



Superintendent's Annual Address: 1941

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Superintendent's Annual Address-- 1941

By ADDISON E. SHELDON

Fellow Nebraskans:

Prince Maximilian von Wied reached the Nebraska Coast on the Missouri River May 3, 1833. He spent a year in the Nebraska region. He was a German. He had with him a famous painter, Herr Bodmer. The prince published at Coblenz in 1838, a three-volume illustrated work on this region. He had the trained eye of the German scientist and the imagination of a poet. He was the first man to reveal the riches, beauty, and great destiny of the Nebraska region to the people of Europe and the civilized world. Parts of his Nebraska story were translated by me and are studied today by all the children in Nebraska schools.

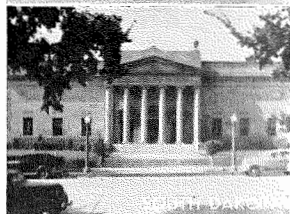
In December, 1918, I stood in the palace of the Prince of Wied on the River Rhine in Germany. The American flag was flying over the palace. An American regiment was quartered in the court yard. In their own Prussian tongue I talked with the people of Wied and told them I had planned for years to visit their city and pay my respects to their great traveler who had discovered and revealed Nebraska to the people of Europe. And we clasped hands there on the River Rhine at the end of that World War and promised each other that we would strive to bring Missouri-River land and Rhineland together in a friendship that could last forever—joining the natural resources, the industry, the human fellowship, the energy, the genius, of America and Germany for a world peace and world unity that the whole world has longed for; which



Prince Maximilian von Wied
1833
Portrait presented to A. E. Sheldon



IOWA



SOUTH DAKOTA



WISCONSIN



MINNESOTA

Jesus Christ died for in Judea two thousand years ago.

We dedicated a monument to Prince Maximilian in the city of Omaha on September 2, 1934, at the Mount Vernon Gardens on the River Drive on South 13th Street. I was one of the contributors to that monument and one of the speakers at its dedication. Part of my address was the recital of a poem written by me in 1906, when a child was born to the Crown Prince of Germany on our Fourth of July. Here it is:

Hoch Das Kaiserlein

In Potsdam Schloss, bei Stadt Berlin
Geboren ist von Prinzessin —
On July 4th, of Prussian line,

A baby: — "Hoch das Kaiserlein."
Mit Pulverschoss und Donnerschlag
Frueh kam Er an dem Freiheitstag, —
And Germans here, and on the Rhine

Drink standing: "Hoch das Kaiserlein."
O viel geliebtes Vaterland

Dir reicht Amerika die Hand, —
Blood of the ancient Saxon line

Cries "Welcome, Hoch das Kaiserlein!"

Es ist hier gar kein Kaiserreich, —

Kaiser und Knab' sind unser gleich, —

Yet for the love of Auld Lang Syne

We echo, "Hoch das Kaiserlein."

We are preparing for publication by the State Historical Society a book: "History of the German Immigrant Colony which Founded the Grand Island, Nebraska, Settlement in 1857."

That was the farthest-west farming colony in Nebraska in 1857. It was a crazy venture. But their descendants are living there today on the islands of the Platte, and in the third city of this commonwealth. They rejoice in the freedom and opportunity which their fathers found here in the Platte Valley. There is only one flag for them and that is the Stars and Stripes.

The Elements of Nebraska Population

Nebraska is a cosmopolitan, polyglot people. It is a cross-section of Europe, with a few slivers from the rest of the world.

Of our 1,315,834 people about half are descendants of the original Colonial stock. The other half are people who were born in Europe or whose parents moved from Europe to America in the last hundred years. The largest part of this second half is Germanic, either by birth or descent. The Scandinavians, the Chechs, the Slavs, the Poles, the Greeks and Italians compose the other chief elements in our Nebraska stock. We are in the process of making one of the most composite peoples upon this planet right here in Nebraska. The two major elements in the composition are British and German. When we get these two national elements thoroughly mixed with the minor elements here in Nebraska we shall have a composite people, the best the world has ever seen. And the marriage license records from day to day in our newspapers show the rapid progress we are making in achieving this composite commonwealth of the west.

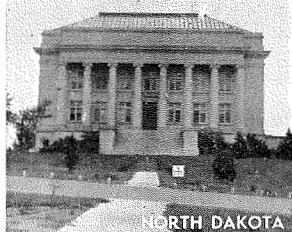
One of the most important factors in our Nebraska life and in our national life is the complete fellowship which should fill our hearts in our relations with one another. We are all Americans here. We need to recognize that quality in each other.

As a full-blooded Yankee myself whose ancestors came three hundred years ago from Derbyshire to New England, it has been my fortune in early childhood to learn the German language at first hand, to read the greatest German literature and learn it by heart; to love the German genius and to have comradeship with my fellow Nebraskans of German descent who helped to create this great state.

Today my theme is "A United Nebraska — Symbol of a United World." Every year we have one or two hundred Nebraska schools which



KANSAS



NORTH DAKOTA



COLORADO



OKLAHOMA

come in a body to visit the State Historical Museum here in the Capitol, to drink deep from the well of patriotic inspiration found in our exhibits. Often I am asked to speak to these children, for they study in school the books I have written. Often we take a show of hands to learn from what land their people came to America.

Clifton Hill School, Omaha, took this test. Their origins are found in fifty-seven different nations, as follows:

England	6	Africa	2
Ireland	4	Germany	7
Scotland	4	Czechoslovakia	5
Sweden	4	Italy	6
France	2	Russia	5
Spain	2	Norway	4
Mexico	3	Denmark	3

"You children fight each other every day — don't you?"

Cries of "No! No!"

"Well, why not?"

"Oh, we're all Americans — we co-operate!"

Fellowship and Freedom

All the people of Nebraska believe in rational freedom. Some of us were born into it. Some of us have been brought up in it. Some of us have been both born and brought up therein. By inheritance and by education we have won the spirit of liberty, a devotion to those doctrines of personal liberty which include the right of free press and free speech, freedom of religious opinion and expression; the right to work and to hold property. These are the principles for which our forefathers have fought, died, and suffered. We believe they are the rightful possessions not only of American citizens, but of all the people in all the world. We believe that in the natural process of international communion and closer relation these principles have been in process of extension to the peoples in all lands. We believe that the printed page, the free public platform, and the world-filling radio are extending the area of knowledge and of aspiration to all the peoples upon this planet.

The Nebraska Extension Course

Here in Nebraska many of us at least believe that Nebraska and her freedoms are part of the United States and part of the planet on which we live. We know that we have an interest in the

peace, happiness, and prosperity of every people upon our globe, and we know this more and more as we listen to the voices of people on the other side of the world talking directly to us in our homes. So we Nebraskans add to our patriotism for state and nation, a universal patriotism for all the world.

Despotism, Death and Slavery

Into this world in which we live has come at the present time the demon of despotism, death, and slavery. This spirit has mobilized the militant millions of central Europe into the most monstrous military machine the world has ever known. It has subjugated and reduced to a condition of slavery sixteen smaller nations, and is today engaged in a deadly conflict to subjugate its only rival on the continent of the Old World so that, standing upon the strength of its enslaved millions of the Old World, it can strike down the republics of free America.

American Choices

We Americans have three choices in the world-crisis which confronts us. We can say that it is none of our business. If the devil wants the rest of the world and can get it, we will stay here and keep the home fires burning. We can say that we will hope for the British and help them with goods and goodwill, but we will keep strictly out of the war ourselves. Or we can say that the freedom of the world concerns our freedom and that we will get ready to fight for it anywhere and will fight when the best chance to fight appears.

The American nation has a government elected by the people. The state of Nebraska has a government elected by the people. These governments are compelled to make one of the choices offered us. We have to ignore the world war, or help the democratic governments, or get ready to fight and fight when we are ready.

The national government has made its choice. It was elected on the democratic ticket. The Nebraska state government, by its governor, has approved the choice of the national government. It was elected on the republican ticket. The people of Nebraska, 1,300,000 strong, have a patriotic duty in this crisis. That duty is to support with all their ability and all their energy the governments of the United States and Nebraska in the present crisis.

There is and there should be no question in our state of British, or German, or Scandinavian, or Slav, or Latin among our people. We are all Nebraskans and Americans.

Nebraska State Historical Society — Its Place in the Present World Crisis

The Nebraska State Historical Society finds itself in the front line of our national defense. It is there because of the sympathy of its members and officers. It is there because one of its chief functions is to preserve and publish the heroic and patriotic deeds of our people. It is there because it is the chief Nebraska storehouse of patriotic information. In the address of its superintendent at the last annual meeting, October 19, 1940, the attitude and the relation of the Nebraska State Historical Society is stated so clearly that it is here restated and reaffirmed:

Our Part in the World Program

The Historical Society has an important part in this program — this patriotic vision of English-speaking peoples: world peace, and world destiny. Founded by the fathers of this city and state in 1867, for over seventy years this Society has organized, presented, and published to the world the data of a free people in their pioneer work of subduing a wild region; making homes; carrying science, civilization, population and government into its domain, and joining it to other regions in a common effort for human happiness.

The most important data of state information in our Nebraska field are in the custody of this State Historical Society. The story of our achievements is found here. The visible evidences — the flags, the weapons, the tools, the implements, the printed records — of Nebraska are here. Here come the editors, the public speakers, the poets, the novelists, the teachers, the children, the farmers, the business leaders, for reliable information upon Nebraska. Here, in our museum and library, are the foundations of patriotic opinion and the fundamentals of civic liberty for our commonwealth.

Where is the Defense Line of America? In the hearts of her people. In the patriotic knowledge of her past and the patriotic purpose of her future. You can enroll the units. You

can put them in uniform. You can drill them. You can teach them to fly in the greatest air fleet the world has ever known. But the real American Line of Defense is in the hearts of her people—their faith in their government; in the social opportunity and justice there is here for the common people.

Where is the Nebraska Line of Defense? It is in the hearts of Nebraskans. It is in our inspiration drawn from the heroic history of our state; from its own pioneer men, women and children; from the noble ideals of human life which have been spoken from Nebraska lips and written in Nebraska literature.

Where is the wellspring of this inspiration for Nebraska? Its chief source is in the Nebraska State Historical Society collections and publications. Today in the 7,000 Nebraska common schools the children are taught the story of their state and the firm principles and foundations of its government. These are required in the course of study for Nebraska schools. And the text books, the source readings, the native Nebraska literature which is studied in our schools—they come from the Nebraska State Historical Society. Here are samples of these original sources of the Nebraska Line of Defense: A sound patriotic education in the history and the government of Nebraska. A glowing state pride in the story of our achievements. A firm faith in our institutions—in their rational evolution to meet human needs and in the freedom of debate which guarantees the progress of a free people. These are some of the things which center in the State Historical Society.

Upon our walls we show the battle-flags of Nebraska regiments. In our racks are the rifles held in Nebraska hands on the battlefields of the Indian Wars, the Civil War, the Spanish War, the World War. The largest collection of war posters in the west is shown here. The portraits of all our governors, generals, great editors, writers, public speakers, and leaders in world causes challenge our youth to future achievements. Here are the breaking plows that broke our native sod. Here are the tools and implements of early homesteads and work shops. Here are our twenty thousand newspaper files, from 1854 to the present year. Here are the books of our Nebraska authors from the beginning. Here are the pictures—thirty thousand of them—

of Nebraska people and activities since the beginning of Nebraska history. Here are the Prehistoric People of Nebraska as shown by their pottery, implements, weapons, skeletons, and house sites.

So here, in the 75th year since its founding by the fathers, is the Nebraska State Historical Society in the First Line of Defense of Nebraska and our American Republic.

It is a First Line of Defense for peace as well as for war. For it equips the youth (as well as adults) of Nebraska with patriotic knowledge of their own state history. It is a state-wide, all-year-round school of Nebraska patriotism and civic duty, teaching our people a splendid story of Nebraska.

A Nebraska Historical Society Building

The first state institution created by the founders of our State and State Capitol was the Nebraska State Historical and Library Association — founded August 26, 1867. It was given a whole block of land for its home, and that block of land was exchanged with the City of Lincoln for the Historical Half-Block across Sixteenth Street from the State Capitol. There it stands today awaiting the completion of a State Historical Building.

On the page margins of this report are the Historical Buildings of our neighboring states. There are eight of them. All of them are handsome, fire-proof structures, each a credit to its state and a mighty factor in its patriotic program.

Nebraska is marching on to the goal of a State Historical Building on our Historical Half-Block. Led by President Lawrence, with the pledged support of a group of strong patriotic citizens, the Historical Society Foundation of Nebraska will secure the future Historical Building to preserve the story and the achievements of Nebraska.