At first thought, there does not seem to be much natural connection between a graduate of the University of Idaho, and the history of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Therefore the account of the forging of this connection presents some romantic elements.

It is a typical American phenomenon to organize in pursuit of an objective. Within half a century after the achievement of national independence, Americans were organizing to collect material from which to write the story of this great achievement. Pennsylvania was one of the centers of activity which produced this republic. In Philadelphia were the most visible landmarks of the effort. Here were Independence Hall and Carpenters Hall. Here were Christ Church and the graves of Franklin and other authors of the Declaration of Independence, and the Liberty Bell. Nearby were Valley Forge and the Battlefields of Germantown and Brandywine, and the bloodstained pews of Birmingham Meeting.

It was only a matter of time until the interested patriots who daily passed these shrines would wish to interpret their meaning and proclaim it to the world as the Patriots had done. So in 1823 a group of such men, members of Franklin’s American Philosophical Society, organized the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to collect the evidence and to prepare for the writing of the history of the Commonwealth in which so much of the early history of the nation had occurred, where William Penn had sought to establish a Holy Commonwealth in his green country town between the Delaware and the Schuylkill guided by unusual moral and social principles.

This Historical Society performed its functions for more than a century. Then with the aid of the Commonwealth, it built a spacious headquarters in Philadelphia and accumulated in this building a great treasure of sources, books, manuscripts, maps and
prints, fine furniture and works of art. Over the years numerous scholars came to use this treasure, take notes and write scholarly history.

These students came from many regions and many schools. One of the most unusual of them slowly made his way from Idaho. Born in Colorado, he had gone to live in Idaho and attended its university. The initial Rhodes scholars were being appointed in those days, and Lawrence H. Gipson was chosen as the first from Idaho, going to Oxford in 1904. After taking his degree in 1907, he returned to teach in Idaho and three years later he entered the Graduate School of Yale where he completed his Ph.D. in 1918. At Yale he became the student of Charles McLean Andrews and chose as his dissertation topic a subject with decided Pennsylvania implications. He wrote a study of Jared Ingersoll, the loyalist. This native of Connecticut had spent some time in England promoting business interests and there had had some association with Benjamin Franklin, agent for Pennsylvania. He attracted some patronage at the British Court, and in 1768 was appointed one of the new Vice Admiralty Judges and stationed in Philadelphia. As trouble developed in the Empire, he remained loyal to the Crown. Much of the research for this work was done in Philadelphia, and Gipson became well acquainted with the Historical Society and its resources. At the conclusion and publication of his dissertation, it received the Justin Winsor prize of the American Historical Association. In the meantime he had gone to Wabash College to set up a department of history and political science. Then in 1924 he cast his lot with Pennsylvania when he moved to Lehigh University to create a similar department.

He moved to the Commonwealth under unusual circumstances. He had designed an ambitious research project which he had announced in a circular which he had widely distributed in 1920. He planned to write a survey of the British Empire before the American Revolution. He designed it in the form of a multi-volume work and his study of the loyalist, Ingersoll, particularly his career in Pennsylvania, Connecticut and London had served as an appropriate introduction to this project. When the recipients of the analysis of the project received it, it was not unnatural that one immediate reaction was, it can't be done in one man's lifetime. However, Gipson settled in at Bethlehem and became a
familiar figure on the Reading Railroad during his frequent trips to the historical sources of Philadelphia.

Gipson and his colleagues as he came to know them at the University of Pennsylvania, Temple and at the other universities and colleges in other parts of the Commonwealth were well aware of certain of the facts of life in the state's historical world. They knew that there was no written history of Pennsylvania of any definitive character. They knew that most of the historical organizations in the state were local and that they did not move about nor provide opportunity for fraternization or much exchange of ideas. Even the Historical Society of Pennsylvania never held any meetings except in its own building. Its distinguished organ, the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* seldom had any but Philadelphians on its Board of Editors and the Board of Directors was wholly Philadelphia.

There were certain historical agencies. Throughout the Commonwealth were scattered several local societies representing city, county or region. They were organized as the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies consisting of delegates from the various societies which met once a year in Harrisburg and published a yearbook supported by a very slim treasury. Within this body were neither the energy nor the resources to do much toward an adequate history of the great state. It is true a few years previously they had prevailed on the legislature to create a state historical commission, appointed by the governor but so limited in funds that it spent its energies largely in marking historic sites and occasionally supervising the care of some building or site of historic significance. Rarely it would issue a publication; it met on occasion in various parts of the state, heard reports and waxed eloquent at dinners celebrating the unveiling of monuments and markers.

There were some with whom Gipson became acquainted who were aware of the lack of an effective agency and at least thought about what might be done. At the time of the Sesquicentennial of the American Revolution in 1926 an effort was made to remedy the situation. A group of historians held a meeting at the Sesqui grounds and organized a statewide historical society, modelled on some experiences in other states, but it only held one or two meetings and died. Then John W. Oliver came from Indiana to be a professor at the University of Pittsburgh. He soon secured
the resources to organize an historical survey of Western Pennsylvania supported by a Pittsburgh foundation, and Dr. Solon J. Buck of Minnesota was brought into the region to head it. Interestingly enough, Oliver, Buck and Gipson soon became acquainted with two colleagues from Penn State and two from the University of Pennsylvania, Asa E. Martin, Wayland F. Dunaway, Arthur C. Bining and the writer. They began to plan and to discuss.

They met annually at the sessions of the American Historical Association and some of them went occasionally to the Harrisburg meetings of the Federation. They were intent on action. Their first effort was to persuade the Federation to accept members from the History Departments of the Universities and colleges and to join in some project for a state history. But the Federation was not willing to alter its form or its habits. Some of its leaders were men of political experience who looked upon these schoolmen as insurgents and proceeded to swallow them and absorb their efforts. However, those mentioned above and Gipson decided on action.

Martin and Dunaway arranged for Penn State to host a planning session. Martin wrote to a number of his colleagues in history throughout the state and invited them to attend this meeting to
discuss the possibility of forming a state historical organization dedicated to active life. These invitations sent out in April, 1932, brought an encouraging response. A small group came to Penn State and literally "took their hair down." They secured the cooperation of the State Federation and the Historical Commission in the matter of staff and meeting expenses, and thus fortified, they agreed to call a state historical convention September 15-17, 1932.

Here at Penn State the die was cast. The gathering agreed to form the Pennsylvania Historical Association and to issue the journal which ever since has been Pennsylvania History ably edited for many years by Arthur C. Bining of the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. A. Boyd Hamilton of the Pennsylvania Historical Commission was named President, Roy F. Nichols, Vice-President and Paul W. Gates, then of Bucknell, Secretary. When the delegates reached home, numerous invitations were sent out and quite generally accepted. The idea gained support from the start.

Those interested in the new association arranged a very informal get-together at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association which was held in December at the University of Toronto. There in the comfortable lounge at Hart House a planning session was very informally held and it was at this point that Lawrence Gipson came into the forefront. He invited the new Association to hold its first meeting at Lehigh University April 28-29, 1933, and he shouldered responsibility for making all the arrangements. We had all been much impressed by the experience of the New York Historical Association and had made it our pattern. So we invited its President, Dixon Ryan Fox of Columbia, to inaugurate us with one of his eloquent afterdinner speeches. We also invited Conyers Read, the Executive Secretary of the American Historical Society, to speak likewise.

We arranged a series of sessions at which historical papers would be read, some of which, together with Fox’s speech appeared in the first numbers of the Journal. Gipson enlisted a number of institutions, hotels and Dutch country restaurants where we could meet, and some of the Bach choir music which would be at our command. Gipson had complete control of this environment including the weather, and we had a solemn and impressive inauguration of our effort. It went well from the start, we immediately recruited a membership which paid enough dues to support
the journal. Certainly among the founders none was more consistent and effective in his efforts or faithful in his attendance than Gipson. He always has been a member of its Council and one of its early presidents.

All during his years of service he was carrying on his great project. He was aiding graduate students in doctoral dissertations significant in Pennsylvania history and he was always at work enlisting colleagues in what he hoped would be a multivolume definitive history of the Commonwealth. Someday it will come to pass and then we shall have what should be called the Lawrence H. Gipson history of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As his own spectacular work in fourteen volumes is now coming to its conclusion, we could wish for him the immortality which would be necessary for him now to undertake the History of the Commonwealth, the dream which he has so long cherished and encouraged. Considering what he has accomplished, we even yet may say "perhaps" for with Gipson nothing seems impossible.