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Article Summary: This annual report describes the reorganization of the Society library and visitors' use of the library, newspaper, and photograph collections.

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# Nebraska State Historical Society in 1946<sup>1</sup>

JAMES C. OLSON

Your new Superintendent has been on the job only a little more than six months of the year for which this report is being rendered. During the other half of the year, Dr. James L. Sellers—as he had since September, 1944—served as Acting Superintendent. This report then, is as much a report of his work as it is of mine, if not more so.

At its meeting on 25 April your Executive Board adopted a resolution expressing its profound appreciation of Dr. Sellers' services. I wish to take this opportunity to add my own personal word of appreciation. It would be difficult to give an adequate statement of the significance of his achievement as an administrator of the affairs of the Society during a most trying period.

I realize that in succeeding the late Dr. Addison E. Sheldon I am following a well beloved pioneer of Nebraska who guided the destinies of this Society for more than a quarter century, and who did much to spread the history of the state among its people. In view of this, and in consideration of his achievement and that of the four other men who have served the Society as superintendent during the sixty-eight years of its active existence—Samuel Aughey, George E. Howard, Howard W. Caldwell, and Clarence S. Paine—I have, quite naturally, been hesitant in embarking upon any new program until I could acquaint myself thoroughly with the history of the Society, and with its resources, limitations, needs, and possibilities. Study toward this end has occupied a considerable portion of my

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<sup>1</sup> Superintendent's annual report to the Society, read at the business meeting held Saturday, 5 October 1946, in Unicameral Hall, State Capitol, Lincoln.

time during the past six months. This study has made evident the great possibilities for extending the work of the Society, in both the conservation and dissemination of information regarding the history of Nebraska and the West. It is my hope that effective strides in that direction may be taken during the coming year.

One step forward was taken just last week when through the cooperation of the Nebraska Press Association the first of a series of weekly columns on the history of Nebraska entitled, "Out of Old Nebraska," was distributed to the press of the state.

I am happy to report, too, that substantial progress has been made in the Society's project for collecting and preserving the records and mementos of Nebraskans who saw service in World War II, and particularly the activities of the 134th Infantry Regiment. We now have in our museum a sizable collection of trophies brought back by Nebraskans from Europe, and within the fortnight we have received from Major General Butler B. Miltonberger, formerly Commander of the 134th Infantry, now Chief of the National Guard Bureau, photostatic copies of all the orders, diaries, and operational plans affecting the 134th Infantry from the time it was called into federal service to its demobilization.

Special attention has been given to the needs of the library, one of the Society's primary responsibilities. A transfer last year to the State Capitol of that part of the library formerly housed in the University Library aggravated an already serious housing problem. New shelving had to be built, encroaching upon the already limited space in the reading room, and a large portion of the books housed on the first floor had to be moved to the basement. The confusion which resulted emphasized the necessity for a close examination into the function of the Society's library, with a view to a possible redefinition of its scope. It is my firm belief that the Society can render its best service to the people of the state by confining its collections to material pertinent to the history of the state and the region of which it is a part. With that in mind and with the authori-

zation of your Executive Board, an inventory has been begun of the large mass of uncataloged material now reposing in the basement, in order to determine what should be incorporated into the Society's cataloged collection and what should be disposed of to the benefit of the Society.

Under the able direction of Miss Myrtle D. Berry, considerable progress has been made in rearranging and reorganizing the library in order to add to its usability. With the close of the war and particularly with the re-establishment of college and university enrollment it is anticipated that the use of the library will increase. It is estimated that during the past year approximately 1,000 people have done research in the Society's library. Some of these have come from distances as far as California and New York, and many of them required the services of members of the library staff for a considerable number of hours. In addition, approximately 410 telephone inquiries for historical information were answered during the year, and since 7 June When a new system of record keeping was inaugurated, 128 inquiries have been answered by mail. Some of these have been answered in the course of a few minutes; others have required the labor of several hours on the part of a trained researcher.

During the year we have accessioned a total of 87 volumes, of which 35 were purchased and 52 were donated. Approximately 840 books have been cataloged, and in the bindery one part-time worker has bound, rebound or repaired approximately 490 volumes.

The newspaper collection continues to grow. We are now receiving regularly a total of 352 newspapers, and it is estimated that we have approximately 2,720 different Nebraska newspapers in our files. A total of 545 volumes have been bound since the last annual meeting, bringing the total number of bound newspapers in the possession of the Society to approximately 27,360. On the basis of a check maintained during the last six months it is estimated that approximately 80 persons used the newspapers per month in addition to those using the other facilities of the library.

During June of this year the newspaper collection was re-organized to facilitate the speedy filing of the papers as they are received and their use by the public.

The photograph collection now contains approximately 48,000 photos illustrative of the development of Nebraska and the West. Requests during the summer from a number of publishers for pictures depicting recent developments in Nebraska brought to our attention the fact that while the collection was unsurpassed as regards early pictures there were virtually no pictures from the past decade. Therefore, an attempt was made to remedy this defect in our collection. Thanks to the efforts of Miss Lucile Fry, curator of newspapers and photographs, and to the cooperation of everyone with whom she communicated, that defect in our collection now is well on the way to being remedied. It is estimated that photos are furnished for the purpose of illustrating publications to approximately 150 persons per year, with each person requiring an average of four photos. Plans are now underway to effect a complete reorganization of the photograph collection in order to make it more useful. It is hoped that this reorganization will be accomplished within the coming year.

The museum continues to attract the greatest public interest and it is estimated that during the year approximately 140,500 visitors viewed the collections. By actual count it has been found that less than one-third of the people who visit the museum register. The total number of visitors registering was 46,834, with every state in the Union represented. A total of 15,270 out-of-state visitors signed the register. In addition, a total of 175, representing 23 foreign countries, registered during the year. Among the states outside Nebraska having the largest number of registrants were: Iowa, 2,376; Kansas, 2,134; Illinois, 1,597; California, 1,442; Missouri, 970; Colorado, 657; Ohio, 454; New York, 437; Minnesota, 435; Texas, 404; Oklahoma, 318; Indiana, 306; and Washington, 308. Foreign countries and territories were represented as follows: Canada, 65; Hawaii, 16; Alaska, 13; France, 12; England, 7; India, 6; and the Philippine Islands, 5.

The museum has been particularly fortunate in the donations it has received from friends during the past year. Altogether 37,065 articles were given the museum by 138 separate donors during the course of the year. Gifts received since those acknowledged in Volume XXVII, Number 2, are as follows:

Lt. Col. A. C. Boatsman, Beatrice: German flag captured by the 3d Battalion of the 134th Infantry in the City Hall at Recklinghausen, Germany, April, 1945; German flag which flew over the city of Recklinghausen, and was picked up by the 3d Battalion, 1 April 1945; the city flag of Gelsenkirchen, Germany, captured by the 2d Battalion, 134th Infantry, 12 April 1945; tunic found in German military store in Gelsenkirchen; German officer's shooting stick picked up in the Ruhr; German paratrooper's camouflage suit picked up by the 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry, during the battle of St. Lo, July, 1944; two pictures of a mural, the original of which a soldier painted in the rest center, Nancy, France; civilian German policeman's cap picked up by the 3d Battalion, 134 Infantry, in Recklinghausen; card written in German from the mayor of Bassenheim to Col. Boatsman; plaque from a church in Bassenheim, Presented 10 July 1945; ash try made from a German 88 shell by the 654th Tank Division; Japanese Officer's sword which Col. Boatsman brought back from India; dagger which the SS troops carried on dress occasions; German dagger carried by the SS troops; arm band for the Oberbürgermeister of the city of Gelsenkirchen; utility knife carried by German troops; pennant from Recklinghausen; original crest of the 2d French truck regiment, which was attached to the 134th Infantry during their tour of occupation on the Rhine after VE day; medal dated 1312; various German handkerchiefs; silk map of France issued in escape kits to Allied prisoners of war and which were also carried by members of the FFI; sheet of a map of the Mortaine section (France) where the Germans tried to split the American 3d and 1st Battalions; arm band; propaganda leaflet directed to Col Boatsman's forces when they went to Holland to relieve the British 51st Highland Division; miscellaneous propaganda leaflets

which were picked up before crossing the Rhine; German SS panzer division insignia; German knife, fork, and can opener; piece of camouflage cloth; copy of the Presidential Unit Citation which was awarded the 1st Battalion, 134th Infantry, for their part in the fight at St. Lo, July, 1944; 35 MM motion picture films taken by a captain in the United States Signal Corps; sword decoration; shoulder dress sash.

T. A. Braziel, Lincoln: old Bay State branding iron; hackmore made by Linch McKinney, a homesteader and cattleman of Western Nebraska; hair rope which belonged to the father of Mr. Braziel.

Grace Zelma Clark, Lincoln: complete World War II U. S. Wave uniform, worn by donor who served in the Waves from January, 1944 to September, 1945.

Mrs. J. G. W. Lewis, Lincoln: Branson Knitting machine used by donor's foster father, Ernest Bernschein, 1893 to 1895, and with which during World War I Mr. Bernschein knit more than 200 pairs of socks for the Wayne Red Cross to be sent overseas.

L. T. Lovercheck, Lincoln: Japanese rifle with the bayonet attached, taken from a Japanese Officer at Iwo Jima; grenade launcher for 50 MM fragmentation; belt with cartridge boxes attached; Japanese officer's field kit containing articles such as razor, bandages, sewing needles, insect exterminator, tooth brushes, eyebrow pencils, and officer's note book.

Dr. L. N. Kunkel, Weeping Water: fine large collection of 36,113 Prehistoric Indian specimens from Cass County, collected by L. N. Kunkel, including 40 restored Indian pots.

Mrs. J. A. Stephenson, Peru: applique quilt made in 1859 at Edwards, New York, by Mrs. Sarah T. Watson, and brought by her to Nebraska in June, 1865.

The effectiveness of the Society will always be in direct ratio to the extent and interest of its membership. In this connection I am happy to report that in the year since our last annual meeting the Society has received 92 new annual members and three new life members, for a total of 95. This, according to the records available, is the largest

number to join the Society in any year of its existence. We now have a total of 1,171 members divided as follows:

Annual members .....	554
Honorary members .....	11
Life Members .....	12
Libraries .....	107
Miscellaneous Exchange .....	113
Newspaper Exchange .....	375

It is to be hoped that next year will see a much greater increase in the Society's membership. The increase of the past year has been due largely to the interest of present members of the Society in securing new members. In this connection I cannot refrain from repeating the truism that if during the coming year each member would get one new member our membership at the next annual meeting would be doubled.