

STATE OF IOWA

1916

REPORT

OF THE

Historical Department
OF IOWA

FOR THE

Biennial Period Ending June 30, 1916

EDGAR R. HARLAN, Curator

Published By
THE STATE OF IOWA
Des Moines

46562

CORNELL UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
46562
IOWA

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL.

HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT OF IOWA,
Des Moines, Iowa, October 31, 1916.

TO THE HONORABLE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

GENTLEMEN: Pursuant to law I have the honor to submit herewith the Thirteenth Biennial Report of the Historical Department of Iowa.

Respectfully,

EDGAR R. HARLAN,

Curator.

REPORT OF THE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT

SCOPE AND POLICIES.

This report is confined to the administrative phases of the work of the last two years.

The details of expenditures are to be found in the financial report of the Executive Council, as to everything except those from the maintenance fund. The maintenance fund, or appropriation, is the source from which all purchases of collections, all binding and other outlay for the collections proper are made. It is the standing appropriation of \$6,000 per year and is expended by the authority of the Board of Trustees of the State Library and Historical Department; therefore is accounted for in the report of the State Librarian.

The cost of buildings, repairs, fixtures, etc., is taken care of as are the similar needs in the Capitol.

The salaries of employes are provided for biennially by the general appropriation measure or "omnibus bill", and the number of employes and their compensation is determined in the joint resolution fixing the same matters for the staffs of other state officers. So the Historical Department of Iowa is simply the office of its Curator, equipped, staffed, administered and accounted for in whatsoever way and with whatsoever success the incumbent of the office chances to possess. The aims of the institution are indicated by the Curator, the policies are determined by the Board of Trustees and the results are obtained through the work of subordinates in the office of the Curator and by the legislative participation with the Curator in the provision of the legal and financial necessities. As the results sought are almost purely aesthetic and the machinery almost identical with that of other state departments which are mainly, often purely, business concerns, the difficulties of seizing all opportunities and filling all responsibilities are apparent.

In the creation of an ideal institution wherein shall be gathered the materials on which are based the truth and traditions of a people, talent and consecration of the highest quality should be employed. Such were the qualities of the founder, Charles

Aldrich. The present Curator is well aware that neither he nor any successor available at the present salary of \$1,800 per year has the qualities equal to the responsibilities; therefore, it is clearly the duty of the State to more adequately support the office.

ARCHIVES ORGANIZATION.

The Archives department of the state government has been consolidated with our work as a division of the Historical Department and the staff formerly employed has been organized interchangeably with the other employes of the Department.

IOWA AUTHORS.

Participating with the Iowa commission to the P. P. I. E. at San Francisco in 1915, we assembled there the largest collection of books and pamphlets by Iowa authors that has yet been brought together. It is now in place, intact, in the Historical Building and forms one of the most important features of our work.

MOTION PICTURES AS HISTORICAL SOURCES.

We have acquired a motion picture machine which is now in use by us in the creation of a library of films and negatives of Iowa scenes and events. The collection and organization of a library of films is in some respects in advance of any work as yet proposed by any similar institution.

NEEDED ADDITIONAL ROOM.

The rapid increase, by gift, to our collections makes it difficult to keep pace in the matter of floor space or display cases and rooms. The most regrettable condition is the impossibility of suitably showing the great accumulation of Civil War material illustrating the services of Iowa men and organizations on the Union side.

GRAND ARMY CORRIDOR.

Although the Department has inaugurated a storage system which provides against loss of identity and other injury, yet these priceless things now coming in so rapidly ought to be given a place accessible to the public at all times. Such a place should be a connecting structure between the present Historical Building and an extensive companion building eventually to be erected on the north. While the connecting structure should be of small cost,

it should have the most dignified interior in the State. It should display every object, book, map, portrait, or manuscript the State owns or can acquire, illustrative of the heroic era and should be designated the Grand Army Corridor.

MANUSCRIPTS.

Three notable additions to the manuscript collections have been received—those of William B. Allison, James S. Clarkson and John F. Lacey. These are held as the property of the state but with restrictions as to their use. These, with the similar materials of General Grenville M. Dodge will require the writer of Iowa or American history of the latter half of the last century to resort to our institution or take chances as to both thoroughness and accuracy.

PROPOSED INVENTORY.

The usual lists of acquisitions to the collections are omitted from this report pending the preparation and publication of a complete list or inventory of all the property owned. This inventory will require some months in preparation by the staff.

LEGISLATION THAT SEEMS DESIRABLE.

At the present time it seems desirable that legislation should embrace specific authority in the Curator to hold real estate as well as other property in trust for the State, when the same is given for historical, memorial or art objects.

Some authority should be granted this or some other department or division of state government to acquire by purchase or condemnation, and hold for public use, certain shore lines and scenic spots of the state; also the more notable prehistoric as well as historic areas.

The approval of and co-operation with the proposal of reserving to federal authority a certain large area in northeastern Iowa as a national park should be given and some means and authority granted this or some other institution or commission wherewith to do effective work.

Means for making historic motion picture records should be provided. That is, means for making the camera record of persons and events of probable historic interest, as distinguished from similar record for amusement or entertainment purposes of staged or artificial action or information, should be provided.