

Editor's Perspective

THE ANNALS OF IOWA, the State Historical Society of Iowa's quarterly history journal, was established in 1863, just 150 years ago. Sometimes current readers of the journal are skeptical that articles focusing on, say, the 1970s or 1980s are really "history." But think of this: When the *Annals of Iowa* was founded, the state was just 17 years old! The state's *earliest* history, then, was only as old as an event from 1996 would be today. Even its earliest white settlement, which was a common subject in the *Annals* in its early years, went back only another dozen or so years. And yet, as the first editor wrote in introducing the first issue, "Will any one say that [Iowa's] authentic Annals are too soon begun?"

The *Annals of Iowa* was established in Iowa City under the auspices of the State Historical Society of Iowa, which published it from 1863 through 1874 and again from 1882 through 1884. During those years the *Annals* published primarily biographical sketches of prominent political and religious figures along with articles on general territorial and state history; the culture, leaders, and relics of the Indians of Iowa; the military history of the Civil War; the origin and meaning of place names in Iowa; and, especially, histories of individual counties, usually in serial form (the "History of Pottawattomie County," by D. C. Bloomer, now better known as the husband of Amelia Bloomer, extended over 14 issues, while the history of Polk County had only one installment).

In 1893, after a hiatus of almost ten years, the *Annals of Iowa* was revived in Des Moines by the Historical Department of Iowa under the editorship of the department's curator and secretary, Charles Aldrich, who was to edit the journal for the next 15 years. Edgar Harlan took over the duties in 1908 and served until 1937, the longest tenure of any editor of the journal. Much to my surprise, my tenure, editing the journal since 1988, is approaching Harlan's length of service.

For more than half of the twentieth century (1903–1959), the *Annals* faced competition from the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, published by the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City. And since 1920 its scholarly interpretations of Iowa history have been complemented by the State Historical Society's popular history magazine, the *Palimpsest* (renamed *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* in 1996). But for all of the twentieth century, much of the last half of the nineteenth century, and now into the twenty-first century, the *Annals of Iowa* has played a valuable role in preserving, interpreting, and disseminating the history of Iowa. We hope to continue to do so for many years to come, and we appreciate your support.

—Marvin Bergman, editor