

THE PALIMPSEST

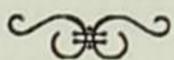
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Charles Reuben Keyes

On July 23, 1951, Dr. Charles Reuben Keyes died at his home on the edge of the Cornell College campus after a long illness. Born at Mount Vernon on May 5, 1871, Dr. Keyes was one of the ablest and most versatile men ever to enter the field of education in Iowa. He received his early training in the Mount Vernon public schools, attended Cornell Academy, and graduated from Cornell College in 1894 with a bachelor of philosophy degree. During his college days he took a year off to teach at Norway, Iowa, and immediately following his graduation he served as principal of the Blirstown schools.

The formal education of Charles Reuben Keyes was not limited to the Iowa scene. He received an M.A. degree from Harvard in 1898 and a Ph.D. from the same institution a quarter of a century later. During the summer of 1900 he studied German literature, fine arts, and the archaeology of Western Europe at Munich and Berlin. Returning to the United States, he taught German for

three years at the University of California. He married Sarah Naumann — on August 5, 1902 — while teaching at California.

In 1903, Dr. Keyes was invited to return to Cornell as a teacher. For the next thirty-eight years he was a professor of German language and literature, and during that period he endeared himself to students, faculty, and townsfolk alike. Gentle and kind by nature, deeply interested in young people, possessed of a quiet optimism, a deep spiritual sense, and a keen scientific mind, Dr. Keyes played a leading role as a teacher at Cornell. Interested in nature, he was well acquainted with the plant and animal life of Iowa, and became especially expert on bird migrations. In his younger years he had contributed many reports to the United States Biological Survey. But it was for his thorough study of prehistoric man in Iowa that Dr. Keyes achieved signal distinction. At the time of his death he was recognized as one of the foremost men in the country in the field of archaeology.

Charles Reuben Keyes began his study of archaeology at the age of fourteen when he started searching for Indian relics. After his brief study of bird life he returned to the field of archaeology in earnest. By 1921 he had gathered together all the available information known at that time about Iowa archaeology. In 1920 his first article on prehistoric man in Iowa was published in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*.

Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh, for many years Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa, was quick to recognize the unique qualities possessed by Dr. Keyes. In 1922 he appointed him a Research Associate of the State Historical Society and Director of the Iowa Archaeological Survey. In thus representing the state of Iowa through the State Historical Society, Dr. Keyes was in a position to carry on his personal field work each summer and in addition make official contacts with amateur and serious collectors of Indian artifacts throughout the state. These contacts, it was hoped, would ultimately bring the scattered collections under one roof for scientific study.

Dr. Keyes was unusually successful in his work. He knew and understood Iowans; he admired and loved them. Perhaps it was this deep understanding of his fellow citizens as well as his own personality and integrity which made him so successful in building up the justly famous Keyes Collection. One of the largest individual collections, that of Ellison Orr (a small portion of which is shown on the back cover of this magazine), illustrates how rich and valuable these collections are and how fortunate the state of Iowa through its appropriate agency has been in commanding the service of Dr. Keyes in this important work. During his busy life Dr. Keyes was one of the prime movers in developing the Iowa Park System. It was largely through his efforts, also, that the justly famous

Effigy Mound Region finally became a National Monument in 1949.

The present issue is a revision of an article published in *THE PALIMPSEST* in June, 1927, and represents the latest findings based on a quarter century of work by Dr. Keyes. Immediately after submitting this article to the present editor, Dr. Keyes set to work on a county inventory of his collection which he was able to complete some months before his death and which will be published as a separate by the Society a little later on. Meanwhile, a start was made on a volume for the Society which was to represent the latest findings of Dr. Keyes in the field of Iowa archaeology. Unhappily this work was never completed, but the Society fortunately owns all the notes and materials which Dr. Keyes carefully catalogued and identified, so that this final volume can ultimately be produced. When this is done it is hoped that a representative part of the collection can be placed on public display on the University campus in Iowa City. The bulk of the collection must of necessity remain catalogued and available to scientific archaeologists for future research.

In publishing the findings of Charles Reuben Keyes the State Historical Society is discharging one of its primary functions and at the same time is allowing Iowans to share in his productive research.

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