

Indiana Historical Society

By CHRISTOPHER B. COLEMAN

The Indiana Historical Society last December celebrated the centennial of its organization which occurred at Indianapolis, December 11, 1830. The first hundred years of the society's existence has been checkered. It has the honor of being one of the earliest state historical societies now in existence, but as Professor Evarts B. Greene, president of the American Historical Association in his address on the occasion of the centennial remarked, part of the time the Indiana Historical Society has been like Lost River, flowing underground without any manifestation of its existence. No publications of the society were put in permanent form until 1897. The membership of the society remained very small, usually less than a hundred, even during the years of its revived activity, until within the last ten years.

The problem now before the society is the enlargement of its activities and the production of more important results in the next hundred years of its existence. The centennial year brought the total membership of the society up to 1204. This membership should be greatly increased. If the state is to become historically minded, four or five thousand is the least number which would seem to represent adequately the element of our population which has an interest in the preservation of the past and in an intelligent view of the present, based upon knowledge of the past. The executive committee is developing an organization, which it is hoped, will produce considerable results. An All-State Membership Committee, organized last year, is to be continued with as many changes of personnel as possible so as to reach new people. Special attention is to be paid to the teachers of the state who have not hitherto been represented in the society in as large numbers as they ought to be. Edgar T. Forsyth, of Shortridge High School, has been appointed chairman of the committee on high schools and their relation to the society. Professor Albert L. Kohlmeier, of Indiana University, has been appointed chairman of a similar college and university section. A circular has been printed, describing the work of the society and the privileges of membership. The secretary of the society will be glad to have the readers of the *Magazine* aid in the distribution of this circular

and will, upon request, send any number of them from his office, 334 State House. There are a large number of people in the state who would be glad to join in the work of the society if they were personally given an invitation to do so. Some confusion still exists as to the requirements of membership. There is no requirement of ancestral residence in the state, as in the case of the Society of Indiana Pioneers. All persons of good character interested in history are cordially invited to become members.

The *Indiana Magazine of History* is vitally interested in the increase of the membership in the Indiana Historical Society. Under an agreement between the Magazine and the society, the *Magazine* is sent to all members of the society in return for the payment of a reduced subscription for each member by the Society. The larger part of the circulation of the *Magazine* comes through this channel. The circulation, however, is as yet not sufficiently large to secure such economical printing and management as to pay the costs involved. Consequently, Indiana University is annually called upon to pay a more or less considerable deficit. While the *Magazine* is one of the important educational agencies of the University and entitled to its financial support, there are so many demands upon the resources of the University for work which cannot possibly bring in compensating returns, that the *Magazine* should be put upon as nearly a self supporting basis as possible. A membership of four or five thousand in the Indiana Historical Society will not only make the *Magazine* self supporting but will make possible an increase in its size and in the scope of its articles.

The Executive Committee of the Society is planning to make the work which it did in preserving data about the building of the School for the Blind, a permanent feature of its program. A committee upon the preservation of data, photographs and other material of important buildings threatened with destruction, is to be appointed. Interest, at the Indiana History Conference last December, in the discussion of old covered bridges has led to the appointment of a committee upon bridges; or, as one of the ladies present humorously remarked, a "Bridge Committee." Instead of giving bridge parties, however, it is to gather information about the oldest and most important wooden bridges about the state and to

promote the preservation of such bridges as can and should be allowed to remain in place, either as part of our highway system or as historical monuments no longer used by traffic.

Another feature to be developed is the historical museum. Quarters in the main building of the Indiana World War Memorial have been assigned to the Indiana Historical Society. This will be an ideal place for the preservation and exhibition of historical material. A general museum would seemingly be inappropriate in a building devoted to the memory of the state's participation in the World War; but material illustrating the history of the state, especially material connected with the World War, would be a most desirable feature in the World War Memorial. The historical society can do a great service by beginning and promoting this development.

The established activities of the Society are to be continued. Besides coöperation in the distribution of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, it will secure for its members the *Indiana History Bulletin*, published monthly by the Indiana Historical Bureau. Out of nearly a dozen manuscripts on hand or promised for publication, at least two or three will be issued this year. The midyear historical tour and meeting is being planned by a committee recently appointed by the Executive Committee. The Society will coöperate with the Society of Indiana Pioneers—these two organizations have hitherto paid all the expenses involved—in the annual Indiana History Conference which is held in December of each year.

The thanks and good wishes, not only of the members of the Society but of the whole state, are extended to two of the officers of the historical society who have resigned after long and honorable service. Professor James A. Woodburn throughout his long career at Indiana University was an active member and supporter of the Society and vice-president from 1910 to 1923. He served as president from 1923 to the end of 1930. As president emeritus, his interest in the Society and the interest of the Society in him continue unabated. Charles E. Coffin, treasurer of the Society since 1894, a period of thirty-six years, has felt that the burden of this work should be passed on to younger hands, and early in January insisted upon the acceptance of his resignation.

The present officers of the society are: James A. Woodburn, President Emeritus; Evans Wollen, President; Richard

B. Wetherill, First Vice-President; Mrs. Harvey Morris, Second Vice-President; Arthur G. Mitten, Third Vice-President; John G. Rauch, Treasurer; Christopher B. Coleman, Secretary.