PENNSYLVANIA'S JUNIOR-HISTORIAN MOVEMENT

BY IRA KREIDER
Abington Township Senior High School, Glenside, Pennsylvania

A
T ONE of the early meetings of the Pennsylvania Historical Association it was suggested that teachers and students of the secondary schools should be encouraged to become interested in state and local history. Soon afterward the association began to devote a part of its annual program to the problem of teaching state history in the schools. The public-school teachers' department in PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY is evidence of the sympathetic encouragement that historians have been giving to the cause of history in the classroom.

Many local historical societies in the state have likewise been developing programs of cooperative activities on the part of themselves and the schools of their districts. They have opened their museums and made their collections available to the children, and their members have given of their time to advise the teachers and to speak to groups of students. Historical tours have been planned, and students have been given opportunities to display their work at the regular meetings of the societies.

The Pennsylvania Social Studies Council has become interested in the movement and has made one of its main objectives the stimulation of interest in state and local history in the schools. Members have been encouraged to form history clubs. During the past year methods of organization have been widely discussed in annual and district meetings.

The study of local history is especially significant in the present period of national emergency. A reexamination of the American heritage is in order. The children of the nation must be made acquainted with the hopes and aspirations, the ideals and convictions, the indomitable courage of their liberty-loving forbears.
They must be led to believe so strongly in all that is fine and good that they will accept nothing else. Every community has had its share of men and women whose memory is an inspiration to all who had the privilege of knowing them. The youth should hear their stories. Every region has had trying experiences. The students should be told about them so that they may catch the will to achieve in the face of tremendous odds. Moreover, a knowledge of a section's contributions in times of national crisis in the past should stimulate its people to more valiant efforts in the present. A nation of citizens who love their homes and their environs will fight hard to preserve its way of life.

The junior-historian movement, backed by the cooperative support of the historical societies and the schools, was recently launched to encourage a student-activity program. The organization and work of the chapters will be determined by the individual schools. In many cases organization is built around local history or social-studies clubs, but these are not the only interests which may well qualify students for membership. The local groups are affiliated with a state-wide association known as the Pennsylvania Federation of Junior Historians, which has as its purposes

...the stimulation of interest in our state and local history among existing history and social studies clubs; the organization of new chapters of Junior Historians; the promotion of interest and study of state and local history in the schools by all pupils who may be able through special project activity in their field to contribute to state and local historical endeavor; the promotion of ways and means of making historic knowledge public through cooperation with local newspapers, historical societies, and other agencies; the establishment of a statewide Federation of the organized Junior Historians for the better integration of their work, the mutual exchange of ideas and information and the promotion of such meetings, publications and similar activities as will be advantageous to the progress of this Federation.

In structure the state organization consists of a president, eight vice presidents (one for each convention district of the Pennsylvania State Education Association), an executive secretary (usually the executive secretary of the Pennsylvania Fed-
eration of Historical Societies), and an executive committee consisting of the president, the vice presidents, the executive secretary, the president of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies, a member appointed by the Pennsylvania Social Studies Council, and a member elected by the chapters. The annual meeting is held in conjunction with that of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies.

The initial meeting of the Federation of Junior Historians was held at the Penn-Harris Hotel in Harrisburg on Thursday, April 16, 1942. About sixty student delegates representing high-school local history clubs from all over Pennsylvania were present. In the morning they were taken on a tour of the capitol and the Pennsylvania state museum. At noon they attended the luncheon meeting of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies. In the afternoon at a meeting presided over by Jay Glendenning of Abington Township Senior High School a constitution was adopted, and Jack Moyer of Ambridge Senior High School was elected president. The lively interest in the debates on amendments to the constitution and in the election augured favorably for the continuing growth of the movement.

A LOCAL-HISTORY MAGAZINE

By Milton W. Hamilton
Editor, Historical Review of Berks County

The problem of the type of publication which should be undertaken by a local historical society depends on the purpose of the sponsoring organization. Formerly historical societies were concerned principally with preserving antiquities, records, and manuscripts and marking historic sites. Another purpose was the bringing together of people interested in local history that they might indulge their interests and thereby derive mutual profit. Hence the groups have frequently printed their publications, "proceedings," and "transactions" chiefly for the convenience of their officers and members. Today, however, the historical society is viewed as an educational institution. It must serve its community and so justify its existence. The city or county society which has a constituency not composed largely of scholars or the élite of the community should therefore try to
popularize local history—to educate the masses of the people in its field of interest. This may be done through a popular or semipopular magazine. Such an organ has wider appeal and greater usefulness than has the older type of publication; moreover, it can help acquaint its readers with the society's museum holdings, collections, and activities, appreciably extend membership, and aid in enlisting local businessmen and schoolmen in the work of the society.

The present article is based on experience with this sort of magazine over a period of seven years. In this instance all the above purposes have been served; and the magazine has in its advertising support, in its widespread reader interest (evidenced by a postal survey), and in the award of the State Historical Commission concrete evidence of its value. Hoping that other societies or groups may thereby benefit, the writer ventures to explain the procedures followed.

When the Historical Review of Berks County was projected, its sponsors in their enthusiasm foresaw the presentation of a wealth of historical material, a long and rich local history to be exploited by many able local writers. But success can be obtained only by persistent effort, and standards of factual and literary quality and of illustration must be maintained. The magazine must remain a local one. The temptation to delve into subjects of general interest (not local or not historical) and to reprint from other periodicals must be resisted. There must be a variety of writers and of subject matter. Our society was fortunate in having a number of able writers on historical subjects—local historians, lawyers, newspapermen, and clergymen who could—and did—write well. These have proved to be faithful stand-bys, but new writers and subjects had to be sought out.

Persons who are not residents of the locality but whose interests have made them students of our history are, we have discovered, decidedly worth seeking. These include university graduate students, collectors, genealogists, and others who have used our collections. Authors of books bearing on our city or county have frequently contributed articles when solicited. Seminar courses in research in local history and prizes for essays written by college students have produced good results. Members of the Federation of Junior Historians in the high schools could contribute much of value, especially in certain departments.
Careful attention must be given subject matter. A postal survey made at the end of five years showed that our readers liked the following in the order named: folk art of the Pennsylvania Germans (ours being a Pennsylvania German community), biographies, illustrations, Pennsylvania German articles (some may have interpreted this to mean articles in the dialect), industrial history, city institutions, social history, political history, genealogies, and book reviews. There were, of course, responses which could not be classified in the above categories.

But individual preferences of readers must not determine entirely the make-up of the magazine. With thirty-two pages to keep popular and interesting as well as historically on a high plane, the editor has an imperative duty of selection. One scholarly and fairly long survey article in each number and several shorter human-interest pieces such as biographical sketches and episodes are apparently well received. Selections from diaries, documents in local collections, visits of famous persons, and so forth provide ample variety. Genealogical information and reviews of books dealing with local subjects interest fewer people but provide a balance and may therefore constitute regular departments.

In planning future issues the exploitation of a theme or general subject from various angles has been found to be a productive approach. If the theme does not work out as planned, at least a number of articles may have been stimulated and new contributors contacted. The editorial board must be constantly on the alert for prospective material, and every idea or suggestion should be fully canvassed.

Illustrations, which add much to the popular magazine, should be well reproduced on coated paper. Their careful selection is important. Photographs taken from the society's collections or borrowed from members, old prints and engravings, documents which may be photographed, and historic sites or remains are only a few of the types which may be used. A pertinent and attractive cover illustration is especially successful in calling attention to the magazine. If possible, it should be related to the contents of the issue. Illustrations are expensive, however, and often expedients are necessary to keep within the budget. Sometimes cuts may be borrowed from other societies or publications, and
line cuts may be used as well as half tones. A photographic committee has been a great aid to our staff in supplying pictures.

Since our publication is a quarterly, space must be reserved in each issue for accounts of the activities of the society in the preceding three months and for “selling” its services. Editorial notes, comments, and announcements are eagerly read. Short anecdotes or humorous sketches may be used as fillers. News of occasional celebrations, pilgrimages, and centennials is placed in the back of the publication since this material is adjustable as to length.

Financing is a perpetual problem. Obviously the magazine is not run for profit; neither staff members nor contributors receive remuneration. Yet it is not necessarily a white elephant. There is a considerable return possible from the sale of advertising, this depending generally upon the extent of circulation. While some businessmen buy space for good will, we have been assured that our magazine is a good advertising medium. Some of the success in this direction may be a result of having a good advertising solicitor. Of course a portion of all dues received is allotted to the magazine, and there is some income from subscriptions of libraries and sale of individual copies. Careful management might make a magazine self-supporting, but a small subsidy, at least at the beginning, is helpful.

The influence of the semipopular historical magazine is not easy to judge. Our postal survey gave assurances that the publication is approved and is quite thoroughly read. Many persons have preserved and bound sets, and certain early issues now sell at a premium. Librarians, doctors, and dentists report that copies are worn out with much handling. The survey indicates that about three persons read each circulated copy. With the growth of the magazine the membership has increased, and members who receive an attractive periodical four times a year are not likely to lapse. In addition to being the best advertisement we have for the society and its work the publication presents community history to the average man as his own concern and not as a subject reserved for antiquarians and specialists. High-school teachers and students can well play a significant part in the success of local magazines.