PROMOTING LOCAL HISTORY STUDY THROUGH PICTURES AND STORIES

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In order to promote and encourage the teaching of local history and arouse a general interest in the subject the Columbia County Historical Society has adopted a plan of action and set up a program which will require a period of years to develop fully and bring to successful fruition. The sponsors are confident that in addition to being useful in the present the work will be valuable to future generations.

Pictures and stories based on historical facts are always appealing to young and old alike. It is the purpose of the organization to go into all corners of the county to obtain material on everything of value historically. The program was started in January, 1940, when it was thought that from five to seven hundred pictures would cover the county. To date, October 1, 1941, over six hundred pictures have been taken, and the estimate has been raised to two thousand. Twenty subjects are now being developed, with from seventy-five to one hundred and fifty pictures to be used to illustrate each subject. All the pictures are in color and are mounted for use with a standard lantern projector.

The first project undertaken was the history of milling in Columbia county. Mr. H. V. White of Bloomsburg, a retired mill owner, was assigned the task of writing the story. Every section of the county was visited by a photographer, who obtained seventy-two historically significant pictures in color, including those of old mills, new mills, dams, races and waterways, old stone walls, and burrs or millstones. Mr. White has completed the descriptive account, which is now ready to be typed and bound in booklet form. The pictures have been numbered and put in order to follow the story. Both story and pictures are on file in the society rooms, where they are available for the asking to any
organization or group in the county. A projector and a screen have been installed in the society rooms for the use of visiting groups.

About twenty other subjects are being developed. Story-writing assignments have been made and pictures are being taken relating to the history of schools, churches, bridges, mining, manufacturing, lumbering and trees, forts and markers, highways, canals, graveyards and epitaphs, old dwellings, rock profiles, banking, general farming, specialized farming, dairying, fruit growing, canning and packing, and the maple-sugar industry.

Since the completion of the pictures and paper on milling there have been calls from individuals and organizations for a cross section of the history of the county. Schools, churches, parent-teacher associations, graduation and promotion meetings, fraternal societies, country festivals, grange meetings, and family groups have been visited, and everywhere have been found manifestations of real interest in local history. Some churches have given the Sunday evening hour to an illustrated history of churches in the county.

In each discussion are used a hundred and fifty pictures, all selected very carefully for suitability to the day, the organization or group, and the community. Throughout every program, which lasts about a half hour, members of the audience are given opportunities to ask questions or to add anything of interest. Many pictures of churches, schools, bridges, and other points of interest are flashed on the screen and the people asked to give the names, locations, and any pertinent information. Thus the fund of local history is enlarged, but all items are authenticated before further publicity is given them. At two township eighth-grade promotion exercises were presented outstanding papers dealing with the history of the township in which the schools are located. Copies of these papers, gladly contributed by the children, are now on file in the historical-society archives.

The pictures and stories are subject to call for showing by any organization or group in the county without cost other than electric current and the room. Bookings are usually made one to three months in advance of presentation. A deep interest has been shown in the work. People like the pictures and they like the stories. It is firmly believed that the results are well worth the time, money, and effort expended by the society.
The camera, screen, projector, and other equipment are the personal property of the president of the society and represent an investment of about $125. The society has purchased a projector and a screen for use in the society rooms. Until there is absolute satisfaction that the project is meeting the fullest expectations of the sponsors, the cost of films will be met by individuals. Detailed information as to cost and equipment will cheerfully be supplied to anyone interested.

The Columbia County Historical Society stands ready at all times to give complete programs of pictures, stories, and musical numbers, both instrumental and vocal. Good volunteer talent is always willing to contribute to the work.

One of the most colorful programs given under the auspices of the society was presented in the woods at a country church festival. Adults and children from all over the township were there to have a good time. The time until dark was spent visiting and enjoying delicious country ice cream and cake. The screen was hedged about with underbrush and drooping limbs of pines and oaks, and the projector was placed close to a great oak which the operator used as a back rest. The children made themselves comfortable in a semicircle on the ground in front of the projector and the older folks stood in the rear, about two hundred and fifty in all. The program started with a picture in color of a large American elm, one of the local trees known to every person in the township. Then followed pictures of local schools, churches, and other places of interest, with little stories woven into the fabric of the whole. A more attentive group could not be assembled; the meeting was truly happy and worth while, the people listening delightedly to tales of their own community.

Many secondary schools might well engage in a more limited way in similar projects. A collection of pictures of places and things of historical interest with a brief descriptive account of the significance of each in the life of the community would give pupils an enthusiasm for history which cannot readily be gained in any other way. It is important in any study of local history to point out relationships with the larger history of the state and the nation. It is hoped that the development of an intensive and extensive acquaintance with our local and state history will stimulate appreciation of our heritage and genuine desire to make our contribution, however humble, to the future improvement of our community, state, and nation.
THE HISTORY-CLUB MOVEMENT

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The essence of a movement now under way is to provide a medium through which Pennsylvania school pupils may learn about the historical development and present practices of their state. For many years progressive school administrators have sought to introduce Pennsylvania history into the public schools. Their attempts have met with only limited success. Through the efforts of the Social Studies Council of the Pennsylvania State Education Association and the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies a program is now in motion to encourage the study of Pennsylvania history through the channel of school clubs. Such a program has already operated successfully in Texas and Indiana.

In many schools of the commonwealth junior historical societies are being organized. The members of these societies are being assigned projects and programs designed to uncover interesting facts peculiar to their areas. Their findings are to be edited and made parts of their local historical records; eventually, it is hoped, an integrated students' study of Pennsylvania may result. Already plans are under way for the formation of a federation of the societies and clubs of the state. Such an organization would create interest in and encourage understanding of Pennsylvania's past; annual meetings would make history a living symbol to the youth of the schools.

The Pennsylvania Historical Commission has prepared in cooperation with the Social Studies Council a mimeographed manual of the Organization and Conduct of High-School History Clubs.¹ The publication contains many fully outlined history projects, all created to stimulate the study of local and national history and challenge the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the pupils. One project, for instance, calls for the construction of a booklet on the "Biography of Leaders in My County." It is the intention

¹ This manual may be obtained by writing to the Pennsylvania State Historical Commission, Room 216, Education Building, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.
of the sponsors to have club members study the lives of important men and women of their localities and write "thumb-nail sketches" on their civic and historical significance. If this is done in each county, pupils and adults alike will come to know and appreciate the qualities of those who have achieved eminence in various fields of community effort. Another project is arranged whereby club members are to familiarize themselves with the functions and problems of various officers by interviewing local officials, such as the tax collector, the assessor, and the constable, and then make written or oral reports to their group. Particularly interesting are the projects concerning the dramatization of Pennsylvania historical events through the medium of stage, radio, and recordings. Challenging, too, are the plans for creating club-sponsored scrapbooks that would familiarize members with current happenings in their state and in their communities. Suggestions for entertaining and profitable pilgrimages to historic sites are included also.

As the use of the suggested projects increase, as organization, administration, and supervision are improved, and as the cumulative effects of the network of clubs are made apparent, it will no doubt become possible to estimate the results of the program. The club idea as related to Pennsylvania history is only beginning. The attitudes taken by those responsible for the program will to a great extent determine whether or not it will be recognized favorably as a vigorous, dynamic, and functional instrument for the development of the social and intellectual character of our school population.