripts, and generally helping to create a growth of interest in things historical. Dr. C. A. Duniway of Northfield, president of the Rice County Historical Society, spoke next, pointing out especially that the new society in Rice County is trying to get the people of the county to see that the story of peaceful development is eminently worthy of investigation and record. Two projects of the society, he said, are to secure space in the county courthouse for its collections and to stimulate the interest of the children in the story of Rice County. Dr. Duniway closed by saying that the society had been laying foundations and was now ready to build upon them.

The next speaker, Mr. Fred Schilplin, editor of the *St. Cloud Daily Times*, told of a recent "achievement edition" of his paper, on which he, Mrs. Schilplin, and the paper's staff

had worked for some two years. While planning the edition, which gave large attention to the history of Stearns County, Mr. Schilplin conceived the idea of a moving picture of that history from the days of Red River carts and pioneers down to the present, and he had such a picture made, giving special attention to present-day industries. He spoke of the Stearns County Old Settlers' Association as an active organization, and touched on the advisability of getting from surviving pioneers their reminiscences and memoirs before it is too late.

"Gopher Trails" was the subject of the next talk, given by Mr. R. C. Emery of the *St. Paul Dispatch*, the author of a popular series of newspaper articles published under that title in the *Dispatch*. Mr. Emery spoke modestly of the keen public appreciation of the stories, which has caused the *Dispatch* to continue them as front-page features for more than two hundred days, an appreciation rooted in the appeal that our common history has for all, old and young. Two major impressions stand out from his travel about the state and his exploitation of its history: the abundance of material at hand in Minnesota for such a group of stories, and the diminishing accessibility of this material from first-hand sources. The time to gather the material is now. "With many it is still the memory of a living man or woman that links the present with the panorama of the past," Mr. Emery said. "With others there are collections of old family letters, a diary kept in years gone by, a scrapbook or files of yellowed newspapers. But always there is something and because there are so many sources there is a variety almost infinite to be had in the tales obtained." Mr. Emery paid tribute to the pioneers, and concluded thus: "Most of those who best could tell the golden tale of Minnesota's youth have left the stage and those who still remain are plodding feebly toward the setting sun. They leave to us today a glorious heritage. It well becomes the part of gratitude to build as well as in us lies a monument of memory for the deeds they did."

The last regular speaker of the conference was Mr. Willoughby M. Babcock, curator of the society's museum, who told of the recently organized Mid-west Museums Conference. This organization has a strictly utilitarian program and gives promise of being able to foster the museum movement and assist community museums in many ways, working in close coöperation with such state organizations as the Minnesota Historical Society. The movement for community museums is gaining headway in Minnesota, Mr. Babcock declared. "Fergus Falls, Morris, Cambridge, Rushford, Highland, Madison, Lake Crystal, Lake City, and several other communities either have local museums already established or are working upon the idea."

In the informal discussion that followed, Dr. Solon J. Buck first called attention to some important manuscript sources for local history now in possession of the state society — the census schedules, which contain the names of every individual in every community in the state at the time for which the statistics were compiled. The society has the federal schedules for the Minnesota sections of Iowa and Wisconsin territories for 1840 and for Minnesota for 1850, 1860, 1870, and 1880, and the state census schedules for 1865, 1875, 1885, and 1895. Touching on the question of moving pictures as sources for history Dr. Buck announced that the Minnesota Historical Society is working on plans for building up a library of films.

Mr. William E. Culkin, president of the St. Louis County Historical Society, reviewed briefly the recent progress of the societies along the north shore, and reported that the organizations in St. Louis, Lake, and Cook counties are all active and growing. He also called attention to the effective, though small, local historical society at Fort William, Ontario. Mr. Burt W. Eaton of Rochester then described the situation of the Olmsted County Historical Society, which is functioning but faces the obstacle that it has no place in which to keep its

collections. A thriving organization will be developed, he asserted, as soon as the needed facilities have been obtained. Mr. Henry A. Swenson of Center City reported that though some beginnings in local history activities were made a few years ago when war records were collected, no organized activity is now under way in Chisago County. Brief remarks were made by two members of the state senate, Mr. L. P. Lund of Luverne, and Mr. Moses L. Frost of Jackson. Senator Lund stated that in Rock County realization of the need of preserving historical records may not be awakened until it is too late; and Senator Frost expressed the hope that something definite might soon be done in Jackson County, and indicated that he was particularly interested in seeing historic places marked. Mr. Smith called attention to the opportunity for developing interest in the schools and commented especially upon the value for Anoka school children of the recently issued *Stories of Early Minnesota*, by Dr. and Mrs. Buck. Mr. H. J. Farmer of Pipestone, a member of the state House of Representatives, added a word on the value of marking historic sites and called attention to the recent establishment of Pipestone State Park.

In closing the discussion the chairman announced that a log cabin is to be built in Kandiyohi County as a memorial to its old settlers and that Willmar has extended an invitation to the state society to make its summer tour to Kandiyohi County and to use this cabin for its meetings.

At 12:30 P.M. about sixty members and friends of the society attended the annual luncheon at the St. Paul Hotel. The toastmaster was Professor Duniway, who announced the theme "Making the Past Serve the Present" and introduced as the first speaker Dr. Henry M. Wriston, president of Lawrence College, Appleton, Wisconsin. Dr. Wriston spoke mainly on American foreign policy as determined by history. In the diplomatic service a much more thorough grounding in the diplomatic history of the country is needed. Dr. Wriston

suggested the establishment of an advanced school for the training of diplomats, an institution comparable with the present advanced school for the training of army officers. The speaker told how most of the important papers and messages of high government officials are drafted by people in lower ranks, who frequently know little or nothing about the backgrounds of the questions with which they deal. He closed his talk with a mention of the American Historical Association and its effective work in helping to preserve the past for the benefit of the present and future. The next speaker was the Honorable O. A. Lende of Canby, who discussed the need of studying the past with a view to understanding thoroughly the present crime situation in the state and dealing adequately with it. The luncheon program closed with an interesting travel talk by the Reverend Richard Read of Minneapolis, who recently made a trip to Europe, Asia Minor, and Egypt.

The afternoon session, which convened at three o'clock, was attended by about sixty-five people. Dr. William W. Folwell, president of the society and president emeritus of the University of Minnesota, was in the chair and opened the meeting by reading the following presidential address:

#### ADDRESS BY DR. FOLWELL

##### MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY:

This is the seventy-eighth annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society, the first meeting having been held November 15, 1849. The society retains its identity, but the act of the legislature of 1925, creating a state department of finance and administration, has changed its status from that of a private corporation aided by the state to that of an agency of the state aided by private contributions. The state thus recognizes the society as a permanent institution to receive continuous support, and not merely occasional gratuities. We may therefore expect that enlightened commissioners will appreciate the objects and services of the society and that legislatures will deal liberally with it according to the times and the aggregated demands on the treasury. Thus assured of a reliable income the society may go forward with its beneficent work, the maintenance and enrichment of its library, its newspaper collection, its museum, its manuscript accessions,

and publications. The annual report of the superintendent, which will be read to you as required by the by-laws, will show the progress and condition of all these branches of the service, together with information in regard to memberships and finances. It is therefore unnecessary for the president of the corporation to duplicate the superintendent's statements. He may, however, indulge in remarks and suggestions upon matters outside of the routine. He may in particular commend to you from his frequent observations the faithful and intelligent services of the superintendent, the staff, and employees. I take pleasure in naming Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, assistant superintendent and editor of our magazine, who during the absence of Dr. Buck for a large part of the year conducted the administration to the satisfaction of his chief and the executive committee.

I have pleasure in saying that the chronology of state events has been carried on by Dr. Upham, and will suggest that our necrologies be connected with this service.

In a previous address I remarked upon the danger to our newspaper collections from the use of wood pulp paper. The *New York Times* of December 5, 1926, states that newspapers printed during the World War in the New York Public Library are already so yellowed that complete disintegration is only a matter of a few years. It was necessary to sweep out reading rooms several times a day because of the flakes falling from decayed newspapers. Such diligence will not be needed in our reading room, frequented by smaller numbers, but I can testify from my own experience that newspapers, for example the *Pioneer Press*, printed thirty years ago have to be handled with extreme care, and are read with difficulty. The *New York Times* is now printing one hundred copies of its regular editions on pure rag paper. The newspapers printed on good rag paper during the first twenty years of our existence as a territory and state can be expected to last indefinitely. I must leave the problem to others.

Not to unduly extend this address, I will merely mention some things which I would like to see either undertaken or advanced to increase the usefulness of the society:

1. Extension of the acquisition of historical source material, especially of manuscripts — letters, diaries, family histories, notebooks, and books of account. I wish more people could be brought to see that the Minnesota Historical Society, with its fireproof building, its filing system, and its skillful custodians, is the best and proper place to deposit all such books and papers, where they will be more accessible even to families than if kept by individual members.

2. The further enrichment of the museum. Fewer than one hundred Chippewa Indians are now living. No time should be

lost in filling up our present collections with needed examples of their crafts and constructions, implements and toys.

3. The posts of the Grand Army of the Republic are rapidly going out of existence by the deaths of comrades. In a few years taps will have been sounded for the last of them. I suggest that the records and other papers, pictures and ornaments, perhaps their Bibles and flags should be gathered in for perpetuation and historical uses. The Rawlins Post of Minneapolis has appointed a committee to bring the matter to the attention of the state encampment.

4. That other departments, themselves crowded, may presently be elsewhere housed than in this building and leave the society room, not merely for expansion, but for its work now carried on at disadvantage.

Following the president's address, the condition of the society's finances was reported by the treasurer, Mr. Everett H. Bailey of St. Paul, and a survey of the activities of the society during 1926 was presented as the annual report of the superintendent. Dr. Buck called attention to the outstanding features of the society's progress — the successful meetings held, the growth in membership, the research and publications undertaken, the collection and custody of materials, the various forms of service rendered the public, the promotion of state historical consciousness, and the collateral historical activities of various staff members; and he summed up the situation with reference to the relations of the society to the state department of administration and finance. He declared that many things not yet undertaken by the society ought to be done in order that the experience of the past might more effectively serve the present, but said that these must wait until increasing popular historical-mindedness leads to more adequate financial support from the state and from bequests. "The scientific investigation of human relations as recorded in the documents of the past," he said, "is as important as any of the multitude of other things for which some of our people of wealth and culture now make liberal donations or bequests."

The following thirty life members of the society were elected to serve as members of the executive council for the tri-

ennium 1927-30: Everett H. Bailey, Ralph Budd, Reverend William Busch, Homer P. Clark, William W. Cutler, Harry T. Drake, Mrs. Charles E. Furness, Harold Harris, Frederick G. Ingersoll, Gideon S. Ives, William H. Lightner, James M. McConnell, Victor Robertson, Edward P. Sanborn, Charles Stees, Warren Upham, and Edward B. Young of St. Paul; Solon J. Buck, William W. Folwell, Guy S. Ford, Herschel V. Jones, Mrs. James T. Morris, and Lester B. Shippee of Minneapolis; William A. McGonagle and Jed L. Washburn of Duluth; Lorin Cray of Mankato; Burt W. Eaton of Rochester; Victor E. Lawson of Willmar; Olai A. Lende of Canby; and John R. Swann of Madison. The new executive council later met in the superintendent's office and elected the following officers of the society for the next three years: Frederick G. Ingersoll, president; Edward B. Young, first vice president; Guy Stanton Ford, second vice president; Solon J. Buck, secretary; and Everett H. Bailey, treasurer.

An interesting feature of the business session was the unanimous adoption by a rising vote of the following resolution, presented by Mr. Ingersoll and seconded by the Honorable Gideon S. Ives, who put the motion:

RESOLVED, That the title of President Emeritus of the Minnesota Historical Society be and is hereby conferred upon Dr. William W. Folwell in recognition of his active interest in and valuable service to this society through a long period of years and of his wider service both to the state and the nation.

Dr. Folwell made a very happy response to this resolution and accepted the election.

"An Artist's Year in Minnesota, 1862-63" was the subject of the first historical paper of the afternoon session. It was presented by Mrs. Francis B. Tiffany and told the story of the experiences of her father, Augustus Olcott Moore, during a year spent as an artist on the upper Mississippi in the early sixties sketching characteristic river scenes. An exhibit in the society's museum illustrated how these scenes from more than sixty years ago still live in Moore's exquisite pencil-



ings: Lake St. Croix and Prescott, the Dalles of the St. Croix, Stillwater, Winona, Prairie du Chien, Trempealeau, Vermillion Falls, Dubuque, and St. Paul with its few large houses on the Summit Avenue sand-bluffs and its scattered buildings on the lower level near the river. Based upon these pictures, a collection of sprightly letters written by Moore, and personal recollections, Mrs. Tiffany's paper reflected with authentic shades and tones the color and interest of a fascinating subject.

The second paper was an account of "Minnesota Housewives of the Thirties and Forties," by Dr. Grace Lee Nute, curator of manuscripts for the society. Drawing upon material in unpublished letters and diaries Dr. Nute told the story of three housewives: Hester Crooks Boutwell, the mixed-blood daughter of Ramsay Crooks, president of the American Fur Company, and the wife of a noted missionary to the Chippewa Indians; Catherine Bissell Ely, likewise a mixed-blood and the wife of a missionary; and Lucy Lewis, the wife of Dr. William Lewis, a missionary to the Leech Lake Indians. This interesting contribution to early Minnesota social history will be published in a future number of MINNESOTA HISTORY.

The seventy-eighth annual meeting came to a close with the evening session in the society's auditorium, attended by about eighty-five people, with Mr. Ingersoll, the newly elected president, presiding. The annual address, on "Washington and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy," by Dr. Wriston, is printed as the leading article in the present issue of the magazine. The program closed with an informing and highly interesting illustrated talk entitled "Glimpses of Minnesota before the Days of the Photographer," by Mr. Edward C. Gale of Minneapolis. Following the evening session an informal reception was held in the museum for members of the society and their friends.



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