

Historical Relics the State should Own

THERE are in our State, in private possession, at least a few collections of historical value which should, if possible, be made public possessions and be accessible to all that are interested in such. Two of these collections we particularly have in mind. One is the paintings of George Winter, the Lafayette artist, spoken of elsewhere in this number. When we saw these they were held by Mr. Winter's daughter, Mrs. C. G. Ball, of Lafayette, and were of unique interest. Being, in large part, portraits of notable Pottawattomie and Miami Indians and of their dress and customs, and being accompanied by keys and much information in manuscript form from Mr. Winter's pen, it is altogether desirable that they be owned by the State as relics of the picturesque race that once owned and trod our soil.

The other collection is that of Mr. Charles B. Lasselle, of Logansport. Mr. Lasselle, who, we believe, is still living, is of an old French family, which has been intimately identified with the Wabash region since Revolutionary times. His grandfather was a trader at the Indian town of Kekionga (Fort Wayne) long before Anthony Wayne's subjugation of the Northwestern tribes. His father, Hyacinthe Lasselle, during his life was a substantial citizen of Fort Wayne, Vincennes and Logansport, and this scion of the third generation has himself helped make the history of the great valley since pioneer times. The historic instinct, and the disposition to preserve what might be of possible future value, seems to have inhered in the Lasselles. As the result of long hoarding the present member of the family has in his possession enough documents and relics of real historic interest to astonish one. First, there are hundreds of letters, business accounts and miscellaneous papers, reflecting trade and life along the Wabash since the last century. It is the kind of material that the thorough historian, working to modern methods, is most in search of—the kind that throws sidelights and reveals intimate glimpses of past conditions. Here, for example, is an old account-book of Francis Bosseron, storekeeper at Vincennes when Captain Helm under the instruction of George Rogers Clark, held that post. In it is a page devoted to Helm's private purchases, such as "one

chapeau," "one capote," playing cards, and frequent bottles of "taffia" and "eu de vie." There is also a page charging the State of Virginia, through Captain Helm, with divers articles and services, among them "five ells of red silk," and "3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ells of green silk for a flag," and along with this the claim of one Madam Goderre for making the flag. Full of interest are these few words touching this red-and-green flag which was, perhaps, the first symbol of the nation ever planted in Indiana.

Apropos to this place and period there is, also, the liquor chest of General Hamilton, the English Governor of the Vincennes post, who captured Helm, and was in turn captured by Clark. It is a mahogany box about eighteen inches square, partitioned into nine smaller squares for as many liquor decanters. Of these only one now remains—the apple-toddy bottle. Those familiar with Clark's famous siege, will remember the story of Hamilton and his prisoner, Helm, sitting sociably together by the open fire, watching an apple toddy brew, when the rifle fusillade began and the bullets pecking at the chimney threw down dirt and spoiled the brew. This antique piece of glassware is, most likely the identical bottle used on that memorable occasion. General Hamilton gave the chest to Francis Bosseron, and after various changes of ownership, carefully recorded, it was secured by Mr. Lasselle.

Along with these may be mentioned a plat of Vincennes, made in 1792, each lot marked with the holder's name, also original document relating to French families of Vincennes, genealogical tables of Vincennes and Kaskaskia, and many other papers of similar character. Not the least interesting of the many relics is the great parchment treaty document, given by the United States to the Miami Indians at the treaty of St. Mary, in 1818, when the central portion of the State, as far north as the Wabash River, was purchased. This instrument, bearing the signatures of Jonathan Jennings, Lewis Cass and Benjamin Parke, commissioners; William and John Conner, interpreters, and the marks of the various chiefs that represented their tribe, was delivered to John B. Richardville, the Miami head chief, and finally came into the Lasselle family through marriage relations.

These are but a part of the things treasured up by Mr.

Lasselle. Whether or not they are now for sale, we are not authorized to say; but the indications are that some day they will be scattered and lost. The point to be made is that the collection now exists, that its value is such the State could well afford to make a generous bid for it, and that no step whatever is taken to secure it.

In this connection it may be said that the State quite unnecessarily lost the large collection of books and relics of the late Judge Horace P. Biddle, also of Logansport. Besides the relics and pictures which Mr. Biddle had long been collecting his library consisted of some 8,000 volumes, representing a money value of \$15,000. At least 3,000 of these volumes were rare works not to be easily found elsewhere, which students came from afar to consult. When James D. Williams was Governor Mr. Biddle proposed that the State agree to take his entire library at his death at 10 cents a volume. Governor Williams, according to Mr. Biddle, twice recommended in his messages that the Legislature take advantage of the offer, but no notice whatever was taken of the proposition.

The Howe Collection

THE "Howe Collection," now in possession of the Indianapolis Public Library, consists of books and pamphlets relating to Indiana and affairs in Indiana, and is in itself a library of rare value. The collector, Judge Daniel Waite Howe, has been one of the few who realize that not only old and scarce books are worth securing but that the seemingly valueless records of to-day have a value on the morrow; much that others threw away he had the foresight to save; as a result much of this collection, particularly the pamphlets, is not, as a collection, duplicated anywhere, and of many of the individual pamphlets it would be exceedingly difficult to now find other copies. The gathering up of these has been the work of years, and they were donated to the Indianapolis library on the condition that they be kept intact and designated as "The Howe Collection." There are 534 volumes, many of which are pamphlets bound together, and 52 unbound pamphlets.