

A NOTABLE MEMORIAL EVENT

In recent years no event so well combines, within the scope of the duties of the Historical Department of Iowa, all the elements for which it stands as the creation and installation of the memorial tablet which was installed August 28, 1921. The proceedings are published in this edition of the ANNALS.

In a community as far removed from the fountains of artistic inspiration and in the regions where the classic productions of artistic spirits are not regarded as sacred public institutions, it is at no time easy to procure the means or to adopt the methods essential to the correct performance of duty in this field. There is a fundamental inclination against the expenditure of money for things that do not tend to alleviate distress, afford necessities, or increase the worth and value of existing wealth. This inclination comes out of the so-called practical minded, and has been the prime impulse in America to the prodigious growth in our material wealth. There is, on the other hand, especially with the finest spirits among us, who, in comfort and in possession of great wealth, have no descendants nor beneficiaries specially selected, a deep and serious void where there is an impulse for doing something permanent toward the spiritual development of our race. The one school of thought would have resources, private and public, hold, in their structural needs, to the purely useful, leaving off embellishment for the mere expedient.

The highest percentage of cost for use and the lowest percentage of cost for beauty, may be said to be the modern automobile service station. The most nearly complete application of funds to pure aesthetic aims with least outlay for utility—the maximum for truth and beauty, the minimum for business—is in such symbolic sculpture as the Allison Memorial on the Iowa State Capitol grounds. Between these extremes in Iowa have recently come into being a score of exquisite courthouses, harmonious facades of bank buildings, and buildings dedicated to education and the church.

Industry and enterprise directed by thrift will and should always have its structural equivalent, but the human spirit in its effort for permanent material expression will ever grope for the sympathy of the architect and artisan.

In this first effort at permanent expression in symbolic sculpture made from the impulse of the recent war, the Historical Department feels that it has fully embraced its opportunity and has achieved a good result.

IOWA STATE PARKS

No other line of public work in Iowa in the last four years has shown such marvelous results as has that of the acquisition of state parks. It is something for any state, but it is remarkable for so young a state as Iowa, to step out of its ordinary economic and governmental course and create places for amusement, recreation and scientific research. The older states had made but little progress in this direction, when Iowa, with but meager precedent, enthusiastically entered upon the work. Public opinion, the great director of state policies, demanded it.

The state park work is closely associated with the Historical Department whose functions embrace that of conservation of natural as well as historical resources. The fact that parks frequently have memorial and historical qualities, and that they contribute to scientific and aesthetic thought, make the connection natural. The legislative department of our government recognized this connection in making the office of Curator of the Historical Department a member of the Board of Conservation.

There are at present fifteen areas that are or will be known as state parks. The method of acquisition divides them into four classes, namely, those purchased entirely with state funds, those purchased in part with state funds and in part with funds contributed by local citizens, those purchased entirely with funds contributed by local citizens, and those given entirely by single individuals. Besides these, one area belonging to the state was turned over to the Board of Conservation for park purposes.

There are three park areas that have been purchased entirely with state funds: Backbone, Delaware County; Oakland Mills, Henry County; and Morehead Caves, Jackson County.

Backbone State Park was the first area acquired. It consists of about 1300 acres along the Maquoketa River in the northwest township of Delaware County. The land is hilly, some precipi-

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.