

NOTES AND COMMENT

The third annual meeting of the Society of Mayflower Descendants in the State of Iowa was held at Ames on April 17, 1931. Mr. Robert Munro Boyd, Jr., Governor General of the National Society, was one of the speakers. The officers of the Iowa Society elected at the meeting include Mr. Irving H. Hart of Cedar Falls, Governor; Mrs. George L. Owings of Marshalltown, Secretary; Mrs. O. W. Strine of Boone, Treasurer; and Mrs. Charles W. Wester of Cedar Falls, Historian.

A joint meeting of three Iowa associations — the State Association of Economists and Sociologists, the Iowa Historical Association, and the Iowa Political Science Association — was held at Cedar Falls on May 1 and 2, 1931. The officers elected for the ensuing year by the State Association of Economists and Sociologists were as follows: president, L. E. Garwood of Coe College; vice president, J. M. Carlton of Grinnell College; secretary-treasurer, E. M. Burrows of Coe College. The Political Science Association elected C. F. Littell of Cornell College, president; Carl Erbe of Iowa State Teachers College, vice president; and N. W. McGee of the University of Dubuque, secretary-treasurer. Ethel M. Jones of Drake University was named president of the Iowa Historical Association; Irving B. Richman of Muscatine, vice president; and William J. Petersen of the State Historical Society of Iowa, recorder.

Mr. S. A. Burgess, historian of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, at Independence, Missouri, has called the attention of the State Historical Society to a statement on page 364 of Mr. Irving B. Richman's *Ioway to Iowa* which reads: "At Council Bluffs between 1848 and 1852 polygamy, sanctioned by revelation to Joseph Smith, was practiced." The point made by Mr. Burgess relates to the accuracy of the statement that polygamy was sanctioned by revelation through Joseph Smith.

It seems to be generally agreed by writers on the history of the

Latter Day Saints that polygamy was not officially sanctioned by any of the publications of the Church until the promulgation of the doctrine by Brigham Young at Salt Lake City in 1852. It is also rather generally agreed that polygamy was practiced to some extent at Nauvoo and Council Bluffs. There has been, however, disagreement among writers as to the origin of the doctrine and the extent of the practice of polygamy in Illinois and Iowa.

Some writers claim that polygamy was sanctioned by a revelation to Joseph Smith as early as 1843, but was taught to only a few of the followers and was not officially proclaimed until Brigham Young published it in 1852. This is the explanation usually made by the Latter Day Saints in Utah. Other authorities insist that Joseph Smith discountenanced and condemned polygamy at all times, that its practice grew up among individuals contrary to his teachings, and that its introduction as a church doctrine was the work of Brigham Young, who later attempted to show that Joseph Smith approved the doctrine. This is the view held by most of the members of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, many of whom now live in Iowa and Missouri.

Mr. Burgess presents the view of those who believe that Joseph Smith did not claim to have a revelation permitting polygamy and did not advocate or condone the practice. His letter includes the following statements which are here quoted with his permission:

"It is certain that the Church did not prior to the assassination of Joseph Smith, Jr., take any action approving or condoning [the practice of polygamy]. If Joseph Smith were in any degree guilty, it is a matter of personal guilt.

"That Joseph Smith, in all of his known writings had most emphatically condemned any form of marital looseness is clear. The official position taken by the church with which he was associated is also clear. It is equally clear that Brigham Young and his associates introduced both the doctrine and practice, and that those so involved in that practice in later years offered testimony seeking to implicate Joseph Smith. This was [done] for very obvious reasons, but those stories when examined do not stand critical analysis.

“The question is one of fact and of course we are always open to any new proof. There does exist evidence according to my present belief that John C. Bennett attempted to introduce for his personal ends some form of a spiritual wife doctrine, and was promptly expelled from the Church. It is possible that in his secret negotiations he tried to shift the responsibility to Joseph Smith, and when expelled made some bitter attacks.

“Also after the death of Joseph Smith, there appears considerable evidence of such looseness developing a year or so later, but not based upon any assumed revelation from Joseph Smith. There is such evidence also as to Council Bluffs, but we do not know of any authentic evidence that it was at that time based upon any authentic revelation to Joseph Smith.

“The argument of Orson Pratt is quite clear that they were in trouble for immorality (see report to congress 1851). It looked as if they were caught, but the constitution guaranteed religious liberty. If it were a matter of religion they would be safe. The process of thought is very clearly developed, and is quite contrary to the ideas that they had been misbehaving under any purported revelation. Much evidence might be brought to bear, though of course the burden of proof is on the accuser.

“I would be pleased to give you a great many references if you wish. The question after all is an open one, a clear question of fact without prejudices. The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints has never officially taken any position as to Joseph Smith's connection [with] or responsibility for polygamy. Every individual has been left free to form his own opinion. There is no reason therefore for there being any prejudice in argument. The case is bad enough that men of the prominence of Brigham Young and his associates were undoubtedly involved. It is merely a question of fairness to one individual, a question of historical accuracy. As an individual, not in any official capacity, I would challenge as did Heman C. Smith our predecessor and others the assertion that the man Joseph Smith was responsible for that abominable practice and teaching.”

MARTIN JOSEPH WADE

Martin J. Wade, Judge of the United States District Court for the Southern District of Iowa, died in California on April 16, 1931. He was born in Burlington, Vermont, on October 20, 1861, and moved to Iowa at an early age. After attending the common schools and St. Joseph's College at Dubuque, he was graduated from the Law Department of the State University of Iowa in 1886. After admission to the bar Mr. Wade practiced law in Iowa City in the firm of Ranck and Wade from 1886 until 1893, when at the age of thirty-two he was appointed Judge of the Eighth Judicial District of Iowa. He remained on the bench until January, 1903.

From 1891 to 1903 he was Lecturer in the Law Department at the State University, and from 1895 to 1905 he was Professor of Medical Jurisprudence. He was president of the Iowa Bar Association in 1897-1898. In 1902 he was elected to Congress from the Second Congressional District and served until 1905, when he resumed the practice of law in Iowa City in the firm of Wade, Dutcher, and Davis. He was appointed United States District Judge in 1915 and served until the close of his career in 1931.

Judge Wade was the author of a number of books and articles dealing with the Constitution. He was one of the founders of the Iowa Commonwealth Conference, and was widely known for his emphasis on loyalty and patriotism.

CONTRIBUTORS

JACOB A. SWISHER, Research Associate in The State Historical Society of Iowa. Born in Illinois in 1884. Received the B. A. degree from the State University of Iowa in 1917, the M. A. degree in 1918, and the Ph. D. degree in 1927. Author of *Leonard Fletcher Parker, The American Legion in Iowa*, several chapters in *Municipal Government and Administration in Iowa*, and numerous articles in *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics* and *The Palimpsest*.

HUBERT H. HOELTJE, Associate in the Department of English, at the State University of Iowa. (See THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS for January, 1927, p. 160.)

CHARLES ELLSWORTH HALL. Born near Centreville, Michigan, on September 26, 1861. Came to Waterloo, Iowa, with his parents in a covered wagon in 1863. Returned to Michigan in 1872. Graduated from the Centreville, Michigan, High School in 1882 and from the Davenport, Iowa, Business College in 1883. Taught school in Orange Township, Black Hawk County, Iowa, during the winter of 1882-1883, and in Fillmore County, Minnesota, during the winter of 1883-1884. On April 1, 1884, commenced service with the Bell Telephone System at Davenport, Iowa, continuing in this service for more than forty-six years. Has served as a telephone official during this period in Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Resided in Davenport, Iowa, from 1887 to 1904, in Des Moines, Iowa, from 1904 to 1911, from 1911 to August 1, 1930, in Omaha, Nebraska, and now resides in Los Angeles, California. Has written many historical sketches and given numerous talks concerning the founders and the development of the "Telephone" in the States mentioned.

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