

THE PALIMPSEST

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Clubs in Iowa History

Someone has said "The Americans are a Nation of Joiners." If this is true of Americans, it is also true of Iowans, for such groups as the Masons, Odd Fellows, and Knights of Columbus, the Elks, the Eagles, and the Moose, have become deeply engraved in the lives of our people. When one considers the various reform groups, patriotic, commercial, agricultural, and labor organizations that have been identified with Iowa's past the impact of their presence can be readily imagined and assessed.

Some of these groups assume a national role, while others, although they may have their nationwide counterparts, are definitely more local in character. Thus, there are athletic clubs and country clubs, art clubs and literary clubs, aero clubs and motor clubs, bridge clubs and bowling clubs, boat clubs and riding clubs.

During the past half century the State Historical Society has published such articles as the West Union Study Club for Men, the Monticello Fri-

day Club, the Keokuk Lantern Club, and the Cedar Falls Parlor Reading Circle. In addition, it has devoted whole issues of *The Palimpsest* to such diverse groups as the Boy Scouts, Kiwanis Clubs, Federation of Women's Clubs, and Farm Organizations. Such studies explore the many facets of the economic, political, social, cultural, and intellectual life of the people.

The present issue of *The Palimpsest* records briefly the history of the Walt Whitman Club, a 75-year old group established by the Iowa Schoolmasters in Des Moines in 1895.

By its title one would assume that this was just another literary club. Further investigation of the Club's records reveals that it had been set up by a dozen Iowa school superintendents bent on developing a spirit of camaraderie and helpfulness among its members. That they were successful cannot be doubted. Nor can one doubt the impact of this group in advancing the cause of education in Iowa. The high rank that Iowa has attained in the field of education during the 20th century can be attributed in no small degree to the men who have made up the membership of the Walt Whitman Club over the past 75 years.

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