The Sesquicentennial Manuscript Project

Robert R. McClarren*

For the historian, both amateur and professional, perhaps the most significant activity of Indiana's Sesquicentennial Celebration will be the Manuscript Project. As a part of this observance the Indiana Historical Bureau, the Indiana Sesquicentennial Commission, and the Indiana Historical Society will encourage the location and preservation of valuable manuscript and privately printed materials relating to Indiana history. Although this program will be emphasized during 1966, it will continue as long as materials are supplied to the project.

All the major libraries in the state have been invited to cooperate in this program. At the present time the libraries of Indiana, Purdue, Ball State, Indiana State, and Notre Dame universities; the public libraries of Fort Wayne and Indianapolis; the Indiana Historical Society Library; and the Indiana State Library are participating. Each library will receive one copy of items accepted for the project. Based on the similar but understandably smaller project of the Civil War Centennial observance, it is estimated that between eighty and one hundred thousand pages of manuscript materials will be copied for the libraries.

Items received will be numbered and entered in a log. Periodically this log will be copied and distributed to these libraries as a finding list for the materials received. Occasionally important items will be announced in appropriate Indiana periodicals, such as the Library Occupant, the Indiana Magazine of History, and the Indiana History Bulletin. Material which warrants consideration for publication will be brought to the attention of the Indiana Historical Bureau, the Indiana Historical Society, or other possible publishers. Ultimately, the Indiana State Library hopes to prepare and publish a descriptive guide to the materials collected.

Examples of materials which the project is interested in locating are indicated by items recently copied by the Indiana State Library. These include: the Pleasant Run Presbyterian Church, Carroll County, 1836-1927; letters of Francis Godfrey and of Civil War veterans; the diary of a forty-niner from

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St. Joseph County; a township trustee's journal account of sheep killed by dogs in Brandywine Township, Hancock County, 1866; minutes of the Executive Committee of the Indiana State Grange, 1872 to the present; minutes of the Washingtonian Temperance Society, Gibson County, 1840-50; and a pamphlet, *The Democratic Campaign Songster*. Among the many other items appropriate for copying would be restaurant menus, account books, and similar records; letters from Hoosiers in the various wars of the country (including Viet Nam); printed keepsakes, commencement, and other programs; personal and business correspondence; copies of sermons and speeches; written recollections and reminiscences, love letters, schoolboy diaries; catalogs of Indiana manufacturers; broadsides and posters. Anything old or new which describes, explains, or otherwise illustrates life in Indiana or the thoughts of Hoosiers in times past or present (which too soon is the past) is appropriate for consideration.

Such items are often dismissed as useless by their owners and so are deposited in attics, gargages, and a hundred other similar locations. This is unfortunate because they are invaluable research material. The season is open for hunters of Hoosier history to ferret out this material and to bring it to the attention of the Manuscript Project.

The commission has prepared a leaflet to publicize the copying program and to encourage statewide response. This publication will be distributed during the year. Letters for special groups, such as the fourth grade students, for whom Indiana history normally is a required subject, and for whom a role in the collection of this material would seem to have an especial appeal, also will be prepared.

For most of the materials Xerox copies will be made; for over-size, bound, or material in a sequence microfilm copies may be substituted. Neither process harms the original document. Although the emphasis of the program is on the preservation of materials for public use in copy form, owners will be encouraged to donate their material to a library. If the material is not to be donated to a participating library, every effort will be made to return the loaned items to the lender by registered mail within a week.

Materials or requests for information are to be addressed or delivered to the Manuscript Project, Indiana State Library and Historical Building, 140 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana, 46204.