

The Indiana Historical Commission and Plans for the Centennial*

BY JAMES A. WOODBURN

Indiana is standing on the eve of her one-hundredth birthday. She became a State in the American Union on Dec. 11, 1816. Next year we shall celebrate this centennial. In May, the official celebration will begin by a commemoration of the one-hundredth anniversary of the election of the first constitutional convention. The convention was held under the historic elm in the little town of Corydon, where a constitution was drawn up in June. An election for governor and lieutenant-governor was held in August, and in November, 1816, the new State government was inaugurated by the General Assembly at Corydon, and the final step in the process of converting a territory into a State was accomplished with the acceptance by Congress of our State constitution and the recognition of our statehood on December 11, 1816.

It is altogether proper that the people of Indiana should take note of the hundredth anniversary of these events and fittingly celebrate the birth of the State. This is to be done by official sanction and in a large measure under official direction, but it is to be hoped that it will be done also by a general and spontaneous co-operation of all the people throughout the State.

The State in its organized capacity and through proper channels has already pointed out the way. On March 8, 1915, an act of the legislature was approved by Governor Ralston creating a State Historical Commission, providing for the editing and publication of historical materials and for an historical and educational celebration of the Indiana centennial. This Historical Commission was made to consist of nine members: The Governor of the State, the Director of Indiana Historical Survey of Indiana University, (Professor James A. Woodburn), and the Director of the Department of Indiana History and Archives of the State Library, (Professor Harlow Lindley, of Earlham College,) were by the act made *ex officio* members of the commission. The Governor was authorized to ap-

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point six other members. This he proceeded to do, by naming President Cavanaugh, of Notre Dame University, Mr. Charles W. Moores, of Indianapolis, a vice president of the Indiana Historical Society; Mr. Lew M. O'Bannon, of Corydon; Miss Charity Dye, of Indianapolis; Mr. Samuel M. Foster, of Ft. Wayne, and Dr. Frank B. Wynn, of Indianapolis.

The creating act laid out work for the Commission on two lines:

In the first place it is made the duty of the Historical Commission to collect, edit and publish documentary and other materials on the history of Indiana. Copies of these volumes, to be printed and bound at the expense of the State in such numbers as the commission may direct, are to be distributed free to each public library in the State, and to the library of each college and normal school in the State. Two hundred copies are to be supplied to the State Library and two hundred copies to the Indiana Historical Survey to be used in making exchanges for similar publications issued by other State departments, historical commissions, societies, and agencies. Other copies may be sold by the Historical Commission at a price to be fixed, and the moneys received therefrom shall be placed in the State Treasury to the credit of the Historical Commission.

The other and distinct line of work to which the Commission is required to give its attention is to prepare and execute plans for the centennial celebration in 1916, of Indiana's admission to statehood. In doing this it may arrange such exhibits, pageants, and celebrations as it may deem proper to illustrate the epochs in the growth of Indiana; to reveal its past and present resources in each field of activity; to teach the development of industrial, agricultural, and social life and the conservation of natural resources. The Commission is authorized to prepare cuts, photographs, and materials illustrative of the history and development of the State and to co-operate in such manner as the Commission may determine with State and local authorities and agencies in stimulating public interest and activity in the celebration.

The members of the Commission while being allowed their actual and necessary traveling expenses when attending the meetings of the commission or engaged in its work, are allowed no compensations for their services. But the Commission is authorized to

employ such clerical and other assistance as may be necessary to carry out its duties.

For all of this work there was appropriated for the use of the Commission the sum of \$25,000, of which \$5,000 might be applied, if the Commission so ordered, for the publication of historical materials.

So much for the official act creating the Commission and defining the scope of its work. I wish now to indicate, as briefly as I can what it has done and some of its plans and its hopes for the future. It met for organization last May. Governor Ralston was made president and Dr. Frank B. Wynn, an ardent pioneer in this cause, was made vice-president, and Professor Harlow Lindley, archivist of the State Library, was made secretary.

The Commission appointed, within its membership two general committees, one to oversee, direct and promote the centennial celebration, of which Dr. Frank B. Wynn was made chairman, and a second committee to attend to the preparation of and publication of historical material on Indiana, and of this committee I have the honor to be chairman.

The Commission reserved for the work of its historical committee the sum of \$5,000, in harmony with the spirit and provision of the statute, leaving only \$20,000 to meet the expenses of the Commission and for the expense of the Centennial Committee and the celebration of the coming year.

The work of Dr. Wynn's Centennial Commission is of more immediate public interest and deals with the popular though highly important phases of our work with which the masses of the people are most concerned. But the committee on the State's history deals with a part of the Commission's work which, if not more important, is of more permanent and abiding character in scope and purpose. After this year of glorious festivities has gone by, and the centennial year has become only a memory; after "the tumult and the shouting dies," let us hope that the work of the Commission on behalf of the history of the State will be with us yet, "lest we forget." It can render Indiana a service that, while attracting no general or spectacular interest, will be appreciated the more as the generations come and go. I shall speak briefly of the projected plans of this committee before describing, as I shall do more fully, the plans of the Centennial Committee for next year's centennial celebrations.

Upon a report of its Historical Committee last June the

Commission authorized the publication of the following historical material:

1. Two volumes embracing the messages of the governors of Indiana, from territorial times to 1851, covering the period of the Territory and the operation of the State under the first constitution. These volumes will be prepared by the Indiana Historical Survey of Indiana University under the general editorship of Professor Samuel B. Harding, of the Department of History.

2. A volume on early travels in Indiana, under the editorship of Professor Harlow Lindley, aided by the staff of the Archives Department of the State Library.

3. A volume on the history of constitution-making in Indiana, prepared by Charles B. Kettleborough, the expert in the Legislative Reference Bureau. This will include the fundamental law of the State from the Ordinance of 1787 to the present time, with a narration of the facts and processes by which our constitutions have been made, together with the amendments that have been proposed and adopted and the judicial decisions relating thereto.

It is the hope of the Commission that these volumes can be produced ready to be offered as centennial publications before the close of 1916, and that this phase of the Commission's work will receive further encouragement and support from the State. The State should preserve and make accessible its historical materials in this way by the publication of many other such volumes. There are rich ores in the mines for our historical workers, and while the workman may die this is a work that should go on as long as the State endures.

I shall speak now of the Centennial plans. The committee charged with the centennial celebration under the leadership of Dr. Wynn, has done a great deal of work and has been fortunate in securing the co-operation of many clubs, societies, literary and commercial bodies and local organizations throughout the State. Public spirited men and women of talent and distinction in special directions are devoting time and thought to this cause.

At one of its meetings last spring the Commission decided to employ a director whose duty it should be to give his whole time to the work in organizing and directing the centennial activities, and to attend to the correspondence and to the means of publicity involved in such a State-wide enterprise. For this work, the services of Mr. C. W. Woodward, assistant professor of history in Earlham College,

have been obtained, and since the middle of June, Mr. Woodward has been giving his time to the work of securing public attention, of obtaining the co-operation of local agencies, informing public opinion in reference to the centennial celebration and in executing the decisions and plans of the Commission. He has been ably assisted by an executive secretary and expert stenographer, Miss Elliott, of Tipton.

The Commission held no meeting from June to September, but during these summer months, Mr. Woodward and Miss Elliott, assisted by Miss Dye and Professor Lindley, members of the Commission, did much to arouse public interest in the State in the approaching centennial by means of correspondence, leaflets, newspaper articles and other publicity agencies. They spoke in a number of county teachers' institutes in the State and Miss Dye before literary clubs and other audiences, asking the co-operation of teachers and citizens, and the county superintendents of schools. An Educational Committee of the Commission secured the hearty co-operation of the State Department of Public Instruction, and through Superintendent Greathouse, Mr. J. I. Hoffman and Miss Barnard of that office, suggestions and direction for the study of Indiana history were inserted in the school manual which is published annually for the use of the common schools of the State and which lays out their course of study. The History Section of the State Teachers' Association through Professor O. H. Williams, and Dr. Logan Esarey, of the State University, prepared a volume on *Readings on Indiana History* giving selections from interesting and important sources touching the past life of the State. This volume is published by the University and offered to the teachers and the schools at what it has cost to pay for printing. So I think it is safe to say that more attention is being paid in our public schools today to the history of Indiana than at any other time within the history of the State and that our children are learning far more of that history than was ever taught to their fathers and mothers.

The director employed by the Commission has given considerable attention to the organization of the counties. In nearly seventy counties of the State, a county chairman has been appointed, who has consented to head and to organize a county committee to co-operate with the Commission in promoting the general State-wide celebration and in arousing local interest and planning for local celebrations. Every community has its history. To

arouse and cultivate an interest in this history, to promote a knowledge of the community's past and some concern for its future,—these will prove worthy means and factors in realizing a suitable centennial celebration. Some notable local celebrations are now being planned by the people of their respective communities,—at Brookville, New Albany, Corydon, Evansville, Vincennes, Bloomington, Fort Wayne, and South Bend, and at many other places, and if one will but put his ear to the ground and be intent for news on this subject he will be impressed by the wide-spread and vital interest which is being manifested by the people of the State in the cause of reviewing her history and celebrating her foundations. By this time next year, we shall find all of Hoosierdom, from lake to river, awake and rejoicing in one great jubilee, celebrating the struggles of our past and the achievements of our present.

So far I have spoken of what the Historical Commission has done. This is but little compared with what is still to be done. What is planned for and hoped for, the future will reveal. We are just on the eve of great endeavors, but when I speak of these, I am in the field not of accomplished facts but of expectations and I can not, therefore, be so certain of my ground. Cortez is reported to have said when he burnt his ships behind him, that "some things should be done before they are even thought of." Perhaps some things should be done, or made sure of, before they are publicly spoken of. It is not certain whether all our aims can be realized, but plans are ripening which the Commission hopes soon to be able to announce, and if they come to full fruition, I feel justified in saying that Indiana's centennial celebration will not only be a pronounced success, but will prove to be one of the greatest educational agencies for revealing the past life of a people to itself ever attempted by any American commonwealth. I refer to the possibilities involved by the use of the pageant and the moving picture film.

Ten days ago at a meeting of the Commission at Corydon it was decided to have a State celebration in that town next May. At that time the First Constitutional Convention of the State will reassemble under the old elm as a part of a drama which will re-enact the "Birth of a State." Jonathan Jennings, the first governor of the State, will be there, presiding over the convention, and William Hendricks, the secretary, who became the second governor. This historic pageant amid the hills of Harrison county, will represent the community life of that little town as it was a hundred years ago.

There will be similar pageants in which whole communities will be concerned, in New Albany, Evansville, Vincennes, Bloomington, Terre Haute and other places. When the State Seminary, now the University, first opened its doors in 1824, the first and only professor in the institution faced the untutored boys sitting on the rustic benches, some without coats, some without shoes, some of whom had two "galluses" and some had one. That scene, like many others can be reproduced and the story of that early life as told by Baynard Hall in his famous book, *The New Purchase or Seven and a Half Years in the Far West*, will furnish splendid material for the pageantry of the stage. It will be put on at Bloomington, under the forest trees of the university campus for the people of the whole community and for all in the State who wish to come to see.

To stage this community life by suitable pageantry in various parts of the State will be no light task. It will require great labor and the direction of a master of pageantry, a man of expert knowledge and experience.

At the late Corydon meeting, Mr. Hugh McK. Landon, a public-spirited citizen of this city, made a report to the commission on the pageant plans for the centennial celebration. Mr. Landon had made careful inquiry into the subject and he recommended to the Commission the employment for the year of an expert and recognized pageant master to have complete charge of this phase of the centennial celebration, and he recommended that the State secure the services of Mr. William Chauncey Langdon, of New York, for this work.

Mr. Langdon is a pageant dramatist, born in Florence, Italy, who studied two years at Cornell University and later graduated at Brown University in 1892. He has for a number of years been a writer and consultant on pageant-drama. His wife is a scenic artist, and Mr. Langdon has been a successful director of pageants in New England, and was the assistant director of the notable Philadelphia Historical Pageant in 1912. It is expected that Mr. and Mrs. Langdon will come to Indiana, making their headquarters at the university where they will give instruction in pageantry and dramatization and train assistants who may prove competent to go to various parts of the State to give aid and advice in community efforts elsewhere. To meet the expense involved in securing for nearly a year such expert and artistic direction in pageantry, Mr. Landon in his report proposed that the Commission should provide for one-third

of the expense, the State University for one-third, and that he himself would raise the other third.

This arrangement was approved by the Commission and it will likely be entered into and it is expected that Mr. Langdon will soon be in Indiana to begin his task in preparation for this work.

The success of the pageantry enterprise will require the expenditure of much money and the devoted labor of many people. But Indiana has people with sufficient patriotic devotion, and the expense will be met in the various localities by the participation of the several communities in their willingness to promote an enterprise designed to enable them to witness the portrayal of their own history.

I come now to speak of the plans for the films and the motion pictures. A committee has reported a plan to the Commission. This committee consists of Dr. Wynn, a member of the Commission, Robert Lieber, of Indianapolis, a man who is always ready to promote municipal improvement and public enterprise, and Mr. George Ade, too well known to fame to need any designation here. These gentlemen are convinced that a moving picture can be devised illustrating the evolution of Indiana from pioneer days to the present time that will prove of immense educational value. It may be named the "Birth and the Growth of a State."

The production, while dealing with matters of local historical interest, will still have so many features characteristic of the whole history of the West, that the final product will prove to be not only of State-wide but of Nation-wide concern. It is intended that the whole production shall be upon the highest plane, true to history, properly staged, and as such it can indeed be made a means of Nation-wide instruction.

To bring such a plan to realization it will be necessary that a first-class producer should have direction of the work, having the advice and co-operation not only of the Commission but of such expert students of our historical lore as will enable the director to produce an artistic as well as a faithful presentation of the whole historical problem. Inquiry, preparation, and investigation, are going forward. The historical scenario is under way and when it is presented, Mr. Ade and Mr. Lieber of the Committee have volunteered to go to Chicago at an early date to visit concerns known to do high class work of this character, and the determination is fixed that we shall either have first-class motion picture films to reveal the story of Indiana history or we shall have none at all. We believe the

best is attainable. The best men and women in Indiana will offer their patriotic collaboration, and under such circumstances it is quite reasonable to believe that an expert film-maker may be found who will be willing to undertake on his own responsibility the getting up of these historic films.

If this plan can be realized what will the people of Indiana see? Let your imagination for a moment go back over the distant past.

Here is a scene of La Salle and his party and the fur-traders around South Bend, about 1680. Twenty-eight men appear dressed as wood-rangers, or *coureurs de bois*. A band of Mohican hunters come carrying their canoes and their furs, with Jesuit attendants from the open prairie. The scene can be reproduced and photographed true to life around South Bend.

Another scene, of farming at Vincennes, time about 1750. Two or more teams of oxen, wooden plow, long flexible beam, mounted on two wheels, other teams hitched to a wooden cart with two big wooden wheels made by sawing off sections of a log. Typical dress of the eighteenth century. Variations in the scene,—card playing, dancing, feasting, with plenty of snuff, tobacco, and spruce beer. The materials are at hand to reproduce such a scene.

Another scene: The capture of Vincennes, 1779. Rude stockade, loopholes for musketry, bastions, palisaded, main entrance facing the street. Fort defended by riflemen. Attack made by a band of 50 or 60 Virginians, no discipline, hunters' rifles of flint lock, frontier dress, hunting shirts and moccasins; desultory, though accurate firing. Peace parley between Hamilton, Clark, Bowman and Hay. Old Captain Helm strolls leisurely out of the fort to where the other men were in conference. Other soldiers come hurriedly and boisterously by, leading or dragging a half dozen or more of Indians whom they tomahawk and throw into the river.

This scene can be put before the camera down at Old Vincennes. I ask for space to suggest one more scene:

The Battle of Tippecanoe, November 7, 1811, upon the scene of the Battle Ground itself. The Purdue boys can stage this before the camera, true to life and with splendid effect. Five or six hundred white soldiers and a band of Indians numbering perhaps five hundred. Flint lock rifles; western militia dressed in militia uniform,—which is no uniform at all; regulars dressed in the uniform of the United States Rangers; soldiers sleeping on their arms; roused by a night attack and the war whoop of the Indians. Fusillades of musketry and the general incidents of a frontier battle.

American officers on horseback, otherwise no horses. Charge by Jo Daviess, in which he is killed. Indians press forward and some of them break through the lines. As the day dawns, they quietly slip away leaving one hundred or more Indians and soldiers scattered over the field.

This would be by no means the only scene that would be full of thrills for boys and girls and grown-ups of all ages. Life and motion, love and romance, achievement and glory, would permeate it all—together with scenes of the every day life and work of a frontier people—which, like grandfather's tales, will never pale nor grow old among the eager and inquiring children of today. A hundred or more of such scenes can be arranged illustrative of our history, and they can be developed in such order as to present an absorbing story vital with human interest. Old Ouiatanon, Hamilton's march to the relief of Vincennes, crossing the portage from Ft. Wayne to Huntington, the settlement of Clarksville, the organization of the Northwest Territory at Marietta, Ohio, a Territorial election, the Pigeon Roost Massacre, the Rappites at New Harmony, tavern scenes and the old log cabins, the camp meetings, the barbecues, the rifle matches, the stump speeches, the college exhibitions, the court trials, the circuit riders, the pigeon shooting, the charivari,—the boys marching to war or returning to their homes, the development of agriculture, transportation, and industry—all these can be reproduced and thrown upon the canvas to show the children of a new generation an ancestral life that seems now to be in the distant and buried past.

If these scenes can be staged by living persons upon the very scenes of their origins, photographed for films and thrown upon the screen, then in every city, town and village in Indiana where there is a moving picture show, the people of all sorts, ages, and conditions, may have brought before them as in panorama the chief features in Hoosier history.

"The past rises before me like a dream!" The past will come again, not merely as the orator recalled it from personal memory at Monument Place in 1876 as he recalled to the boys of '61 the days when they marched out to war. But a more distant past will return, far beyond the memories of living men. And as the Indiana of the present is brought before her past with its achievements, its memories, its trials, and its tears, she will pledge herself in consecrated devotion to the achievement of a better and nobler Indiana for the future.