



THE HISTORICAL, MEMORIAL AND ART BUILDING—SOUTH FACADE

This building is occupied by the Historical Department of Iowa, except the basement of the east half, occupied by the Library Commission, and the main and second floors of the same half, occupied by miscellaneous department of the State Library

ANNALS OF IOWA.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

THE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT OF IOWA.

Four distinct functions combine to form the Historical Department of Iowa. They are an historical library, a museum, the publication of historical materials and a repository of public archives. Developed together they should form the State's most valuable source for historical investigation.

In his first biennial report, 1894, the founder showed that all these activities except the archives repository had already been well started. He said:

At the capitals of most states collections of the data for their own history and that of surrounding regions, have been in progress for many years—in some from their organization. Wisconsin, the model western state in this regard, has been engaged in the work fifty years. Kansas for nearly half that period. . . . The early settlers of the State [of Iowa in which no such effective enterprise had been shown] were rapidly disappearing, either by death or removal to other regions, and all their recollections of pioneer times fading away. Their places were occupied by newcomers, who could not reasonably be expected to take much interest or pride in Iowa of early days, for the reason that they knew little about it, and little of its history had been preserved. No complete collection of our early public documents was in existence, and but few of the pioneer newspapers had been preserved. Precious books which will one of these days be worth their weight in gold were so fading from public knowledge as in many cases to have been almost wholly forgotten. Our prehistoric pottery and stone implements were being gathered up and largely sent abroad to enrich the museums and collections of other states. Even the fossils secured by one of our geological surveys, and costly engraved plates for their illustration, paid for by the State, met the same fate. To see and study these fossils at this time necessitates a journey to an eastern city. They would today form a most valuable addition—these type specimens—to a collection in our own capitol; but no effort was ever made to keep them here or any other place in Iowa. If Iowa owned them now, no proposition to part with them would be entertained by anybody. While our statesmen upon the rostrum boasted the absence of illiteracy in Iowa, and pointed with pride to the magnificent

record of Iowa soldiers during the great civil war, it was continually pleaded that this State, free from debt, could not afford to collect the necessary data for her own history, nor preserve from waste the archaeological treasures yielded by her own soil, or even mementos of our early settlers and soldiers. It is a fact not to be proud of—a strange anomaly—that so many of the public documents published by the state authority prior to 1860 are not now in the capitol nor represented in any collection. Of many, not a single copy is known to be in existence, nor were the originals preserved in the offices whence they emanated. It is to stop this waste—to repair, as far as practicable, the losses which have already occurred, to build up collections incidental to such work, and contributing greatly to its usefulness and to the everyday instruction and enjoyment of the people, to save up precious materials which shall illustrate to future times the history of our own, that the efforts of the Historical Department have been devoted during the year and a half of its existence. That these are worthy ends no one, I believe, will at this day question.

That the State should build up and fairly maintain a great Historical Museum, wherein should be secured as large collections as practicable in State and National history, literature, art, military relics and mementos, natural history, geology, archaeology, numismatics, etc., as it is practicable to bring together, would seem to have become the settled belief of the people. Such an institution should be kept growing, for "a finished museum is a dead museum." There is apparently no end to the amount of materials which may be readily obtained for this purpose. The great need is a place in which they can be safely kept and conveniently exhibited.

The founder devoted the remaining fourteen of his four score years to the development of this work. With the support and assistance of a Board of Trustees sympathizing with his purposes, he built up an institution from which the public derives great benefit and in which it takes great pride. At his death, March 8, 1908, there was collected and under the efficient administration of Miss Mary R. Whitcomb, assistant curator, a library of 18,000 volumes, consisting of books of State and western history and biography, the Civil War, slavery, the Indians, genealogy, etc. It also includes many volumes of original manuscripts, personal letters, maps, and the great collection of bound newspapers. The whole forms a workshop of printed materials and auxiliary items already invaluable and growing with great rapidity.

There was a vast collection of materials on display, and in course of expansion into the new and more extensive apartments of the new building, which formed a museum illustrative of Mississippi Valley life. Specimens of natural history and prehistoric archaeology; relic, weapon, trophy, print and parchment touching periods and personages of note; manuscript, portrait and statue of Iowa men and women of honor and achievement; utensil, fabric, tool and other aids to the study of processes past and passing. This collection, carefully authenticated and labelled and displayed in a way most easily to be seen and understood, forms the great institution for popular museum education in the State. Its advantages are annually embraced by throngs who are enlightened and stimulated as are visitors to agricultural and other exposition enterprises for museum education.

Through the *ANNALS OF IOWA* there had been gathered in sixteen years, eight volumes of matter chiefly of original character, contributed by men most active and strong in the formative phases of State building, as well as the editorial work of the founder, himself a pioneer and participant in many of the State's most notable events. Publications falling outside the province of other activities of the State and forming valuable additions to the historical materials accessible to the citizens have been issued. They are Richman's "John Brown among the Quakers;" Todd's "Reminiscences of Western Iowa;" Shambaugh's "History of the Constitution of Iowa;" Statute Laws of the Territory of Iowa 1838-39; 1839-40 and special session of 1840 (republished); Journals of the Second Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa at the special session of 1840 (printed for the first time); and other printed works augmenting the collections of information on early Iowa.

The thought of more carefully preserving and arranging for use by the public the documentary accumulations of the different officers and offices of the State government in this as in other States, had been taking form for some time. As early as 1860, through the efforts of Charles Aldrich, an inquiry was instituted into the conditions and needs of our State in this direction. Mr. Aldrich continued to agitate the mat-

ter of the proper care and preservation of public archives, and in 1906 all historical interests in the State joined in securing legislation to this end. A plan was prepared under direction of the Board of Trustees of the Historical Department by Dr. B. F. Shambaugh, of the State Historical Society at Iowa City. Actual work under this plan and by direction of our Board of Trustees was begun in 1906, but by act of the Thirty-second General Assembly the work was transferred to the Executive Council in 1907, which since that time has had charge of the work.

There had been erected the structure urged by Mr. Aldrich in his first report. It had been most suitably equipped and thrown open throughout for public use. It consists of a modern fire-proof building of native Iowa oolite, costing about \$375,000, with equipment costing \$50,000, especially provided for the Historical Department of Iowa; of four full stories, with 51,998 square feet of floor space. About one-fourth of this is in use by the Iowa State Library and one-eighth by the Library Commission and Traveling Libraries. The exterior dimensions of the building are 96 by 512 feet. The height from foundation to coping is 60 feet; to top of dome 100 feet. The walls are of brick and stone. The floors are of steel and concrete; the artificial lighting by electricity; steam heat and ventilation by automatic system. The building is entirely in use, but contracts for completing the marble and bronze finish of corridors and stairs and the installation of elevators provided by the last General Assembly, have but recently been let. There is practically an end, therefore, of expense for building, the almost perfect physical equipment called for by Mr. Aldrich, having been provided. Future appropriations for the work should be increased and may well be anticipated, since need of those for equipment is so nearly eliminated.

After the death of Mr. Aldrich in March, 1908, the writer, who had been an assistant to Mr. Aldrich for over a year, was placed in charge of the Department as acting curator. He had the efficient assistance of the corps trained by Mr. Aldrich, at the head of which was Miss Mary R. Whitecomb, upon whom

the responsibilities of the Department had largely rested during the declining years of its founder, and who was to lay down her earthly labors almost exactly a year later, April 8, 1909. October 1, 1909, the acting curator was appointed to the position of curator, and Miss Alice M. Steele, who had been an assistant in the Department for a number of years, was promoted to the position of assistant curator. Mr. T. Van Hynning remains as museum curator and Miss Ida M. Huntington, of Des Moines, has been added to the staff.

From the many good things said by the press of Iowa in relation to the filling of the position of Curator, we quote the following from the editorial columns of the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*:

Edgar R. Harlan (has been appointed) . . . Curator of the State Historical Department . . . as successor of the lamented Charles Aldrich, father of the Department . . .

Great achievement in any pursuit is only possible with adequate equipment. Both the general assembly of Iowa and the public, have a duty to perform; the former by liberal appropriations; the latter by personal interest in the institution, by contributions of valuable historical books, pamphlets, maps, letters, and relics of pioneer days. Personal co-operation with the curator has done much in the past; it can do much in the future. Let the citizens of Iowa, interested in the preservation of all data pertaining to the history of the state, get in touch with the curator. Visit the Historical Department at Des Moines; go often and see and realize what has been done and what the vast field still has open for intelligent endeavor. Write the curator for information of what is now in hand and what is still needed and desired. Ransack the book shelves and closets, store rooms and attics for suitable material for the department. In this way the citizens can render assistance of inestimable value and help make Iowa's Historical Department one of the foremost in the United States.

It is with full consciousness of its responsibilities and opportunities that this work is taken up. Courage is found in the fact that the Board of Trustees which encouraged and supported the founder, remains of equal zeal in its assistance of his successor. The public is generous in applause and in tangible contributions. Enthusiasm is not hard to sustain nor are results difficult to achieve under such auspices. Our ambition is to carry forward the work of the Historical

Department as planned by its founder, with such modifications as may by the Board of Trustees be prescribed from time to time.

JAMES W. GRIMES AND ABRAHAM LINCOLN IN 1844.

A short time since, the writer met by chance Mr. M. W. Blair, a native of Des Moines county, now resident near Mediapolis. Learning that his memory comprehended men and events in the first years of the territorial government of Iowa, sundry questions were asked as to his recollections of the visits and speeches of Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln in Burlington in 1858. One result was the discovery of an interesting political circular of 1844, and therein of an autograph letter of James W. Grimes. The circular and the letter were addressed to his father, Honorable David E. Blair, then living at or near Yellow Springs. Mr. Grimes' correspondent had been a member of the House of Representatives of the fourth (1841) and fifth (1842) sessions of the Territorial Legislature and afterwards a member of the lower house of the first General Assembly under the State government. Mr. Blair was kind enough to forward the circular to the writer for examination and to consent to its reproduction for use in *THE ANNALS*. (See opposite page.)

The circular "To The Whigs of Iowa" announces a mass meeting of that party in Burlington, July 13, 1844. The committee of arrangements signing it, promise speeches and festivities appropriate to the occasion. Among the committee-men signing is J. G. Foote, afterwards a member of the State Senate (1862-1866) and later a member of the Capitol Commission that supervised the erection of the present Capitol building, whose sister became Mrs. John H. Gear. The circular in and of itself is not without value. Its chief interest, however, lies in the letter of Mr. Grimes which, although without postmark or date, was probably written at Burlington roundabout July 1st. The letter is as follows:

[Burlington.]

Friend Blair

You see from this circular that the Whigs in this section are wide awake. Every one seems to be deeply sensible of the importance

of the present crisis, and determined to do his duty and his whole duty as a Whig. The increase we find upon actual count, in this county has been enough since last year, to secure us the county by a very respectable majority, provided we can induce our friends to turn out. To accomplish this latter most desirable result we have got up the mass meeting. If we can properly stir up our own friends, our efforts will unquestionably be crowned with success. We expect to see the whole of your township here. We are getting a banner painted for you and will have a cold colation in the grove. We know it will be in the midst of a busy season, but circumstances forbid its being at any other time. Now is our time or never, and every Whig must come up to the mark. It is hoped you will use every exertion in your power to induce every man in your township to turn out.

I am very truly &c

JAS. W. GRIMES.

Baker and Lincoln of Ill & some Mo. men—besides Lowe, Woodward, Reid &c are expected.

The letter is valuable on two accounts. It affords us an illustration, at an early stage in Mr. Grimes' political career, of one of his distinguishing characteristics as a party worker and leader. It indicates his tactics—his alertness, directness and thoroughness, his comprehension, method and urgency in attending to political matters. From first to last Mr. Grimes was a statesman of high order, but he was also a practical politician of first rank, who realized that political supremacy depends upon the mastery of the matter-of-fact, and he always devoted himself with discernment and vigor to the work of getting out "the whole township" to the rallies and to the polls. The point of major interest, as often occurs, is found in what appears to be a postscript.

The circular announces that "several distinguished gentlemen from abroad have been invited and are expected to attend." Evidently with a view to arousing Mr. Blair to extra efforts to secure a large attendance from his township, Mr. Grimes adds in the way of an afterthought—"Baker and Lincoln of Ill. and some Mo. men—besides Lowe, Woodward, Reid &c are expected." The first two referred to were Edward Dickenson Baker and Abraham Lincoln. These men had been rivals that year (as two years before) for the Whig nomination for Congress in the Seventh or Springfield district of Illinois, the former being successful. Baker had a wide reputation as an orator of remarkable powers of fascination

and persuasion. He was elected to Congress in 1844 and later resigned to serve in the Mexican War in which he had a distinguished career. On his return he was again elected to Congress. In 1851 he went to California. In 1859 he pronounced a notable oration on the occasion of the death of Senator Broderick, at the hands of Terry, and soon after was nominated by the Republicans for the United States Senate, but failed of election. In 1860 he was elected to the Senate from Oregon, and in 1861 he was killed at the head of a regiment at Ball's Bluff.

In 1844 Abraham Lincoln had attained a reputation that went far beyond the borders of Sangamon county. His career in the legislature of Illinois had given him a state-wide acquaintance among political workers. His ability as a public speaker prior to 1840 was such that his addresses, lectures and stump speeches were printed in the leading Whig paper at Springfield. In 1842 and 1844 he was a competitor for the Congressional nomination with John J. Hardin and Edward D. Baker. In 1840 and again in 1844 he was nominated by the Whigs for a Presidential elector—an honor of far greater significance then than nowadays—one result being that he canvassed the greater part of Illinois. He enhanced his reputation as an effective campaigner so much that he was invited to canvass a part of Indiana for Clay, which he did. It is obvious that Mr. Grimes referred to him as a celebrity whose presence at the mass meeting on July 13th would constitute a decided attraction which should induce a large attendance.

It is not certain whether or not either of the Illinoisians spoke in Burlington as expected. Miss D. N. Sabin, Librarian of the Free Public Library of Burlington, informs the writer that the files of *The Hawk-Eye* and of the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Advertiser* are incomplete or missing for July, 1844. In neither paper, either preceding or succeeding the mass meeting, is there any mention of either one being expected or having appeared in Burlington. The writer knows of no tradition that Abraham Lincoln appeared in Burlington prior to October 9, 1858, at which time he followed his great opponent, Stephen A. Douglas, into that city in the interval between the debate at Galesburg and Quincy. F. I. H.

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