

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA 1957-1959

By *William J. Petersen**

Two years ago the State Historical Society of Iowa celebrated the centennial of its birth on February 7, 1857, and started down the second century of its history. The first biennium of this new century — 1957-1959 — was both fruitful and in many respects the most outstanding in its long years of service to the people of Iowa. On the fruitful side, the biennium showed a net gain in membership of 811. Its publication program has continued on the traditionally high level that has won the applause and excited the envy of kindred societies. Its historical tours — by steamboat, auto caravan, and bus — have continued to attract widespread membership participation and public attention.

Certainly outstanding was the progress made on the Society's new dream home. Thus, during the biennium we asked for bids for the construction of our new Centennial Building, turned the spade in the first ground breaking ceremony, and have seen the building rise steadily during 1958 and 1959 so that by the time of our biennial meeting on June 29, 1959, members of the Society were able to gather on the lawn outside the completed structure and subsequently make a tour of the interior to see the installations then in progress. Meanwhile, the Society had spent \$165,000 of its own funds and had almost exhausted the \$200,000 appropriated by the State. It had, however, had its spirits buoyed up by an \$85,000 appropriation by the Fifty-eighth General Assembly for much needed furnishings and equipment for the new building. This sum was to become available as of July 1, 1959. On June 29, the Society was awaiting the completion of air-conditioning, plumbing, and electrical work during the summer before beginning its move into the new structure. The dreams of five generations of lovers of state and local history were about to be realized.

Membership Growth

In my last report I indicated that the membership of the Society had increased from 60, at the time the IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS

*William J. Petersen is superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

was established in 1903, to 978 when *The Palimpsest* was founded in 1920. By 1940 the membership had risen to 1,560. Seven years later, in July of 1947, our membership stood at 1,121; of these, 683 were active members and 438 were life members. At that time the five historical societies of the Upper Mississippi Valley ranked as follows in active and life membership: Missouri — 4,312; Wisconsin — 2,343; Illinois — 1,682; Minnesota — 1,674; Iowa — 1,121. In 1947 six counties had no members, while one-third of the ninety-nine counties had two or less members. This obvious weakness was readily apparent to the curators, who took action to see that a larger and more evenly distributed membership should be built up throughout Iowa. The compilation on page 291 reveals the membership growth that our Society has enjoyed by counties since 1947.

On June 29, 1959, our membership stood at 6,067, which still placed us second in the United States in total membership. It also represents the greatest percentage of membership increase of any Society in the United States over the past twelve years. Only Missouri eclipses the Hawkeye State in total membership, but with its \$1.00 membership fee for its quarterly magazine, there is little chance of Iowa's overtaking our neighbor to the south. During the past twelve years our Society registered gains in active as well as life membership. The following figures should be gratifying:

Iowa's Increase in Active and Life Members

	1947	1949	1951	1953	1955	1957	1959
Active Members . . .	683	1,749	3,095	3,776	4,197	4,545	5,322
Life Members	438	545	614	676	703	711	745
Total Members	1,121	2,294	3,709	4,452	4,900	5,256	6,067
Net Gain		1,173	1,415	743	448	356	811
Total Membership, 30 lowest counties	80	146	306	288	328	363	385
Average Membership, 30 lowest counties	2.6	4.9	10.2	9.6	10.7	12.1	12.8

The membership growth by counties should present a challenge to all members, particularly those in poorly-represented counties. There is no justifiable reason why Jones County with 42 members in a population of 19,405 should equal Adams, Decatur, Osceola, Taylor, and Wayne counties — with a combined population of 55,570. This is no exception, for Bremer and Butler counties both have smaller populations than Jones but

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Membership Growth by County, 1947-1959

County	1947	1951	1955	1957	1959	County	1947	1951	1955	1957	1959
Polk	127	315	426	434	454	Van Buren	2	14	17	26	32
Johnson	123	285	323	321	372	Calhoun	4	12	17	24	31
Linn	81	204	288	326	342	Montgomery	8	28	37	35	31
Scott	90	197	272	267	277	Hancock	4	12	18	18	29
Black Hawk	48	138	189	191	207	Humboldt	2	19	28	33	29
Muscatine	8	71	93	101	146	Jackson	4	22	25	27	29
Fayette	6	25	40	41	138	Warren	3	11	29	25	29
Washington	18	64	88	81	136	Allamakee	8	16	20	21	28
Story	12	45	59	69	101	Buena Vista	0	16	17	22	27
Buchanan	7	27	42	49	92	Clay	2	21	24	21	27
Iowa	15	68	74	73	92	Wright	5	16	18	22	27
Lee	20	58	72	79	89	Dickinson	6	28	24	25	26
Jasper	5	30	72	74	87	Greene	4	22	28	25	25
Dubuque	25	71	78	84	84	Pocahontas	8	25	17	12	22
Henry	9	23	39	54	84	Winneshiek	5	14	16	19	22
Cerro Gordo	15	57	72	82	81	Harrison	2	7	17	19	21
Clayton	5	29	40	45	78	Sioux	2	15	21	21	21
Des Moines	19	56	62	79	78	Union	2	14	14	21	21
Clinton	17	71	79	70	75	Cherokee	4	16	19	19	20
Cedar	10	42	66	57	64	Appanoose	8	39	25	25	19
Page	6	31	35	56	64	O'Brien	5	18	18	16	18
Webster	5	39	55	54	62	Palo Alto	4	17	19	17	18
Marshall	14	33	59	62	61	Winnebago	0	7	16	21	18
Wapello	14	60	69	57	61	Lyon	1	14	11	16	17
Benton	13	52	62	62	59	Shelby	4	12	16	18	17
Delaware	1	19	37	42	58	Crawford	4	12	14	19	16
Woodbury	14	30	42	42	57	Worth	2	8	14	13	15
Poweshiek	6	25	36	44	56	Davis	2	6	6	11	14
Kossuth	4	29	40	37	54	Howard	1	8	11	13	14
Hamilton	7	30	47	54	51	Monroe	2	10	14	12	14
Pottawattamie	16	46	41	43	51	Audubon	0	10	7	10	13
Bremer	7	21	35	46	47	Franklin	4	10	15	16	13
Butler	4	18	43	44	45	Fremont	2	11	13	13	13
Keokuk	12	35	41	42	45	Guthrie	5	9	12	13	13
Louisa	8	25	38	48	44	Emmet	1	11	11	10	12
Carroll	5	23	28	39	43	Ida	5	7	6	10	12
Jones	8	23	39	43	42	Lucas	3	9	8	15	12
Grundy	8	30	24	30	40	Monona	5	9	15	9	12
Jefferson	12	30	42	35	39	Ringgold	2	9	8	11	12
Mahaska	8	45	25	28	38	Plymouth	4	8	8	12	11
Marion	9	14	23	31	38	Adair	0	10	10	8	10
Tama	3	40	33	37	38	Clarke	1	9	7	7	10
Boone	3	25	29	35	37	Madison	0	13	13	9	10
Dallas	9	19	28	28	37	Mitchell	4	4	8	12	10
Floyd	1	11	26	27	35	Adams	3	6	6	7	9
Mills	5	18	29	32	34	Decatur	0	9	8	11	9
Hardin	4	15	16	32	33	Osceola	1	16	10	8	9
Cass	8	34	26	28	32	Taylor	3	15	11	9	9
Chickasaw	2	6	29	29	32	Wayne	4	4	3	8	6
Sac	3	11	23	27	32						

have even greater membership than the five above mentioned counties which stand at the bottom of the ninety-nine counties in Society membership. A further comparison can be drawn between Linn and Woodbury counties with almost identical populations. Linn counted 342 members in 1959 compared with 57 for Woodbury. We are happy to note, however, that Woodbury did register an increase of 15 over the previous biennium, due in part to visits by the Superintendent to Sioux City during the biennium just closed. In contrast to a total membership of 108 for Pottawattamie and Woodbury counties, Polk, Johnson, and Linn have grown to 1,168 members, which is more than the membership of ninety-nine counties twelve years ago.

There is plenty of opportunity for membership growth, particularly in the weaker counties in the state. Actually, 73 of our 99 counties gained in membership, while 7 remained the same. This is a better record than we made in the previous biennium when 64 counties gained and 10 others remained the same.

County Gain in Membership: 1957-1959

Fayette 97	Page 8	Clarke 3
Washington 55	Webster 8	Boone 2
Johnson 51	Pottawattamie . . . 8	Mills 2
Muscatine 45	Floyd 8	Jackson 2
Buchanan 43	Cedar 7	Harrison 2
Clayton 33	Marion 7	O'Brien 2
Story 32	Calhoun 7	Worth 2
Henry 30	Allamakee 7	Monroe 2
Polk 20	Van Buren 6	Emmet 2
Iowa 19	Clay 6	Ida 2
Kossuth 17	Clinton 5	Adair 2
Linn 16	Sac 5	Adams 2
Black Hawk 16	Buena Vista 5	Bremer 1
Delaware 16	Wright 5	Butler 1
Woodbury 15	Wapello 4	Tama 1
Jasper 13	Carroll 4	Hardin 1
Poweshiek 12	Jefferson 4	Dickinson 1
Hancock 11	Cass 4	Cherokee 1
Scott 10	Warren 4	Palo Alto 1
Lee 10	Keokuk 3	Lyon 1
Grundy 10	Chickasaw 3	Howard 1
Mahaska 10	Winneshiek 3	Ringgold 1
Pocahontas 10	Davis 3	Madison 1
Dallas 9	Audubon 3	Osceola 1
	Monona 3	

Despite the over-all net gain of 811 new members for the biennium, one cannot help regretting the fact that 19 counties declined in membership, even though 15 of the 19 sustained losses of three or less. Since it is important for our members to watch these trends and endeavor to correct them, the counties are listed herewith, with the number lost. One can gather solace from the fact that the total loss was only 48 compared with 97 in the previous biennium.

1 loss	2 losses	3 losses	4 losses	6 losses
Cerro Gordo	Mitchell	Hamilton	Louisa	Appanoose
Des Moines	Decatur	Winnebago	Montgomery	
Marshall	Wayne	Crawford	Humboldt	
Jones		Franklin		
Shelby		Lucas		
Plymouth		Benton		

It would be a real achievement if every county could have at least one member for every 1,000 inhabitants. At the present time our statewide membership is approximately two and one-half members for each 1,000 inhabitants. Iowa County can boast better than six members for every thousand. Woodbury, on the other hand, needs 104 members instead of its 57, while Pottawattamie should have 69 instead of 51. Proportionately, however, when compared with Iowa County, these desired goals could well be multiplied by six. Our five lowest counties, happily, need to increase their total from 42 to only 55 in order to reach the minimum objective of one for every 1,000 inhabitants. It would seem that our real work is to register gains in those counties that lag in membership. One must still wonder — does the wide disparity in county membership indicate apathy or a possible lag in historical and cultural interest?

Publications

During the past two years *The Palimpsest* and the IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY have appeared regularly. We print approximately 7,000 copies of our monthly magazine regularly, but frequently receive heavy demands for extra copies so that our total printing of *The Palimpsest* generally runs well over 100,000 copies annually. The use of our monthly by schools and study clubs has grown to such an extent that it frequently serves as the primary source of information on the various topics under discussion. The supply of our *Selected Readings in Iowa History* has been virtually exhausted during the biennium, and a reprint will be made shortly bringing it

up to date. This four-page pamphlet has saved our staff a tremendous amount of work in answering correspondence and at the same time has proved of inestimable value to students of Iowa history.

The wide variety of subjects treated in *The Palimpsest* is indicated in the following:

<i>The Palimpsest</i>		
	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>
1957		
July	The Fourth of July in Iowa	William J. Petersen
Aug.	The Tama Powwow	Ruth A. Gallaher Dick Spencer III
Sept.	The Manchester & Oneida Railway	Frank P. Donovan, Jr.
Oct.	University Football Through the Years	William J. Petersen John O'Donnell Bert McGrane Tait Cummins Gus Schrader Al Grady Eric Wilson
Nov.	The 57th General Assembly of Iowa	Frank T. Nye
Dec.	Christmas in Iowa	Phil Stong John T. Frederick William J. Petersen
1958		
	<i>Title</i>	<i>Author</i>
Jan.	Old Fort Madison — 1808-1813	Donald Jackson
Feb.	The Fur Trade	George F. Robeson J. E. Briggs
March	My Amish Boyhood	Sanford C. Yoder Melvin Gingerich
April	Visitors From Outer Space	Ben Hur Wilson William J. Petersen
May	Harry Bedwell — Railroad Raconteur	Frank P. Donovan, Jr.
June	Joliet and Marquette	William J. Petersen
July	Keokuk	F. R. Aumann J. E. Briggs
Aug.	Arch W. McFarlane	William J. Petersen C. C. Clifton David Dentan
Sept.	Iowa State College, 1858-1958	Ned Disque
Oct.	Centennial of the Trans-Atlantic Cable	William J. Petersen
Nov.	Spanish Land Grants in Iowa	William J. Petersen Ben Hur Wilson Iola B. Quigley
Dec.	Iowa in 1858	William J. Petersen

1959	Title	Author
Jan.	New Year's Day in Iowa	William J. Petersen
Feb.	Centennial of the Waterloo <i>Courier</i>	David Dentan William J. Petersen
March	Letters to Iowa Editors	William J. Petersen
April	The Cornell Music Festival	Bartholow V. Crawford Paul Beckhelm
May	The Mennonites in Iowa	Melvin Gingerich
June	Crime in Iowa	John Carl Parish Eliphalet Price

During the same period our quarterly magazine, IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY, has stood at the forefront among the publications issued by state historical societies. It has published a wide variety of scholarly yet readable articles that have attracted widespread interest among our membership as well as among professional historians. The following monographs have appeared during the biennium:

<i>Iowa Journal of History</i>		
Issue	Article	Author
July, 1957	"The State Historical Society of Iowa, 1955-1957"	William J. Petersen
October, 1957	"Iowa and the Battle of Shiloh"	Mildred Throne
	"Proslavery Sentiment in Iowa, 1838-1861"	Joel H. Silbey
January, 1958	"Pioneer Farmers and Innovation"	Allan G. Bogue
April, 1958	"Iowa Railroads and the Des Moines River Improvement Land Grant of 1846"	Leonard F. Ralston
	"A Decade of Transportation Fever in Burlington, Iowa, 1845-1855"	George A. Boeck
July, 1958	"Iowa Politics and the Compromise of 1850"	Morton M. Rosenberg
October, 1958	"Dennis Mahony and the Dubuque <i>Herald</i> , 1860-1863"	Hubert H. Wubben
January, 1959	"The Election of 1859 in Iowa"	Morton M. Rosenberg
	"The Burlington Railroad's Swine Sanitation Trains of 1929: A Case Study in Agricultural Development"	C. Clyde Jones
	"The Fruits of Iowa Progressivism, 1900-1915"	William L. Bowers

<i>Issue</i>	<i>Document</i>	<i>Editor</i>
July, 1957	"A Letter from Cedar Falls"	Thomas H. Smith
October, 1957, and January, 1958	"Reminiscences of Jacob C. Switzer of the 22nd Iowa"	Mildred Throne
April, July, and October, 1958	"Erastus B. Soper's History of Company D, 12th Iowa Infantry, 1861-1866"	Mildred Throne
January, 1959	"Three Gold Rush Letters of Adonijah Strong Welch"	William H. Hermann
April, 1959	"Iowa Troops in Dakota Territory, 1861-1864. Based on the Diaries and Letters of Henry J. Wieneke"	Mildred Throne
<i>Issue</i>	<i>Source Material</i>	
October, 1957	"David Brant's Iowa Political Sketches"	
January, 1958	"The Appointment of James Wilson as Secretary of Agriculture"	
July, 1958	"A Burlington Editor Comments on the Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858"	
January, 1959	"James S. Clarkson's Letter on Allison's 1872 Election"	
<i>Issue</i>	<i>Miscellaneous Articles</i>	<i>Compiler</i>
July, 1957	"Comments on the 'Hornet's Nest' — 1862 and 1887"	Mildred Throne

Two Books Distributed During the Biennium

During the biennium two outstanding books were distributed by the Society. The first volume, mailed out in October, 1957, was a reprint of John B. Newhall's *A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846*. It promptly won an accolade of praise from both members and reviewers. In addition, the American Association for State and Local History voted an *Award of Merit* to the Newhall book, emphasizing the value of its scholarly introduction by the Editor and expressing the hope that both book and introduction would serve as a model for other societies to follow. The book joins four similar reprints of rare Iowana and Americana by the Society, viz., *Black Hawk's Autobiography*; A. M. Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory, Particularly with Reference to the Black Hawk Purchase, or Iowa District*; John Plumbe, Jr., *Sketches of Iowa and Wisconsin*; and Dr. Isaac Galland's *Galland's Iowa Emigrant*, all extremely rare volumes that have become

highly prized by members of the Society and are of inestimable value to students and scholars. It is worth noting that original copies of these five books in good to mint condition would bring anywhere from \$2,500 to \$5,000, whereas members of the Society have been receiving valuable reprints of these volumes free with their membership.

A second volume issued during the biennium was Thomas R. Ross's *Jonathan Prentiss Dolliver*, a full-length biography of one of Iowa's most distinguished statesmen. The warm reactions of members to this readable volume were highly gratifying. One appreciative soul, Harry Hansen, a native of Davenport and distinguished editor of the *World Almanac*, wrote a penetrating review in his column in the *Chicago Tribune* Book Review section. Twenty-seven Iowans have served as United States Senators, and six of these have been the subject of full-length discussion in the *Iowa Biographical Series*, which, with the appearance of the Dolliver book, now numbers nineteen volumes.

In addition to the above, the Society has issued regularly its *News for Members*, which continues to alert members on the activities of the Society. *News for Members* has been responsible for bringing many valuable manuscripts, photographs, maps, and books into our possession. It is equally significant in chronicling the history and development of the Society, particularly in these last few years when every effort has been bent toward securing a home of its own in its Centennial Building. Members should continue to respond to our appeal for photographs, manuscripts, diaries, newspaper files, industrial records, catalogs, and house organs, all of which will make us a more effective historical institution.

Another publication, *Iowa History News Flashes*, goes out to over 500 newspaper editors, providing them with feature articles and fillers for their papers. It helps to bring Iowa history down to the very grass roots.

The Library

During the biennium 1957-1959 the library acquired 1,545 books in addition to numerous maps, pamphlets, pictures, and manuscripts. Most of the latter, in addition to some of the books, have come to us as gifts. Of course many of the books also come to us from other societies and learned organizations in exchange for our own publications. We still need more city directories and telephone directories, both old and new, to build up our collection in this department. We also want to expand our holdings in plat books and atlases, and we especially would be grateful for some of the

more recent ones, say 1920-1957, which have been overlooked while we have sought out the older ones.

Genealogy

The Society already has proved a rich source of information for those interested in genealogy. We have both original and microfilmed United States Census Records, almost every county history that has been published in Iowa, plat books and atlases for all but one county (Grundy), genealogical records from other states and regions as well as a good file of those published by the Daughters of the American Revolution and kindred groups. We are hopeful that many families will place copies of their genealogies in the Society's Genealogy Room.

Newspapers

In the past we have been unable to accept files of newspapers offered to us, but this situation no longer prevails. We are now in a position to store almost 200 per cent more bound files in our new Centennial Building and as a consequence we hope to assemble all rag content newspapers that were published during the nineteenth century, as these have a longevity prospect of one to three centuries if properly cared for in our air-conditioned, humidity-controlled newspaper stacks. Our original files date back to 1840 and will be good for generations to come if carefully handled. We have microfilm records and photostat copies of newspapers dating back to the 1820's, these being either Galena, Illinois, or St. Louis newspapers, which form a prime source of Iowa history prior to the appearance of the *Dubuque Visitor* on May 11, 1836.

Postcards and Photographs

Members can do much to improve our publication program by sending us photographs and picture postcards relating to their home town and community. Life on Main Street, whether in Deep River, What Cheer, Lost Nation, Calliope, or Morning Sun, will become more meaningful if we can secure a more complete collection of photos of courthouses, libraries, churches, schools, manufacturing plants, swimming pools, golf courses, parks, railroad stations, post offices, and garages that will be useful to us in preparing articles on various subjects.

In addition to commercial photos, the Society would benefit if members sent in more personal photos, both current and old-time pictures. For old-time pictures the following are suggested:

<i>Outdoor Scenes</i>	<i>Indoor Scenes</i>	<i>Holidays</i>
Picnics (church & school)	Church suppers	New Year's
Baseball	PTA meetings	Easter
Football	General stores	Arbor Day
Chautauqua	Blacksmith shops	Memorial Day
Fire departments	Drugstores	Flag Day
Circus	School programs	Fourth of July
Carnivals	Ice cream parlors	Labor Day
County fairs	Barber shops	Armistice
Boat regattas	Photo salons	Thanksgiving
Plowing matches	Groceries	Christmas
Husking contests	Meat markets	

Historical Tours

During the biennium the Society continued to sponsor historical tours, not only for its membership but for various groups of Iowans. The past twelve years have clearly demonstrated the value of such tours in developing a greater awareness among our citizens of their rich heritage. By steamboat and bus, by railroad and in family car, thousands of Iowans have gained a rewarding experience as they discovered, frequently for the first time, how colorful and inspiring was the story of their local community and their state. One of the cardinal responsibilities of an active historical society is the fostering of a genuine state pride among its citizens.

Steamboat Excursions: 1948-1959

When our first Mississippi River steamboat excursions were inaugurated in 1948 there was no thought of establishing them as annual events. And yet, as our 1957-1959 biennium comes to a close, we find that the seven years of exciting outings with Commodore O. D. Collis on the *Rob Roy III* have been followed by five years of equally enjoyable historical excursions with Captain H. Andressen aboard his *Addie May*. Surely, it was thought, such enthusiasm would have declined, but an average of one hundred members and guests were aboard the *Addie May* on each trip in 1959. It is unfortunate that we have been unable to run similar trips on the Missouri during the biennium, but we hope to continue these in the years ahead.

Overland Tours

During the biennium we sponsored several outstanding tours. For the fourth consecutive time we conducted the Legislative Ladies League on a tour of the Amana colonies in May of 1959. Once more William Leichsenring, proprietor of the Ox Yoke Inn, tendered the ladies a breakfast, and George Foerstner and the Amana Refrigerator, Inc., were hosts to them at a

luncheon at the Ox Yoke Inn. Dr. Henry Moershel gave an excellent talk to the group in the Homestead Church.

Another unusual tour sponsored by the Society was the one to Decorah, Spillville, and Fort Atkinson. Fully sixty-six Johnson County Farm Bureau women made this tour in Greyhound buses and greatly enjoyed the scenic and historic treasures of northeastern Iowa.

During May of 1958 the Society also sponsored a tour of the Iowa State College campus for the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Bessie Petersen conducted this tour as a part of her work as state chairman of Iowa Heritage for the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs.

The Lincoln Sesquicentennial

The Society has taken an active part in the observance of the Abraham Lincoln Sesquicentennial in Iowa. The first Lincoln meeting was held on the Iowa Wesleyan campus on December 13, 1958, with Dr. William E. Baringer, executive director of the Abraham Lincoln Sesquicentennial Commission in Washington, D. C. The Superintendent of the State Historical Society outlined a program for the observance of the Lincoln Sesquicentennial in Iowa. Among the projects mentioned by Dr. Petersen were: (1) restoration of the Harlan Home; (2) a joint session of the General Assembly in Des Moines on February 12; (3) a program in Iowa City to honor the memory of Judge Bollinger and his great Lincoln collection on the University campus; (4) a dinner and program at Iowa Wesleyan on February 15 featuring Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, noted Lincoln scholar; (5) encouragement of Lincoln programs throughout Iowa in 1959; (6) creation and development of a Civil War Round Table in Iowa; (7) the proper marking of historic spots in Iowa associated with the memory of Lincoln; and (8) the issuance of a special Lincoln publication by the State Historical Society of Iowa.

State Historical Society of Iowa Centennial Building

Five years ago, in October, 1954, your Superintendent described the desperate need for space in his monthly "Message" in *News for Members*. The next month he outlined a program that was destined to induce the 56th General Assembly to appropriate \$200,000 for a State Historical Society of Iowa Centennial Building contingent on the Society's matching this sum with \$100,000 of its own funds. At our biennial meeting in 1955 it was reported that \$25,000 had already been raised but emphasized at the same

time that \$75,000 more would be needed to entitle us to the \$200,000 matching fund just appropriated by the Fifty-sixth General Assembly. It was hoped that all members would want to become identified with this project as contributors.

Our willingness to raise \$100,000, our cramped quarters in Schaeffer Hall, the need of the University for additional space in this building, the enthusiastic support of the press and radio — all were important in gaining legislative backing and in securing additional contributions from various sources. As a result, it was possible to report, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Society on February 7, 1957, that the goal of \$100,000 in cash available had been reached. On a more somber note, it was noted that the cost of building had gone up approximately 10 per cent since we initiated our dream building and that at least \$125,000 would be required to furnish the new structure with adequate shelving and other equipment. Four months later, at the biennial meeting of the Society on June 24, 1957, it was reported that cash available then totaled approximately \$118,000 with another \$10,000 in pledges to be collected, which, with interest, brought our Centennial Building fund holdings to \$330,000.

Bids Asked — Opened

While busy with problems of raising funds, promoting the Society, writing and editing publications, the Superintendent devoted more and more of his spare time with architect Burdette Higgins, of the firm of Tinsley, Higgins, Lighter, and Lyon of Des Moines. With the modest sum at our disposal there could be no tinsel in the plans to house our holdings and insure adequate room for expansion for years to come. Space was the primary need of the Society. After much toil to get the most for the small sum available, plans were finally approved by the Board of Curators of the Society and bids were asked for the construction of the Centennial Building.

On April 17, 1958, bids were opened in the presence of over fifty bidders. There were nine bids for the general contract, four bids for the mechanical contract, four bids for the electric wiring contract, and six who sought the service elevator contract. Superintendent Petersen and Curators William Hart, James Nesmith, and James Stronks of Iowa City, John Mohl of Davenport, and L. R. McKee of Muscatine were present and introduced by Architect Burdette Higgins. Mr. Higgins then opened and read the bids before the group.

Successful Bidders

<i>Contract</i>	<i>Firm</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Amount</i>
General	Frantz Construction Co.	Iowa City	\$215,400
Mechanical	Darragh & Associates, Inc.	Cedar Rapids	99,850
Electric Wiring	The Home Appliances, Inc.	Iowa City	22,217
Elevator	R & O Elevator Co., Inc.	Minneapolis	16,929
		Total	<u>\$354,396</u>

Since the architect's fee of 6 per cent must be added to the above figure, it was decided to eliminate the elevator from the project. It had been hoped that an elevator could be installed for \$10,000, and no one felt more badly than the Superintendent when the above bid was rejected. Those seventy-six steps to our eerie perch on the third floor of Schaeffer Hall were a daily reminder. However, when attending the annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association at Minneapolis on April 24 the Superintendent determined to contact the lowest bidder — R & O Elevator Company, Inc., in Minneapolis. A short telephone conversation with Mr. Ken Arnold was followed by a breakfast and inspection of the R & O elevator in the Elks Club building in Minneapolis. The exact needs of the Society were outlined, and Mr. Arnold agreed that such an installation could be made for close to the \$10,000 originally hoped for. When a new proposal was actually made by the R & O, the Board of Curators approved the price of \$11,757, and the elevator was reinstated in the Centennial Building plans. The original contracts as finally accepted were:

<i>Contract</i>	<i>Successful Bid</i>	<i>Amount</i>
General	Frantz Construction Company.....	\$215,400
Mechanical	Darragh & Associates, Inc.....	99,850
Electrical	Home Appliances, Inc.	22,217
Architect	Tinsley, Higgins, Lighter & Lyon.....	22,080
Elevator	R & O Elevator Co., Inc.	11,757
Miscellaneous	3,000
	Total.....	<u>\$374,304</u>

Additions and deductions brought the total figure to \$381,895.81, of which \$325,763.15 had been paid by June, 1959, leaving a balance of \$56,409.46 to be incurred at the time of the biennial meeting.

Conclusion

In concluding this report it should be evident that emphasis has been

placed upon the more obvious activities of the Society. The actual humdrum work goes on, apparently unnoticed, but nevertheless important and all too frequently time consuming. Letters by the thousands must be answered. Most of these are relatively simple for our trained staff, but invariably some will come across our desks which have stumped the Iowa Development Commission, the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce, the Governor's Office, or some other state or local official. The rich resources of the Society must then be combed to provide an answer. While thousands of these letters are from Iowans, literally hundreds come from all over the country.

The variety of these inquiries would baffle the average person. On one occasion a famous stage designer arrived in the Superintendent's office and asked to be shown a spot in Iowa that would have "corn as high as an elephant's eye" and at the same time would meet the exact demands of the Hollywood producer for a setting for filming *Oklahoma*. The former was easy, but two interesting days of travel in five counties failed to yield the desired spot for the latter — a house of 1905 architectural vintage, no telephone wires or paved roads, and a pleasant sloping vista to afford a good camera view for the setting. Scores of Iowans knew the exact spot — only to have one or more undesirable feature quickly pointed out by the stage designer. We could only content ourselves with the fact that the great state of Oklahoma had also failed miserably after the stage designer had traveled thousands of miles in the Sooner State.

Some of these inquiries involve considerable research. On the eve of the opening of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man* a special delivery arrived asking for information on famous living Iowans, the stores and industries in existence, and the events that were transpiring at the time this smash hit took place. Such an inquiry is not answered in a minute, an hour, or a day. And yet there are time limits, due to our small staff, and when the research is too involved the writer is simply asked to come to Iowa City and do the research himself.

One of the strangest coincidences occurred when the Superintendent stepped into the office of a fellow Iowan in New York City — Keith Funston, president of the New York Stock Exchange — only to find that a letter had been sent to him in Iowa City the day before, asking for information about one of Mr. Funston's ancestors, whom he believed was an Episcopal or possibly a Presbyterian minister in Iowa. Upon my return to

Iowa City I looked up the desired information and wrote Mr. Funston that among other things he would have to content himself with a Methodist minister heritage.

During the course of a normal year the sources of our library are used not only by the graduate students and faculty at the University of Iowa but by scholars from all over the state and nation. The by-product of such research is to be found in numerous scholarly publications printed far beyond the borders of Iowa. Thus, the Society is able to carry on the work for which it was originally set up, namely to collect, preserve, and publish (or help others to publish) the great stories evolving around the history of Iowa.