WITHIN recent years a new conception of museums has arisen among people interested in museums generally. Most of us may still have the mistaken conception of a museum being a place where a great many odd objects are piled ceiling-high, covered with cobwebs and dust, among which a few peculiar people move examining one piece at a time, but which contributes nothing to the general welfare. Museums of natural history have been trail blazers in establishing a new meaning to museums, and, incidentally, the first to spread this new meaning among our educators and public. The very essence of natural history, especially since Darwin propounded his theory of evolution, inevitably determined a course of action in arranging natural history in a logical and meaningful sequence showing the development of the race or species.

Museums of history have been slow in grasping and applying this new interpretation to history and historical objects. The small regional and county historical societies, which sprang up like mushrooms throughout the country shortly after the Civil War, were concerned and founded with the purpose of collection, preservation, and storage of objects of historic interest. Hero-worship, national and local, was written in large letters over their lowly portals. Collections of books, documents, newspapers, and eventually objects ranging from grandmother’s wedding dress to parts of whole buildings were gathered together and exhibited in just about the same sequence in which they were accessioned, with uninviting labels, “Do not touch,” “Do not disturb.”
How many teachers ever heard about the local historical society in their own county? Or if they have, and if they are not scholars especially interested in some phase of history, have they ever visited their local society headquarters? Yet, if they would take time to browse through their society’s collection, they would discover to their amazement a vast amount of concrete teaching material which they could use for illustrative purposes.

The greatest value of an historical society and its museum lies in its field of service to the community. Since the schools are the most important units in successful democratic life, it is through them that a program of action of a museum of history must render its service, if it wishes to become a positive influence in civic life. Small historical societies here have a challenge if they expect to become more than poorly-supported depositories for the benefit of the few. The Historical Society of Berks County is trying to fall in line with this new conception of historical service to the community and offers its program, which it is gradually developing, for the benefit of those who may be contemplating a similar one. Here are some of the things that are taking shape at the society’s museum.

First of all, its museum collection is being properly classified and cataloged. A more logical arrangement of exhibits according to a definite plan with a fixed purpose in mind is being executed. The history of the city of Reading and of Berks county is logically suggested in a series of exhibits depicting the highlights of the different periods. Agriculture and early industry occupy one large-sized room. Real objects, wherever possible, are used; in addition there are pictures, charts, diagrams, scale models, and dioramas to complement the real objects. We feel that this is the starting point for a real educational program through the schools, for we can now sincerely encourage teachers to bring their classes on school journeys to our museum assured that we have something educational to offer. In our exhibits, history will be a living force animated with life and breath, revealing the authentic story of our country and city, and presented in an understanding manner so that the individual with average ability will have no difficulty in grasping it. Teachers are encouraged to schedule their visits several days in advance in order that they may be sure of having one of our staff available to give an introduction to the permanent exhibits and to act as guide in explaining in detail special exhibits.
Wherever possible we suggest that the teacher become well acquainted with our arrangement of objects before bringing his class so that he may be of greater help to his pupils in interpreting the significance of the exhibits. We try to avoid making such visits entertainment only, because we consider them a useful educational experience. The success of a trip to the museum is determined by the preparation the teacher gives his students before they arrive, and through his interest and cooperation in our program generally.

We are also of the opinion that this is only the necessary beginning of a functioning museum of history. Its greatest challenge lies in the field of service which it renders beyond its walls in supplying elementary and secondary schools with instructional materials. The smaller cultural objects which are easily replaced have been assembled in small boxes to be offered as loans to schools. Pictures will also be made available in a similar manner. It has been proved rather definitely that if abstraction is to produce meaningful content, the concrete has to precede the abstract in depth, breadth, and variety toward progressive stages of abstraction.\(^1\) It is assumed that teachers are acquainted with the effectiveness and usefulness of concrete teaching materials and therefore the museum officials will not attempt to become teacher-training units in the use of sensory materials. It is our purpose only to make the material for local and American history available and more accessible and to encourage its use by the schools. In connection with this loan service we are also compiling a representative slide collection on local historical subjects. Sets on "The Early History of Reading" and "Early Industry in Reading" have already been completed. Historic houses in the county and city will make up another set; canals, early roads, early agriculture, colonial life, and numerous other subjects will be compiled. From these extensive general sets, many smaller sets can be assembled on specific subjects for classroom use. We are procuring this material by copying old photographs, from illustrations in newspapers, from books in our library, and from photographs taken in the field, objects in our museum collection, pictures and objects in the possession of private individuals in the community.

It is an easy matter to gather extensive material for copying from many private sources if proper publicity is given in the newspapers. After showing our first set of slides to several organizations in the city and suggesting that we were interested in making slides from old photographs of Reading, many suggestions from the audience gave us leads where we might get valuable material which we did not possess. If we bear in mind that much of this would be destroyed eventually, or at least never be made available for distributing and disseminating knowledge of our local history, we feel that we are doing a worthy service, first in discovering this new material, second in preserving it, third, and most important, in making it available for educational uses.

Each set of slides is accompanied by a manuscript copy of authentic data for each slide as a guide to the teacher. It is not desired, however, that the teacher follow this comprehensive data and verbally repeat it when using the slides, but, on the contrary, that he adjust and coordinate the information to the intelligence level of his group. After making a careful study of this problem in consultation with a special photography committee consisting of amateur photographers, we decided to adopt the new miniature 2"x2" slide, more commonly referred to as Kodak slides,2 because we felt that a larger percentage of schools, especially the rural schools, would be able to afford the projection equipment required for this size slide and also because the original cost of producing these slides would be cheaper to prepare than the old standard glass slide.

Naturally the program of every organization is limited by its financial ability and needless to say it is foolish for any society to contemplate a program out of proportion to its means. But a program of this kind need not be an expensive item. The most important factor in such a project is to have good sound ideas, imagination, and the cooperation of teacher groups.

The teachers of the public schools have a wealth of teaching material in their local historical societies, and in order to make this material available for use they should become active members and leaders in the administration of the local societies. Pennsylvania is especially rich in historical objects, many of

2 The Kodak Company, Rochester, New York, publishes a very interesting booklet on the preparation and use of slides.
which lie dormant waiting to be used. Here is a challenge that requires dynamic action and cannot be ignored. The challenge of a democracy in the present crisis can be met, if the teachers can be made to realize the positive influence on American patriotism of a wide-awake museum program through the schools.

THE BRADFORD COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND SCHOOL YOUTH

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The Bradford County Historical Society was organized in 1870. It sponsored a history of the county by that able historian, David Craft, and finally lapsed into quiescence in 1879. In 1902 the society was revived and entered upon a very active period. A permanent home was secured, a representative museum built up, a large amount of material relating to early Bradford county gathered together, and the foundation laid for a good historical library. From 1906 to 1916 Annuals were published and in 1926 the society published a History and Geography of Bradford County by C. F. Heverly, who was for many years secretary and historian of the society. During these years much was accomplished by a membership composed of the leading citizens of the county.

During 1940 the society realized that there were changed conditions which demanded new activities. It was felt that the work of the society should cover a wider field and a more active one than it had in the past. Modern historians say that "history begins at home," and if this be true, it was evident that much could be done to arouse and stimulate an interest in the history of Bradford county. It was decided to use the publicity of the press. Towanda has an excellent morning newspaper, which, through the efforts of the County Superintendent of Schools J. Andrew Morrow, goes daily into every school in the county. The editors agreed to cooperate and accordingly a series of articles was started in February, 1940. These articles, covering the history of the county, were about three to four hundred words in length, and appeared weekly. They ran for fifteen weeks.
There also appeared weekly a "Quiz" of ten questions on local history. The articles were freely commented upon and many inquiries were received which indicated that they had been widely read by pupils. Some schools reported placing the material in scrapbooks and otherwise using it as a basis for class activities.

During the past school year a series of articles appeared weekly in the *Daily Review* under the title "Thrills and Adventures of Early Days," among which was Conrad Weiser's Journal of his 1737 trip to Onondaga, Barbara Leininger's Captivity among the Indians, Colonel Hartley's Expedition, Colonel Proctor's Journal of his Mission to the Indians in 1791, and other adventures of early settlers. Occasionally, items of historical interest appear under the headings "Do You Know That?" and "Do You Remember?"

Through the efforts of the Bradford County Historical Society, a course in local history was introduced into the Towanda High School. The course is elective and is not designed to interfere with the existing program in social studies but rather to complement it. The initial enrollment at the beginning of the school year 1940-41 was seventy-four and interest has been high. Plans are being laid to have other schools in the county organize similar courses.

Cooperating with the Towanda School Board, the society has shown weekly to the pupils of the borough schools the Yale University Chronicles of America Photoplays. These are being received with keen interest and are proving a valuable help in the teaching of history. Next year it is hoped that some way may be found to make possible the showing of these films in other schools of the county.

To aid in visual education, schools of the county were invited to visit the museum of the society. Over three hundred children, representing all grades from kindergarten to eighth grade, have heard a talk on Indians and early settlers and have been conducted through the museum. Some interesting educational exhibits for future showing to school children are now being planned.

Maps have been drawn for use in the schools showing Sullivan's Expedition against the Iroquois in 1779, Indian Paths and Villages in Pennsylvania, Pioneer and Colonial Forts of Pennsylvania, and Early Roads and Indian Paths of Bradford County. Blueprints will be available at a nominal cost.
The library has been greatly enlarged by the purchase of many books on early history. These have been indexed and catalogued by a trained librarian. Through some rather strenuous efforts, the society now has practically a complete set of the *Pennsylvania Archives*. The library is open for research and the school pupils have been specially invited to make use of its resources. All possible assistance is given them in seeking information needed for their assignments.

In all this work during 1940 much has been learned which will enable the society to shape a program for the ensuing year. While considerable material is available, much of it is in such shape that it is not suitable for school-room use. Using the Department of Public Instruction's *Unit Course of Study* as a model, an effort will be made to prepare a similar one for a course in Bradford county history, adding a bibliography of books available in the society and the public libraries of the county.

Plans are also being made to write an outline of courses in the early history of each township in the county, accompanied by a map of the township. Separate topical outlines will be included covering subjects, such as—Indians of Early Days, Life in the Early Days, Transportation, Education and Agriculture of the Early Days.

During the year it is also planned to push actively the securing of junior members, limited to school children, with dues of twenty-five cents a year, and the issuance of a membership certificate.

From the experience of the society during the past year it is felt that there is now a very real opportunity for historical societies to interest themselves in educational work, especially among our youth. Youth needs everything that builds stronger belief in our democracy, and a firm determination to retain it. What better means is there of strengthening a belief in our way of government than the study of those early pioneers who came into our county, and whose names are yet borne by many of our young citizens? These pioneers believed in the "new" democracy, and under it they sought homes in the wilderness. The story of their struggles and hardships will help school children become better citizens and make their study of history far more interesting. Youth can be interested in these things if they are approached in
the right way. They feel that the historical societies are only for old people and that they do not welcome the young. Youth in the community has found an eager interest in the museum and the program which it is carrying out. The many requests for assistance is a manifestation of a growing concern about local history. It has made the society more determined to make its museum even more useful and instructive to the entire county.

Every county historical society should seek the answer to this question, "Is local history being taught in the public schools?" If it is not, then there is a job to be done. The historical society should start the movement to add such courses to the school curriculum. And if such courses are already being given—then there is still work to be done. The crying need in many schools throughout the state is for source material on local history. This is especially acute in those counties that do not have a county historian. Such source material must be collected and put in shape for use in the elementary schools. And this work is something in which every county historical society should be actively interested.