

ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

THE DEVICE OF OUR FIRST OFFICIAL SEAL.

The Thirty-sixth General Assembly empowered the Curator to certify copies of such of the public papers as he receives from State offices for perpetual care and custody in the Division of Public Archives in the Historical Department. Such certification implies an official seal.

Study for the device of such a seal reveals nothing appearing to so well combine a symbolism of Iowa history, art and patriotism with that permanence, dignity and beauty of design requisite to a seal, as does the classic visage of the founder of the Historical Department.

There is immeasurable satisfaction in authenticating the most formal and imperishable communications of the Department by affixing a visual reminder of that unselfish service to which Iowa is indebted for an aroused respect for her historical interests. Formal documents with this impress in a sense will be inspirited. They will have with them something like the presence as well as the thought of Charles Aldrich.

morals, not as of the date it became possible but of its effect. Between this extreme and that of the original discovery and publication of highly creditable but forgotten facts regarding men and events of former days, lies the field of discretion on the part of the curator.

The writer advocates the acquisition and preservation of every scrap of paper that originates with or comes from the hand of any man of note. He believes the supreme test for such item was when it passed in review of the attention of the mind of the person through whose hand it was derived. If at that instant that mind reserved it, every other mind following is put upon inquiry whether all the functions for which it was originally reserved have been performed. Few of us have the temerity to say a man once high in military or social affairs, knew or felt less accurately the meaning of an item related to his problems than can thereafter become known without our own exhaustive study. Few of us have time even if we had the ability to judge whether all the functions for which an item was reserved have been performed. So the custodian of historical materials should both acquire, and control the use of all that exists which tends to throw light upon the working out of the destiny of man within his sphere.

The writer holds that the curator must therefor know the qualifications and purposes of applicants for the use of historical materials precisely as the banker must know the things necessary to protect and produce dividends upon the funds of his depositors which as an agent he lends to his clients. Nor is it unnecessary hardship upon the user to cause him to make himself known in this respect. To establish himself in the acquaintance and confidence of the curator is to clothe his naked right with a good will and convert passive into active energy. He gains access to the whole of the record and all the local color with which the curator is possessed. Often this is vital to success. For instance, if a student observe from available sources that the current of a life or of public affairs suddenly swirls about something he senses but cannot see, he confers with the curator and finds there is some explanatory tradition or "inside evidence." The student proceeds with knowledge or at least with notice,

where, unassisted, or without the confidence of the curator, his course must have been at random or at the least uncertain. The writer has entrusted matter in confidence to investigators under assurance of honor against untoward use of facts and has had the pleasure of seeing rocky channels thereby safely navigated and accurately charted without inviting wreck. The curator as a trustee is entitled to personal safety and to obtain it is entitled to establish rules and exact guarantees so long as he exercise good faith, diligence, and the maximum of his intelligence in dealing with applicants. But after all it is for him to determine in every instance of applicant and purpose; of item and its bearing. There is probably no field of scholarly endeavor where as highly trained men on as important missions meet (and by the way, present) so great a lack of uniformity, not to say low order, of ethics as that where the inquiring mind presents itself to the keeper of historical material. There is no institution where the contending considerations of this complex trust is better illustrated than in the Historical Department of Iowa. There is nothing better supported than our rule that everything possessed is for the public use, yet whether a proposed use is of public or private character is for the decision of the curator.

PROPOSED GRAND ARMY CORRIDOR.

Officials and leaders of the Iowa Department, Grand Army of the Republic, plan for an eventual testimonial to the valor of loyal soldiers of Iowa in the War of the Rebellion. The idea is best outlined in resolutions adopted at the 41st annual encampment of the Iowa Department, Grand Army of the Republic, Sioux City, June 8-10, 1915:

Whereas, Many of our Grand Army Posts and individual comrades and their families possess valuable records, correspondence, pictures, trophies and books which illustrate our service for the Union, and which are likely to be lost, Be it

Resolved, That all comrades of this department are urged to send or provide for the sending of all such material to the office of the Assistant Adjutant General at Des Moines for safe keeping, particularly all unused Post records, correspondence, pictures, flags and wall pieces, and all letters, commissions, weapons and uniforms that relate to the Federal service of the soldier or sailor, that are still in existence.

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