

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

Preserving War Records The Iowa War Records Commission

A century ago when Charles Lamb, the English essayist, expressed his cordial dislike of a certain well known public figure, his astonished friend asked if he knew the man well. Lamb quickly replied, "No, if I knew him, how could I hate him!"

With equal truth no one who truly knows the history of his nation can help but be strongly attached to it. But one can not love that which he does not know.

What is true of national and world-wide history is likewise true of one's state and local community. One can not love that which he does not know. An understanding and appreciation of community and country—the basis for good citizenship—rests upon a knowledge and acquaintanceship of that area and its people. Thus the importance of history.

But history must be based upon records, and facts. Otherwise "understanding" and "knowledge" are but as ropes of sand.

If it is so desirable to know the general course of a nation's, a community's history, how much more desirable and important it is to know of the crises in its life. We are in one such period now.

This is one of the gravest, if not the gravest hour, in the history of the United States of America. This crisis is reflected in each state of the Union, in each county, and in each local community, city, town, or village. No one can, a generation hence, understand the world or the nation, or the smaller community of state or town, without an understanding of the causes, course, and consequence of the events of this war. The records of these days of preparation and battle are, therefore, historic. Consequently, if we are to avoid in the years to come the hazy thinking, the vague understanding, the inaccurate appreciation, and safeguard ourselves from the dangers of demagogery and the tragedies of a misunderstanding of

the forces unleashed during these present days, the FACTS must be preserved.

Twenty-five years ago comparatively little was done in Iowa cities and towns to preserve a complete record of the first World War. In many cases this neglect is irreparable.

To prevent a similar calamity occurring during the present war there is being planned an Iowa War Records Commission, whose function will be to stimulate and foster the care and preservation of the records of World War II in the State of Iowa. Sponsored by the Iowa Department of History and Archives, the Commission's aim will be to aid each community, and the state as a whole, to select and preserve the significant records of its participation in and contribution to the war.

This will be accomplished through aid and cooperation between those war agencies whose records are sought, and those organizations capable of preserving and caring for those records once created and selected.

Four classes of "war agencies" are obvious objects of the attention of the Commission: volunteer organizations, the "Bundles" groups, the USO, fraternal and social lodges; trade and professional organizations, business and mercantile interests, labor and farm groups; state and local government units, such as mayors' committees, town defense groups, and the Iowa State agencies such as the Iowa Industrial and Defense Commission, the Iowa Home Guards, etc.; and fourthly, federal agencies such as the War Production Board offices, and the Office of Price Administration, Selective Service, the military recruitment offices, and others.

Organizations who will be asked to cooperate in arranging for the preservation of the records of agencies in the four classifications above will be public and college libraries, local historical societies, newspaper news and editorial rooms, certain business and patriotic organizations. Through their help the vital records of the war and Iowa's local communities should be saved. If this is well done then records of the war and the State of Iowa as a whole will also be saved.

The personnel and details of the program and organization of the Iowa War Records Commission will be announced the first of the fall. Suggestions and helps to all groups and all cooperating agencies will be prepared and distributed as soon as possible after the formation of the Commission. In the meantime, let every county in Iowa, let every town and village in the state, plan now to preserve all the information possible regarding its contributions to the progress of World War II.

We firmly believe that if this crisis is worthy of our sacrifice, if this war is worthy of our lives, it is worthy of a record. Let us make it possible for the generations to come to know and to cherish their history! K. E. C.

AN ALDRICH INCIDENT

Many letters of commendation and appreciation have been received regarding the brief story of the origin and development of the Iowa Historical Department in THE ANNALS OF IOWA for April. This was prepared, quite as much as for anything else, to get together in one story the narrative of the making of the Department and at a time when the events have not yet faded from memory. A letter from Mr. L. L. Bingham, formerly of Estherville and member of the Iowa General Assembly, comes from Los Angeles saying:

"Iowans at home or sojourning elsewhere are indebted to you and your associations for the faithfully fine work you are doing in the interest of us and the generations of Iowans yet to be."

The *Daily Freeman-Journal*, of Webster City, republished a large part of the article, especially as it told the story of the struggles of Charles Aldrich, and W. F. Hunter, the editor, added the following note as an interesting incident:

"Mr. Aldrich told us of the experience he had in getting the autograph of Gen. W. T. Sherman. He forwarded a letter to the general asking his signature to place in the Historical Department of Iowa. The general was a crusty old fellow and replied saying 'I have no time to waste on cranks and publicity seekers.' That of course, riled Aldrich, who was very sensitive and easily offended, and he wrote Sherman that if he failed to send his autograph, as requested, the gingery letter of the general would be preserved in the archives of the State of Iowa. Well, the old general cooled off, and sent the desired autograph."

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