

American Historical Societies, 1790-1860. By Leslie W. Dunlap. (Madison, Wisconsin, privately printed, 1944, pp. ix, 238. \$3.50.)

Historical Societies in the United States and Canada, a Handbook. Compiled and edited by Christopher Crittenden and Doris Godard. (Washington, D.C., American Association for State and Local History, 1944, pp. xi, 261. \$1.75 to members, \$2.50 to non-members.)

Leslie W. Dunlap, newly appointed Assistant Chief of the General Reference and Bibliography Division of the Library of Congress, has compiled a very readable volume concerning the sixty-five American historical societies organized before the Civil War. They were organized because "the interest in the growth of the American nation was sufficiently strong and widespread to cause men in all sections . . . to seek historical records. The young republic had no research libraries to care for such material, so other agencies had to be established to perform this function."

As sources for the work, publications of the societies have been consulted but less generally known facts have come from the correspondence files which contain much information about other historical organizations. Within a week after the first meeting of the Indiana Historical Society on December 11, 1830, its secretary, John Hay Farnham of Salem, was instructed to communicate with similar institutions. Farnham, who had been extremely active in organizing the society, had been born in Massachusetts, was a graduate of Harvard and in 1831 became a corresponding member of the Massachusetts Historical Society. He was also a member of the American Antiquarian Society. It was his correspondence with Nathan Dane of Beverly, Massachusetts, in 1831 that brought Dane's letter concerning the origin of the slave article in the Ordinance of 1787, printed in the Society's *Publications* (Indianapolis, 1897-), I, 69-70. Dane was made an honorary member of the Indiana society December 17, 1831. The sketch of the Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society states that two years after its formation the society sought to open correspondence with other societies of similar character. The third and last historical group listed as formed in Indiana before 1860 is the Historical Society of the County of Vigo, Indiana, which celebrated its first anniversary in 1844. A speech delivered on that occasion by the Reverend Robert B. Croes seems to be the only surviving record of the society's existence.

Throughout this volume the author has stressed the size and growth of historical society libraries, the scope of their materials, and their early printed catalogues, their performance in the early eighteen hundreds of some of the functions of public libraries before these were so well established. He also emphasized their use by such patrons as Elihu Burrit, the self-taught "learned blacksmith" who acquired much of his knowledge from the American Antiquarian Society library. Peter Force, who examined many collections in the preparation of his *American Archives*, Benjamin Lossing, who often used the library of the New York Historical Society while working on his *Pictorial Field-book of the Revolution*, and many other famous and scholarly persons. Another less scholarly but well-known patron was Mrs. E.D.E.N. South-

worth who asked the Maryland Historical Society for information about Sir George Calvert whom she wished to make the hero of a novel. Perhaps Capitola, the madcap maid, was to be the heroine. So great was the emphasis upon the acquisition, preservation, and recording of materials that the first salaried staff member of any of the societies was a librarian employed in 1818 by the New York Association. These librarians seem to have been persons of considerable ability and certainly of extraordinary devotion. Christopher Columbus Baldwin, that most zealous collector-librarian, employed in 1832 by the American Antiquarian Society, asked in his diary "But what right has a librarian to have any affection but for books and MSS? I doubt his authority for any other love, even tho' it be for a beautiful lady."

The experiences the Indiana Historical Society had in common with other organizations are cited throughout. It is known that for a time election of members was omitted by the Indiana as well as other societies. The Indiana society is listed among those once receiving state aid, having been given a legislative appropriation of \$500 in 1859. Lectures delivered before the membership were said also to have been sometimes rambling with little reference to the local community, but Judge John Law's address before the Vincennes society required a second edition before 1860.

Altogether more than five hundred printed works were issued by fifty-five organizations during this period despite great difficulties and the societies were also responsible for publication of documentary materials by state and federal agencies.

For those interested in a more detailed account of the Indiana Historical Society reference should be made to James A. Woodburn, *The Indiana Historical Society, a Hundred Years* (Indiana Historical Society Publications, X, 1933, pp. 5-42), a work not cited in this volume.

Prior to his association with the Library of Congress Mr. Dunlap was the Order Librarian of the Library of the University of Wisconsin and earlier was a member of the staff of the New York Public Library. He is the editor of the *Letters of Willis Gaylord Clark and Lewis Gaylord Clark*, twins who were with the *Knickerbocker* magazine, Lewis as editor, 1834-1860, and Willis as associate editor, 1834-1841.

Of the 65 societies established before 1861 about half are still active and are listed with the 904 American organizations recorded in the third edition of *Historical Societies in the United States and Canada, a Handbook*, issued by the American Association for State and Local History. According to the editors, Indiana stands fourth in the number of societies following Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New York in that order.

In arrangement of the information, names of societies are arranged alphabetically under the states in which they are located, with address, names of officers, staff on salary, membership, dues, and annual income. Notes about libraries and their contents and some information about museums is given. New features relate to hours open, whether or not duplicating facilities are available and the official to whom correspondence should be addressed is indicated. An attempt has been made to list publications but unfortunately there is

much less detailed information as to dates, volume numbers and specific titles than in the previous edition, an omission especially regrettable to order and exchange librarians attempting to complete files and to serial cataloguers seeking bibliographical information. Omitted, too, have been the notes about the housing of the societies.

It is suggested that the editor of the next edition include more notes about ownership of historic sites and a fuller description of library holdings unless some better description of special libraries and collections has been issued than is now available. Usually collections are called by the donor's name which does not always have much to do with content. It would be helpful, too, if patriotic societies which publish historical materials could be included.

The percentage of typographical errors seems fairly high. In the repeated phrase of a local radio newsman "Hoosiers can always smile" and some of them laughed right out loud when it was discovered that a local historical society was listed as located in Hells County but the proofreader in Washington must have been startled to discover that such a trick has been played upon a county properly named Wells. Another of the obvious, or perhaps not so obvious, misprints in the Indiana list is the spelling of Quistenon instead of Ouiatenon for the name of the French fort in Tippecanoe County. It should be noted, too, that it is Mrs. George W. Blair, not Mrs. George W. Bevin, who is chairman of the Indiana Library and Historical Board. Various other errors in personal and geographical names occur.

Tools cited in the preface are the two previous editions of this handbook, the *Handbook of Learned Societies and Institutions, America, 1908*, the *American Library Directory, 1942*, the *Handbook of American Museums, 1932*, and Coleman, *Museum in America, 1939*, but no reference is made to Griffin, *Bibliography of American Historical Societies, 1907*, nor to the extremely useful Holbrook, *Survey of Activities of American Agencies in Relation to Materials for Research in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, 1932*, with its discussions of the historical anthropological, archaeological and patriotic societies, university departments, libraries, museums, and archival establishments.

Nellie M. Coats

A History of Oberlin College, From Its Foundation Through the Civil War. By Robert Samuel Fletcher. (2 vols., Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, 1943, pp. xvii, xi, 1004. \$5.00.)

Written by a graduate who is now a member of its faculty, this history is both a scholarly work and a labor of love. In many respects it is an ideal history of a college, ideal because Oberlin made important contributions to many significant developments, because the author is so much a part of Oberlin that he understands it thoroughly, because his love for his alma mater required of him the best workmanship, and his scholarly training would be satisfied only with the highest standards. Oberlin's record was great enough that unfortunate and unfavorable episodes and events could be and were discussed