

Editor's Pages

THIRTEEN YEARS AS EDITOR

WILLIAM O. LYNCH

Like most of the states of the Union, Indiana boasts a quarterly journal of history. The title for many years has been *Indiana Magazine of History*. Starting in March, 1905, the quarterly will round out a period of thirty-seven years with the December issue of 1941. The founder of the *Magazine*, George S. Cottman, brought out about twenty-seven issues, Dr. Logan Esarey edited about fifty-five issues, in all, and Dr. Christopher B. Coleman, serving as temporary editor at times, in the periods of both Mr. Cottman and Dr. Esarey, edited about twelve issues. Taking up my editorial duties with the issue of September, 1928, and laying them down with the appearance of the current issue (June, 1941), I have carried on continuously for thirteen years. The new editor, Dr. John Donald Barnhart, assuming his duties on July 1, 1941, will bring out the issue of September, 1941. Dr. Barnhart was recently appointed associate professor of history at Indiana University. Born and reared at Decatur, Illinois, he comes to Indiana from the history faculty of Louisiana State University. He will teach courses in American history, specializing in the history of the Middle West and Indiana history.

The task of editing a state historical journal on the side for thirteen long years has consumed a vast amount of my time and energy. Commenting on the job a few years ago, I stated that my years had resolved themselves into a rapid succession of four months each — March, June, September and December, the months in which the issues of the *Magazine* are scheduled to appear. To bring out four issues a year, it has been necessary to start a new one each quarter the moment the preceding issue is off the press. For example, it has been necessary each year, after the mailing of the December issue, to hurry to the work of publishing the March number; then, in succession, to the June, September and December issues in like manner. David Harum said that it was good for a dog to have fleas because it kept him from "broodin' on bein' a dog." By the same token, I presume that it was good for a professor to edit

the *Magazine*, since he had no time to worry about the troubles that naturally fall to a professor's lot.

When the hour arrived for me to take on the *Magazine* in August, 1928, I had no copy on hand. One of my graduate students had just written a master's thesis on the "Senatorial Career of Albert J. Beveridge." At the suggestion of Dr. A. L. Kohlmeier, I divided this study into two parts and ran it in my first two issues. Through Dr. Christopher B. Coleman, I received a biographical sketch of "Ephraim Samuel Frazer, 1824-1896." Soon afterwards, Elmore Barce of Fowler, Indiana, submitted a sketch of Jesse Birch, and Mrs. Leola Hackett of Wabash, Indiana, an article on the local history of the Wabash and Erie Canal. A former student, Roger C. Hackett, now professor of history in the junior college of the Panama Canal Zone, furnished me with a copy of a short Civil War diary. In my barrel, I found some copies of interesting letters, written from 1857-1860 to a member of Congress who was a Douglas man by citizens of Indiana. Instead of making bricks without straw, I was fortunately in possession of enough material in a very short time to enable me to plan two issues of the *Magazine*.

Since the opening of the year, 1929, I have never lacked for copy. Usually I have had enough ahead for two or three issues. It has been my policy to try to give to the contents of each issue the mark of variety. I have tried to avoid filling each issue with long articles by graduate students and I have published very few long studies, serially. Such studies are properly published as separate monographs. In every issue, I have tried to present some document or documents not previously printed or else difficult of access if in print. In the thirteen years of my service, I have published many articles written by prominent authors residing outside of Indiana.

Much material has been published which was poorly prepared when received and which could easily have been returned to the writers. It has been my rule not to reject valuable matter even when it has required much revision. I have tried to remember that the quarterly should be an aid to amateurs in history possessing something of real worth to contribute. I have labored hours over many manuscripts to improve their organization, composition and accuracy. I have, however, endeavored to retain the style and expressions of and not lose the individuality of any

author. It would be amiss not to mention how generally amateur writers of all ages have appreciated the efforts that have been made to improve their offerings before sending them to the printer.

It is possible that some of my editorial ventures during my thirteen years have been indefensible. I feel that it was rather daring and unusual to carry autobiographical sketches through twelve issues. At other times, I commented independently on various current political and economic problems. I knew at the time, that editors of historical magazines are supposed to keep in the background, and no doubt I followed an unusual policy. In defense, I may say that it worried me to see that dignified and trained historians were so often passed up by the reading public for authors of less ability whose writings made a stronger appeal. As I reflected on this fact, I was tempted to experiment some with the *Indiana Magazine of History*, the purpose being to make it more attractive if possible without lowering the standard. Perhaps, I erred, but, if so, it is too late to retrace my course.

I wish to add in conclusion that while I am glad to be relieved of the burden of carrying the *Magazine*, I regret to break off the many fine relationships that have attended the editorship. I have deeply appreciated the friendliness and support extended to me by hundreds of persons during my period as editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History*. May this quarterly live long and grow in value and interest.

Contributors: Paul Wallace Gates is an associate professor of history at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, who has done much research on problems related to the public lands. George E. Amick, who lives at Cicero, Indiana, is much interested in all that pertains to the federal mail service in the Middle West in the pioneer period. Mrs. Ruth P. Sutherland lives in Indianapolis. Judge Samuel C. Williams of Johnson City, Tennessee, has published several volumes on Tennessee history. He is especially interested in the history of East Tennessee. Christopher B. Coleman is Secretary of the Indiana Historical Society and Director of the Indiana State Library. James Barnett is a citizen of Indianapolis. Mrs. Agnes McCulloch Harna, who lives in Indianapolis, devotes a part of her time to writing feature articles for newspapers. Cecil K. Byrd is a graduate student in history and part-time teacher of history at Indiana University.