

# INDIANA QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

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CHRISTOPHER B. COLEMAN, *Editor*

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## EDITORIAL

Mr. George S. Cottman, after carrying on for three years almost unaided the work and the responsibility necessary in starting and maintaining the Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History, has been compelled this month on account of absence from the State to turn the magazine over to other hands. The present number, however, has been gotten out almost entirely by him and from material which he had collected. It was felt by members of the Indiana Historical Society that the magazine which Mr. Cottman had started was of too great importance and that the momentum which it had accumulated through his efforts was too hardly won to be lost through his absence. With this support, and at the request of Mr. Cottman, the present editor has undertaken the task of editing the magazine for the current year. He bespeaks the cooperation of all who are interested in Indiana and local history. All communications should be addressed to the Indiana Quarterly Magazine of History, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.

The American Historical Association will hold its so-called "western" annual meeting in the last days of December, 1910. The annual meeting is held west of the Alleghany mountains once every three years, the last one having been at Madison, Wis., December 27-31, 1907. A movement has been started to secure the next western meeting for Indianapolis. Invitations have been extended by the Historical Section of the State Teachers' Association, the Indiana Historical Society and the Commercial Club of Indianapolis. Other organizations will undoubtedly join in the movement. The executive committee of the American Historical Society decides upon the place of this meeting before the next annual meeting of the Association at Richmond, De-

cember 27, 1908. It is desirable that as many Indiana organizations and societies as possible join in the invitation before that time.

The advantages that would accrue to Indiana, in the impetus toward historical study, from the presence in the capital city of several hundred persons interested in the study and teaching of history, including nearly all the best known historians of the country, need no emphasis. The American Historical Association now has a membership of more than 2,500, and its magazine, "The American Historical Review," is universally recognized as the most important publication of its kind in America. The meeting of this association usually brings with it also the annual meetings of the American Economic and Political Science Association, the American Sociological Society, and the American Association for Labor Legislation. The papers and discussion in all of these organizations engage the ablest men of the country.

Indianapolis has all the necessary facilities for such meetings; accessibility by numerous railroads, hotel and public hall accommodations, and a large constituency interested in the subject-matter of the meetings. There is no reason why we should not have these conventions. To this end it is necessary to have the cooperation of all societies interested, and desirable to have a largely increased membership from Indiana in these national organizations. Inquiries and communications on the subject may be sent to the editor of this magazine.

#### CONCERNING THE BELT ROAD.

The following letter from Mr. W. H. Ragan, of Washington City, to Mr. George S. Cottman, needs no introduction:

"DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
"WASHINGTON, D. C., December 30, 1907.

"I have been very much interested in reading the December number of your Magazine of History, for which I sincerely thank you. Early history of railroading in Indiana, as told by you, is valuable history and should be cherished by all native Hoosiers, who should feel great pride in what the railroads have so well helped to accomplish.

"While at home recently I was impressed with the great results growing out of the Belt Railway and could only conjecture what might have been had that great enterprise failed. Certainly much of the through business, especially the shipping of live stock, would have avoided Indianapolis by finding other routes. I think, in that event, Indianapolis would have been a good and prosperous city, but it must have fallen far short of its present proportions, and, to a greater or less extent, would the whole of central Indiana have suffered. One of the most inexplicable things connected with my public career is that both the Marion county Senators, in the session of 1877, should have bitterly opposed the legislation that was necessary in the project of its construction.

"Speaking of railroads reminds me of a prediction that was made in my hearing almost a third of a century ago, which is now almost verified. While traveling in company with the late Charles R. Peddle, then the master machinist of the Vandalia railroad, and while passing the neglected and unused bed of an old canal, I asked if the railroad was ever to be superseded by some other and better method of transit, as the canal had been by the railroad? He said not in its essential principles—that the plan of the track and of the carriages moving on the track would never be essentially changed, but the motor was to be different. I asked in what way, to which he said electricity would supersede steam. At that time there was not an electric motor other than, possibly, mere toys, in existence. Now, it would appear that his prediction is almost a reality.

"Respectfully, W. H. RAGAN."

Referring to an error inserted by the editor into an old Henry Ward Beecher letter concerning Indianapolis, which Mr. Ragan had supplied for the last number of this magazine, he says:

"By the way, I regret that you said in brackets [county fair].\* It was a fair held by the Indiana Horticultural Society in October, 1842. The one prize that was awarded was to my father—a set of silver teaspoons, and I have two of them, inscribed 'Premium 1842. I. H. S.' (Indiana Horticultural Society)."

\*This occurs on page 189 (1907.)—*Editor*.

## WAYNE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The regular meeting of this society was held at the Wayne county court-house in Richmond, Saturday afternoon, February 29. The purchase of fire-proof cases for keeping historical collections, and the receipt of several old papers and other articles from the Starr family were reported. The program included, among other numbers, a short paper upon the history of New Garden township, written by Francis W. Thomas, and read by Professor Hodgkin, "Pioneer Reminiscences," by Hannah Symons, and an account of the "Founding of the School at Economy by a Volunteer Association," contributed by Arthur Osborne, of Spiceland, and read by Eli Jay. The following officers were elected: President, Professor C. W. Hodgkin; secretary, Professor W. O. Wissler; vice-president, B. F. Wissler; treasurer, Harry E. Penny; advisory members, Eli Jay, Prof. Lee Ault, Cambridge City, and Mrs. Helen V. Austin, Center-ville.

## DECEASED—GENERAL JOHN COBURN.

*January 28, 1908.*

General Coburn was, at the time of his death, first vice-president of the Indiana Historical Society. For many years he was active in serving the interests of the study of Indiana history. In the old days when the books and records of the society were carelessly stored in the Marion county court-house, they were by his personal direction probably saved from destruction and by him put in a safe place of deposit. General Coburn contributed to the publications of the Indiana Historical Society an article in collaboration with Judge Horace P. Biddle upon the "Life and Services of John B. Dillon." He also wrote an article upon the Supreme Court of Indiana for the *Bench and Bar*.

General Coburn was a maker of history as well as a student of it. Born in Indianapolis, October 27, 1825, he was for many years prominent, not only in the city, but in the State at large. He served in the Civil War with distinction. He was Judge of the Circuit Court for Marion and Hendricks counties 1865-'67, and Representative in Congress from 1867 to 1875. For some time he had been one of the oldest, if not the oldest, resident of Indianapolis born in the city.