

The Editor's Perspective

A primary goal of the *Annals of Iowa* is to promote research on Iowa history. The two feature articles in this issue highlight programs within the State Historical Society of Iowa that support that goal. In an earlier era, particularly when Benjamin Shambaugh directed the Society (1907–1940), research was one of the Society's primary activities. Our current mission statement emphasizes preservation and education. Yet support for research remains an important objective.

The State Historical Society's Community Programs Bureau has supported countless studies of individual properties as a means of getting those properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Those documents, often called "gray literature," are an invaluable, underutilized resource for people who want to know more about particular places or topics. In addition, the bureau has occasionally commissioned larger contextual studies to support National Register nominations of a whole class of properties. This issue of the *Annals* showcases one of those context statements, Joyce McKay's study of Iowa's corrections system. Other valuable statewide studies of a similar nature from the past decade or so include ones on the state's park system, opera houses, Iowa's railroad system, flour mills, Civil War-era national cemeteries, highway bridges, and round barns. These studies are buried treasures waiting to be discovered and mined.

The other Society research initiative, its modest research grant program, supported the research that led to Michael Ross's article on Samuel Freeman Miller's appointment to the U.S. Supreme Court after the federal judicial system was reorganized during the Civil War. Besides Ross's project, that grant program, which was given a kick start by the Iowa Sesquicentennial Commission in 1995, has helped to fund 33 research projects, which, in turn, led to 20 articles in the *Annals of Iowa* on topics ranging from histories of the Des Moines Register and

Tribune Company and the Hart-Parr tractor manufacturing firm to rural children and Republican women's clubs. With continued funding from the State Historical Society, Inc., a private, non-profit organization, four new projects were funded this spring:

- Eleanor Hayes McConnell (University of Iowa) for "Troubles about Titles: Property, Race, Law, and the Struggle for the Half-Breed Tract"
- Everard K. Meade (University of Chicago) for "From Heartland to Heartland: A Historical and Cultural Perspective on Mexican and Central American Migration to Iowa"
- Leah Tookey (Iowa State University) for "Coming Together, Tearing Apart: Seventy-Five Years of School Consolidation in Exira, Iowa"
- Jennifer L. Weber (Princeton University) for "Reverberations of War: The Civil War and the Northern Home Front"

Watch for these researchers' work to show up in future issues of the *Annals of Iowa*, stimulating further creative thinking about the course of Iowa history.

—Marvin Bergman, editor

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