

HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES

The annual meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin was held in the Library at Madison on October 18, 1934.

The sixteenth annual Indiana History Conference was held at the Claypool Hotel, Indianapolis, Indiana, on December 7 and 8, 1934.

Among the papers recently acquired by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin are those of the former Governor and United States Senator, John J. Blaine. These will not, however, be open to public research for a number of years.

The Missouri Historical Society held a meeting at the Jefferson Memorial on October 26, 1934. The speaker was Mrs. Arthur H. Pfaff. Her subject, "Costumes and Customs of the American Indian", was illustrated by dolls dressed in tribal costumes and by Flaming Arrow, an Acoma Indian.

IOWA

J. C. Harvey of Seymour has instituted an effort to mark early day burial grounds in Appanoose County. Many early graves are said to be unmarked and unrecorded.

The Woodbury County Pioneer Club held a meeting at Sioux City on October 13, 1934. The speaker was Mrs. Ralph Henderson who gave a resumé of the early history of the community.

A monument to Father Pierre Jean De Smet, pioneer Jesuit missionary to the Pottawattamie Indians in what is now Pottawattamie County, was unveiled on October 12, 1934. It is located in Council Bluffs at the intersection of State Street and Broadway.

The Woodbury County Pioneer Club held a monthly meeting at Sioux City on August 23, 1934. Miss Rose O'Connor gave a talk on "Historical Beginnings of Woodbury County". F. B. Leitch gave the address at the meeting on September 22nd. His subject was "Pioneer Days".

On October 8, 1934, a tablet marking the site of the first public school building in Des Moines was unveiled. It stands at the corner of Ninth and Locust streets and was provided by the Abigail Adams Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The school was first occupied in 1858. The tablet was presented by Mrs. Erwin Schenk and accepted for the city by Mr. D. William Ash.

A marker for the site of the log cabin which once stood some five miles south of Danville, Iowa, was dedicated by the State Baptist Convention on October 20, 1934. In this log cabin the first Baptist Church in Iowa was organized on October 20, 1834. Two of the speakers at the Convention were Professor R. Holbrook and Dr. Coe Hayne. Dr. Hayne's subject was "In the Early Morning God Walked in Iowa".

Mrs. Mildred Pelzer (Mrs. Louis Pelzer) has prepared and published a map of Iowa which she calls "Iowa: Prairie Chronicles in Picture". Around the border are pictures portraying highlights of Iowa's history. The map itself presents numerous pictures representing persons, places, and events of historical significance. In securing historical data for the map Mrs. Pelzer was assisted by her husband, Dr. Louis Pelzer, and by members of the staff of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

The Wyoming Historical Society held its tenth annual meeting at Wyoming on August 25, 1934. W. B. Scarecliff, superintendent of schools at Wyoming, gave a talk on "What a Historical Society Means to a School and How They Might be Connected" and Elsie Bender gave anecdotes of pioneer days. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: president, Mrs. Jessie Koch; vice presidents, Mrs. Jennie Hulton, Mrs. J. W. Morse, and Miss Winifred Wherry; recording secretary, Miss Elsie Bender; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Mae Peck; and treasurer, Miss Emma Alden.

The Iowa-Des Moines Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, meeting at Burlington on September 18-23, 1934, celebrated the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the organization of the church and the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of Methodism in Iowa. On Tuesday, September 18th, a meet-

ing was held at Mt. Pleasant where a new marker for the grave of the Reverend John H. Ruble, first Methodist minister to marry, to die, and to be buried on Iowa soil. Dr. R. M. Shipman gave the principal address. An historical sketch, prepared by R. E. Harvey, was read by R. C. Buchanan. John H. Ruble came to Iowa in September, 1835, and died in the spring of 1836.

The *Des Moines Register*, the *Moville Mail*, and the *Clear Lake Reporter* are continuing the series on Iowa history, prepared by Hubert L. Moeller. Among the lessons in the series to date are: an Indian feast; Jean Marie Cardinal; French-Indian battle in Iowa; Indian opposition to Fort Madison; early Iowa visitors; and treaty councils in Iowa. These lessons appear each week. A similar series by John E. Briggs appears in other Iowa newspapers, including the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, the *Marshalltown Times-Republican*, the *Fort Dodge Messenger & Chronicle*, the *Davenport Democrat*, the *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald*, the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, the *Muscatine Journal*, and the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil*. Among the topics so far discussed are the following: exploring the wilderness; the expedition of De Noyelles; the Nicollet survey; French forest rovers in Iowa; and traders in the Iowa country.

The State Historical Society is in receipt of the following letter from Mr. C. J. Fulton concerning plank roads in Iowa. Because of the information it contains it is printed in full.

"Fairfield, Iowa
September 26, 1934

"Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh,
Iowa City, Iowa.

Dear Dr. Shambaugh:

"I have just read the current Palimpsest. The story of the plank roads as it relates to Jefferson County is incomplete and as it relates to the bridging of the river 'Chicauqua' is in error.

"The Mt. Pleasant, Deedsville and Brighton Plank Road and Bridge Company, granted right of way in February, 1851, built a bridge over Skunk River at Deedsville (Merrimac). It was sold by the sheriff in December, 1854, on an execution for debt. Some of its timbers were still standing a few years ago.

“The Fairfield and Mt. Pleasant Plank Road Company was incorporated on March 31, 1851. Samuel Jacobs of Fairfield was the surveyor. A bridge put under construction across Skunk River progressed slowly on account of shortage of funds. On March 11, 1853, Charles Negus, the president of the company, crossed it with horse and buggy and opened it to travel. It was a substantial structure a quarter of a mile long and so much of a curiosity that it attracted numerous visitors. Travelers went out of their way to see it. At its west end sprung up a settlement called Bridgewater. For a time receipts from tolls were \$50 a month.

“It was the irony of fate that just five days after this bridge was opened, that is, on March 16, 1853, the citizens of Jefferson County met in Fairfield to consider what they should do to promote the building of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad. Later in the year, by a vote of 1159 to 454, they authorized the county to purchase \$100,000 of stock. These activities and others to the same end presaged the death of the plank road movement.

Yours truly,

(Signed) C. J. Fulton”

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Dr. John E. Briggs, editor of *The Palimpsest*, gave a talk to the Kiwanis Club of Iowa City on September 4, 1934. His subject was “Exploring the History of Iowa”. Dr. Briggs is the author of the Iowa history lesson printed in various newspapers.

Dr. Jacob A. Swisher, Research Associate of the State Historical Society of Iowa, gave an illustrated lecture on “Iowa Historic and Beautiful” before the county superintendents section of the State Teachers Association at Des Moines on November 2, 1934.

Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh, Superintendent of the State Historical Society, was one of the speakers at the School of Citizenship, sponsored by the Des Moines League of Women Voters, on October 19, 1934. His subject was “The Challenge of Revolution”.

“Revolutionary and Pre-Revolutionary Iowa” was the title of an address given by Dr. William J. Petersen, Research Associate of the

State Historical Society of Iowa, before a district conference of the Daughters of the American Revolution held at Iowa City on September 18, 1934.

The following persons have recently been elected to membership in the Society: Rev. W. J. Collins, Davenport, Iowa; Mr. W. F. Barr, Des Moines, Iowa; Mr. G. W. Brown, Shenandoah, Iowa; Dr. Leslie K. Fenlon, Clinton, Iowa; Dr. Lafe H. Fritz, Dubuque, Iowa; Miss Melva Rae Gingerich, Kalona, Iowa; Mr. Harry H. Hagemann, Waverly, Iowa; Mr. Clair E. Hamilton, Des Moines, Iowa; Mrs. Esther H. Hardy, Tabor, Iowa; Mr. Charles Arthur Hawley, Iowa City, Iowa; Dr. Geo. A. Hartley, Battle Creek, Iowa; Mr. Louis L. Hill, Postville, Iowa; Mr. Chester S. Johnson, Cedar Rapids, Iowa; Mr. W. M. McLaughlin, Des Moines, Iowa; Miss Marjorie Medary, New York City; Rev. Paul T. Meyer, Hampton, Iowa; Mr. Clifford L. Niles, Anamosa, Iowa; Mr. R. D. Noble, McGregor, Iowa; Dr. Lester D. Powell, Des Moines, Iowa; Mr. John L. Ryan, Vinton, Iowa; Mr. Joseph S. Schick, Chicago, Illinois; Mrs. Herman J. Schipfer, Sigourney, Iowa; Mr. A. H. Beyer, Dubuque, Iowa; Mrs. Clara E. Brown, Red Oak, Iowa; Mrs. Alex C. Burt, Mt. Harris, Colorado; Mr. Louis C. Iten, Clinton, Iowa; Mrs. Milo J. John, Clinton, Iowa; Mrs. A. Florence Joyce, Medford, Mass.; Mr. Carlyle Klise, Iowa City, Iowa; Mrs. Jane Wellman Leighton, Iowa City, Iowa; Dr. H. E. Martin, Clinton, Iowa; Mr. Milton J. Moon, Iowa City, Iowa; Mr. J. R. Neveln, Middle Amana, Iowa; Dr. W. L. Rantz, Andrew, Iowa; Mrs. Iowa Byington Reed, Iowa City, Iowa; and Mr. Walter K. Voss, Davenport, Iowa. The following persons were enrolled as Life Members: Mr. Jay J. Sherman, Detroit, Michigan, and Dr. L. L. Myers, Sheldon, Iowa.

The *Report on a Survey of Administration in Iowa*, made by the Brookings Institution in 1933, includes the following comment (page 213) on the work of The State Historical Society of Iowa, under the direction of the Superintendent, Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh:

“In the number and scientific quality of its publications, as well as in their practical bearing on the political, economic, and social

problems of the state, the superintendent and staff of the Historical Society have demonstrated their capacity to render notable public service, and, with respect to the type of historical research which they have conducted, have been surpassed by no other institution in the country.

“The admirable work of the Historical Society has been done, not because of, but in spite of the cumbrous organization set up by law. Its success is to be attributed almost entirely to its relationship with the University and to the personal ability and ideals of the Society’s superintendent and editor who has been head of the political science department of the University.”

The following comment on the work done by The State Historical Society of Iowa under the direction of Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh, the Superintendent, is contained in an article by Julian P. Boyd on *State and Local Historical Societies in the United States* in the October, 1934, number of *The American Historical Review*:

“The State Historical Society of Iowa, guided during the past four decades by Dr. Benjamin F. Shambaugh, has research and publication as its dominant purpose; during this time it has employed some twenty-six trained persons to do research and has issued 720 publications totaling 75,111 pages! It is doubtful if the political and constitutional history of any other commonwealth has been so thoroughly documented. These publications range in character from documentary sources meant for the scholar to essays in a style that is popular in the best sense. The Iowa Applied History Series embraces under this interesting title a seven volume attempt to bring the light of history to bear upon the solution of current problems of legislation and administration. These volumes deal with such explosive questions as road legislation, regulation of utilities, workmen’s compensation, removal of public officials, law-making abuses, county government, and welfare work. Here history is raised to the dignity of a coördinate agency of government, assisting through historical scholarship to throw light upon vexing present day questions. James I might dissolve the Society of Antiquaries of London because of a fear of their peering too closely into the arcana of government, but here in a modern common-

wealth we find a legislature making liberal appropriations to enable scholars to investigate its most recent activities and to broadcast their findings among 190 libraries and hundreds of members. It was such a public function as this that led John Quincy Adams in 1844 to declare that historical societies were among the most useful of human institutions. If legislative control acts as a brake on absolute freedom of research under these auspices, the scientific method is nevertheless employed. Thomas Sprat could declare in 1667 that he 'never yet saw an Historian that was clear from all Affections: that, it may be, were not so much to be called *Integrity*, as a Stoical *Insensibility*'; yet here in Iowa in 1933 'neither partisan bias nor personal prejudice is allowed to enter into the work of those who are engaged in research for the Society'."