

## THE 20TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

By *William J. Petersen\**

### *Historical Background*

The American Association for State and Local History was organized in 1940 and was an outgrowth of The Conference of Historical Societies, an organization whose activities were largely limited to the issuing of two *Handbooks of American Historical Societies*, the first prepared and published in 1926 by a committee headed by Joseph Schafer of the Wisconsin State Historical Society, and the second prepared and published in 1936 by a committee headed by Christopher B. Coleman, Secretary of the Conference of Historical Societies and head of the Indiana Historical Society.

In 1944, eight years after the Conference of American Historical Societies published its *Handbook*, the American Association for State and Local History issued its first *Handbook of Historical Societies in the United States and Canada*. A comparison of these two directories indicated a steadily increasing interest in the establishing or reactivating of local historical societies and the encouraging of those already in existence — but for the most part struggling along. Actually, the number of historical societies in the United States increased from 545 to 833, or 53 per cent. The increase in Iowa was even more spectacular, from 8 to 23, with an additional 14 included in a supplementary list. While a majority of the Iowa list were not active and some were actually dubious as to their inclusion, they nevertheless indicated that a stirring at the grass roots was taking place.

Between 1941 and 1947 the American Association for State and Local History issued twelve monographs which in some measure served as tools for the furtherance of the cause of state and local history. The titles of the monographs were:

1. What Should Our Historical Society Do?
2. Local History and Winning the War.

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3. Using Volunteers in the Local Historical Society's Program.
4. The Local History Museum and the War Program.
5. A Publicity Program for the Local Historical Society.
6. Broadcasting History: The Story of the Story Behind the Headlines.
8. The Development of War Records Projects in the United States, 1941-1943.
9. How to Organize a Local Historical Society.
10. Church Records and History.
  - The Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches.
  - Behold There Shall Be a Record Kept Among You.
  - Historical and Archival Activities of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States.
11. Writing Your Community's War History.
12. The Junior Historian Movement in the Public Schools.

In September, 1949, the American Association for State and Local History launched an impressive quarterly entitled *American Heritage*. An able introduction by S. K. Stevens, Associate Editor of the new magazine, sounded the tocsin for its readers.

"Our American heritage of freedom, with its emphasis upon tolerance, with its opportunity to achieve the utmost liberty of thought and action consistent with the good of all, with its 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' is our most precious possession. I believe we are at long last appreciative of the fact that it is worth more to us than all the gold at Fort Knox, or the wealth represented in all our bank deposits and the value of our products of farms, mines, and factories. If our freedom is ever lost, all of these material things would mean little.

"The most of us are likewise conscious today that this heritage of freedom could be lost to us in the future. Our way of life is threatened by other concepts of society and government which rest essentially upon the denial of our ideals of individual liberty. We believe in law and in order, as applied to the control of our society, our economy, and our political life. But we cannot accept totalitarianism which strangles the freedom of the individual to achieve and to exercise his basic liberties. That is the real difference between the American way of life and all the 'isms' which exist elsewhere.

"What is needed in America today is a new appreciation and understanding of our American heritage and its advantages over

the ways of totalitarianism and dictatorship. This understanding must rest upon a greater diffusion of popular knowledge about the historic roots of our national progress and development. The best place to begin is at home; for local history is truly living history, close to the experience of our people. A deeper loyalty to our institutions and our way of life must rest upon a firm bedrock of love of our home communities, and the translation of our national ideals and aspirations into individual and community experience and history."

*American Heritage* was designed to cover the history of the United States, and its neighbor — Canada. The success of the editors, working with virtually no funds, is reflected by some of the major titles covered in the first four issues constituting volume one.

The Champlain Valley	100 Golden Years California
Centennial Minnesota	Explorers of the Ohio
Colonial Williamsburg	The Freedom Train
Chicago Railroad Fair	Old Sturbridge Village

*American Heritage* was continued through five volumes of four numbers each, the last one ending with the Summer, 1954, issue featuring "Festival of the American Heritage" and "The Custer Massacre." Meanwhile, negotiations had been carried on over a number of years with The Society of American Historians who were desirous of acquiring the title *American Heritage*. An agreement was reached whereby *American Heritage* was to be published by the American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc. with James Parton as Publisher and Bruce Catton as Editor. The new magazine, to be issued six times a year in stiff covers, met an enthusiastic response. The first volume appeared in December, 1954, as Vol. VI, Number 1. By October, 1959, thirty volumes had been issued and a *Cumulative Index* for the first five volumes (VI-X) had been printed. From the start *American Heritage* has been sponsored by the *American Association for State and Local History* and the *Society of American Historians*. So successful has been the magazine from a lucrative point of view that the American Association for State and Local History has been enabled to perform far more effective work in promoting the cause of state and local history.

The publication that has knit the American Association together over the period of most of its existence is entitled *History News*. It is a small monthly leaflet of four pages begun in 1946 and gradually increased to 8, 12, and occasionally to 16 pages. Since 1957 a touch of green on its front

cover has made *History News* more attractive. Meanwhile, in addition to chronicling the more unusual things sent in by state and local history groups, *History News* has expanded enough to allow inclusion of some of the papers read at Annual Meetings. It also prints the Annual Program and lists the Awards of Merit announced at each Annual Meeting.

The American Association for State and Local History holds its annual meeting in the fall of the year. Over the past dozen years it has met at such points as Denver and Glenwood Springs, Colorado; Burlington, Vermont; Houston, Texas; Madison, Wisconsin; Williamsburg, Virginia; Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts; Columbus, Ohio; Detroit, Michigan; Salt Lake City, Utah; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Iowa City.

The Program Committee for the 20th Annual Meeting in Iowa City was headed by Russell Fridley, Director of the Minnesota Historical Society. The program prepared appears on pages 49, 50, 51, 52.

The objectives of the Association as outlined by Albert B. Corey on the occasion of the Sturbridge Village meeting are:

TO DEVELOP a deeper understanding and appreciation of the American heritage as it rests upon the story of men and events in our communities and states and bring LOCAL, LIVING HISTORY TO THE PEOPLE.

TO BRING TOGETHER in one organization the people and the organizations interested in and working in the field of state and local history.

TO ENLARGE AND IMPROVE by helpful suggestions and exchange of ideas the work of all societies and organizations active in local history.

TO ACT as a clearing house for all information, ideas, contacts, news, and thought in the field of local history as a means of preserving our history at the local level and making it known to ALL the people as a basis for UNDERSTANDING OUR HERITAGE AS A FREE PEOPLE.

TO ENCOURAGE the use of state and local history in the SCHOOLS, and by the PRESS, RADIO, and TELEVISION as a means of bringing the American story to the people everywhere in the most interesting and lively forms.

TO PROMOTE activity in preserving the materials of American history, such as private and public papers, records of business enterprise, early American newspapers.

Having outlined the objectives, President Corey, who is the New York State Historian located at Albany, emphasized the value of bringing together

## PROGRAM

*Twentieth Annual Meeting*AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR  
STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31

8:00 a.m.

Registration—Centennial Building

9:30 a.m. Conference Room No. 2, Centennial Building

"NEW DIRECTIONS AND TRADITIONAL FUNCTIONS IN OUR LOCAL  
HISTORICAL SOCIETIES"CHAIRMAN: *Don Herald, Public Museum, Davenport, Iowa*

PANEL:

*Clark J. Pahlas, Olmsted County Historical Society, Rochester, Minn.**Mrs. John Wilterding, Menasha Historical Society, Menasha, Wis.*

9:30 a.m. Conference Room No. 1, Centennial Building

"THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY MAGAZINE—DOES IT HAVE A FUTURE?"

CHAIRMAN: *James Rodabaugh, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus*

PANEL:

*Michael Kennedy, Montana Historical Society, Helena**Bertha L. Heilbron, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul*

PANEL COMMENT:

*James C. Olson, University of Nebraska, Lincoln*

11:00 a.m. Dedication of the Centennial Building

1:00 p.m. Dedication Luncheon, University Athletic Club

*Floyd C. Shoemaker, State Historical Society of Missouri, Columbia**Russell W. Fridley, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul*

3:00 p.m. Historical Tour

Plum Grove, home of Governor Robert Lucas, first governor of Iowa  
Territory

Herbert Hoover Birthplace, blacksmith shop and new library

Return to Iowa City

7:00 p.m.

Reception and Dinner, Jefferson Hotel

Presiding: *William J. Petersen, Supt. State Historical Society of Iowa*Speaker: *Mackinlay Kantor, "The Historical Novelist's Obligation to  
History"*

## THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

9:00 a.m. Visit Old Capitol—Territorial and State Capitol

9:30 a.m. House Chamber, Old Capitol

"URBAN RENEWAL AND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION"

Chairman:

*David W. Knepper, University of Houston, Houston*

Panel:

*Aubrey Neasham, California Division of Beaches and Parks*

*Robert G. Stewart, St. Louis County Historic Buildings Comm.*

Panel Comment:

*Ronald F. Lee, National Park Service*

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9:30 a.m. Senate Chamber, Old Capitol

"MANUSCRIPT COLLECTING IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE BATTLE OF THE BULK"

Chairman:

*David C. Mearns, Library of Congress*

Panel:

*Edith Fox, Cornell University, Ithaca*

*Josephine Harper, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison*

Panel Comment:

*Lucile M. Kane, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul*

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Special Ladies Program—For Registered Out-of-State Members

9:30-12:00 a.m.

A Visit to Amana Homes and Gardens

Hostesses: Amana Ladies

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1:00 p.m.

Lunch at Bill Zuber's Dugout, Homestead

Presiding:

*Richard P. McCormick, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N. J.*

"Communal Life in America"

*Arthur Bestor, University of Illinois, Urbana*

2:30 p.m.

Tour of Amana

Homestead Church

"Historical Background of Amana," *Dr. Henry Moershel*

"Communal Life in Amana," *Martin Dickel*

3:00 p.m.

Tour of the seven Amana villages—Homestead, Upper South and Lower South, West, High, Middle, and East Amana  
Amana Heim, Open Hearth Oven, Kitchen House, Refrigeration Plant, Cemetery, Meat Market, Furniture Factory, and Woolen Mills

6:00 p.m.

Reception at Ox Yoke Rathskellar, Amana

7:00 p.m. Dinner at Ox-Yoke Inn, Amana

Old Fashioned Songfest

Zither music by *William Dittrich* and *Henry Dietrich*

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

9:30 a.m. Conference Room No. 1, Centennial Building

"TRAINING PROGRAMS"

Chairman:

*Clement Silvestro, American Assn. for State and Local History*

Panel:

*E. McClung Fleming, Winterthur, Delaware*

*Walter J. Heacock, Eleutherian Mills-Hagley Foundation*

Panel Comment:

*William J. Murtag, National Trust for Historical Preservation*

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(Sponsor: American Association of Historic Sites Administrators)

9:30 a.m. Conference Room No. 2, Centennial Building

"LEGISLATION SUPPORTING THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC SITES"

Chairman:

*Nyle Miller, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka*

Panel:

*Rogers Young, National Park Service, Washington, D. C.*

*William S. Tarlton, North Carolina Dept. of Archives and History,  
Raleigh*

*Henry Brown, Detroit Historical Society, Detroit*

12:30 p.m. University Athletic Club

Business luncheon of the Association

Presiding:

*Clifford L. Lord, Columbia University, New York*

2:30 p.m. Conference Room No. 2, Centennial Building  
 "Raising Funds for the Historical Agency"

Chairman:

*Clifford L. Lord, Columbia University, New York*

Panel:

*S. K. Stevens, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission*

*Charles van Ravenswaay, Missouri Historical Society*

*Leslie Fishel, State Historical Society of Wisconsin*

*Thomas Vaughan, Oregon Historical Society*

Special Ladies Event—For Registered Out-of-State Members

2:00 to 5:00 p.m. Visits to Iowa Farms

Hostesses: Ladies of Johnson County Farm Bureau

5:30 p.m.

Reception

7:00 p.m.

Annual dinner of the Association—Mayflower Inn

Presiding: President-elect of the Association

*Dr. Clifford Lord, President of the American Association for State and  
 Local History—"New Horizons"*

### SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Leave Iowa City at 8:00 a.m.

9:00 a.m. Visit Harlan-Lincoln Home at Mount Pleasant

10:00 a.m.

Sheaffer Pen Company—coffee and tour

Site of Old Fort Madison

11:00 a.m.

River road trip to Keokuk. Spanish Land Grant, Fort Des Moines No. 1,  
 Half-Breed Tract, and great names like Zebulon M. Pike, Robert E.  
 Lee, and Francis Scott Key

12:00 noon

Mississippi Steamboat Trip and Luncheon

Courtesy State Historical Society of Iowa

6:30 p.m.

Dinner—Keokuk Country Club



in fellowship all people who love the history of their community, state, and nation, in order that each might personally have an "opportunity to influence creatively the development of many projects and activities which will promote the preservation of our American heritage and its use to strengthen our American Way of Life."

Written on the occasion of the Sturbridge Village meeting, there probably was no time in this Nation's history when there was a greater need of acquainting Americans with their rich heritage. State and local history is a "key" to this story and every state historical society should dedicate its every effort to unfolding it, emphasizing the "blood, sweat, and tears" as well as the hopes, the prayers, and the sacrifices that brought the dreams of the pioneers to a rich fruition. For it is of such stuff that dreams are made; it is of such stuff that Iowa and the Nation were born and flourished.

As one comes to the end of what proved one of the most interesting and rewarding meetings of the American Association for State and Local History one cannot help but ask the question: "How does the State Historical Society of Iowa rank in reaching the various objectives outlined above?"

(1) We might first point out that the State Historical Society was established by law at Iowa City in 1857, and that it has been issuing its publications in various forms for ninety years.

(2) The Society has acquired over a century of time 82,000 books, 30,000 pamphlets, 10,000 bound volumes of newspapers, over 2,000 rolls of microfilm, and innumerable manuscripts, documents, photographs, maps, etc.

(3) Its publications fill more shelves of space than any other Society in the country. This is due to the fact that we publish a monthly, a quarterly, and books. Our monthly magazine, designed for popular consumption although accurate in every detail, anticipated the Junior Historian movement by years.

(4) The Society began pictorializing *The Palimpsest* in 1948, one year before *American Heritage* was born, thus greatly increasing the value of as well as the interest in our popular monthly.

(5) It began the use of three and four color on *The Palimpsest* cover just before the dedication of its new Centennial Building in 1960.

(6) The Society has built up a membership of over 6,500; its depositories and exchanges bring the total mailing list to almost 7,000. This membership is not padded by counting all members of a subscribing county historical society as members of the State society.

(7) It is one of the few societies that distributes its publications free to 150 college and tax-supported libraries within the borders of Iowa so that all citizens may have access to them.

(8) It has brought its members closer together through its fifteen annual steamboat excursions, enjoyed by as many as 700 participants each year.

(9) It has taught the productivity of Iowa through its All Iowa Menu — 42 Iowa raised and processed foods served on a one-day steamboat trip.

(10) It has promoted overland trips to Amana, to the Little Brown Church, to northeast Iowa, and on railroad excursions.

(11) It has more than tripled the number of active County Historical Societies in the past decade.

(12) Its publications on Iowa Government have won the unstinted praise of the Brookings Institute. Its Bulletin of Information Series have been of inestimable value to schools, study clubs, and county historical societies. The following titles of the Bulletin of Information Series are indicative of but a fragment of the State Historical Society's work. Need more be said?

1. Provisions for Membership in The State Historical Society (1904)
2. An Iowa Program for Study Clubs (1904)
3. Suggestions to Public Libraries and Local Historical Societies Relative to Collecting and Preserving Materials of Local History (1904)
4. Suggestions to Local Historians in Iowa (1905)
5. Organization of County Historical Societies (1906)
6. An Iowa Program for Study Clubs (1907)
7. One Hundred Topics in Iowa History (1915)
8. Collection and Preservation of the Materials of War History — A Patriotic Service for Public Libraries, Local Historical Societies, and Local Historians (1919)
9. Opinion of American Historians on the Work of the State Historical Society of Iowa (1920)
10. Pageantry for Iowa Communities (1923)
11. State and Local Archaeology Surveys (1923)
12. State and Local History in the High School (1924)
13. The Pioneers — A Pageant of Early Iowa (1927)
14. The Story of the Indian — A Pageant of Early Iowa (1928)
15. Two Hundred Topics in Iowa History (1932)
16. Organization, Purposes, and Activities of Local Historical Societies in Iowa (1941)