Report of the Publications Committee

In June, 1939, a Committee on Objectives, of which Mr. Edward C. Gardiner was Chairman, submitted to the Council a “Declaration of Faith” for the Society. This was approved at that time by the Council and subsequently printed, with a foreword by Mr. Julian Boyd, in the Magazine (LXIV, April, 1940, 153ff). This statement included a program for the Society in general and for the Magazine in particular, with which the present Publications Committee is in entire agreement. It submits the following report with a view to reiterating these principles, and also in order to implement them with specific suggestions pertinent at the present time. The report is divided for convenience into two sections, relating respectively to the Magazine and to other publications.

The Pennsylvania Magazine of History

The Council’s Publication Committee and the editors believe that the Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography has served, and should continue to serve, two purposes which are mutually harmonious. The first is to provide the members of this Society with historical articles and book reviews of interest to the educated public, and also to keep them informed about the library, the collections, and the general activities of their Society. The second purpose is to maintain the scholarly tradition of the Magazine, which can best be done by presenting scholarly articles which have at the same time some degree of literary merit. The Magazine has come to have a national reputation which should be preserved.

The recognition of these two purposes means, in practice, that each issue—with occasional exceptions—should contain at least one article of wide interest to general readers; and at least one which represents primarily a scholarly contribution. Efforts should be made to avoid the extreme forms of either of these two types; that is: (1) The more general article should be popular in the better sense. It should be readable, interesting, not “heavy,” but at the same time authentic. It should not be “jazzed up” or distorted for mere effect. (2) The scholarly article or interpretive essay should appeal to scholars; but at the same time be made as clear and readable as possible.

Each issue should contain a book review section. Relatively popular works as well as academic studies should be included. Reviews will ordinarily be fairly short, not over about five hundred words. There are arguments pro and con for longer reviews. But these take up so much space as to preclude notices of other works which the members might wish to note. Hence, generally speaking, the use of relatively brief reviews will be followed for the present.
The reviews are expected to be of a critical nature. This means that some will be unfavorable; and occasionally this will result in protests by authors. It may be held that the review should not have been printed, or that a retraction or an apology should be added. The code of ethics of the historical profession is quite clear on these points. Editors endeavor to send books to reviewers whom they consider fair as well as critical; but despite this they receive back, on rare occasions, reviews which they themselves consider unduly severe. In this situation, they still have no choice but to print the review—assuming that it is not personally libelous. If the author then protests, he is afforded an opportunity to publish this protest in an ensuing issue, to which the reviewer is also permitted a brief rejoinder. This procedure allows both parties a fair hearing. Retractions or apologies, or answering reviews, are never published, since editors are not responsible for reviewers' opinions. But exchanges between authors and reviewers appear in the best historical journals. These cannot be avoided entirely if the review section is to be critical, and therefore of any worth.

Some issues will contain a section on "Notes and Documents," in which will appear hitherto unprinted, original papers of special interest, with editorial notes. Our own collections can be drawn upon for this purpose when it is feasible; but other materials submitted from the outside can also be used.

Most issues will contain a section entitled "The Library." Here will be printed accounts of collections of special interest in the Society's possessions, with historical and critical comments on the same. Ordinarily, manuscript materials will be discussed; but in some cases other types of collections can be considered. Under this heading, also, will appear an annual list of manuscript accessions for the preceding year. Such lists will serve as supplements to the published Guide to the Manuscripts in the Society's possession.

Most issues will contain a section on "Society News." It is essential that the members be kept informed of both the usual and the special activities of their Society. Such information will relate to the work of officers and committees, stated and special meetings, relations to other societies and the public, historical or public activities of members, etc. Gifts to the Society, other than books and manuscripts, may be listed here or under "Library," as seems best. To increase the information available to members, annual reports of the Director, the Treasurer, and the chairmen of committees of the Council, will be published in this section in the April issue of the Magazine.

The entire contents of the Magazine will relate primarily to Pennsylvania in general, and to Philadelphia in particular. To a lesser extent, we are interested in the adjoining states; i.e., in the Middle Atlantic area. No historical journal has ever been devoted to this region—the only section of the country that has not had such a publication. We may serve this function to some degree. The importance of establishing an historical
tradition in the Middle Atlantic area is pointed out in the editorial article which appears in this issue.

The Magazine will be concerned with all periods in the history of Pennsylvania, from the early colonial to the present. The significance of the hitherto neglected period after about 1800 is also noted in the editorial mentioned above. But this does not imply that there will be any neglect of the interesting and important colonial era.

These generalizations about time and place relationships will apply to all sections of the Magazine.

The Publications Committee and editors will welcome the interest and cooperation of the Council and of all members of the Society in matters pertaining to the Magazine. As a matter of orderly procedure, it is urged that all inquiries or suggestions in this connection be submitted directly to the Chairman of the Publications Committee or to the editors. It is also requested that Council members receiving suggestions or correspondence from individuals concerning the Magazine, refer these individuals directly to the editors, so that responsibility may be centered in the hands of those appointed for the purpose.

Other Publications

The “Declaration” noted above gave as the two major purposes of the Society, (1) the collecting, preservation and use of historical sources or materials; and (2) the dissemination of historical information. In order to serve the first of these purposes, the Publications Committee has directed for the Council in recent years the publication of guides intended to make more accessible the special collections in the Society’s possession. Notable were the Guide to the Manuscript Collections (1941), the Catalogue of the Paintings and Miniatures, prepared by William Sawitzky (1942); and the “Checklist of Prints,” compiled for the Pennsylvania Magazine by Boies Penrose (1942).

In order to serve the second major purpose, that is, the dissemination of historical knowledge, the Committee has also supervised the publication of collections of documents and monographs of varying lengths. During the last eight years, the list of publications issued is as follows:

*Oliver Evans*, by Greville and Dorothy Bathe (1935)

*Indian Treaties Printed by Benjamin Franklin, 1736–1762*, with an introduction by Carl Van Doren and historical and bibliographical notes by Julian P. Boyd (1938).

*Lewis Evans*, by Lawrence H. Gipson (1939)

*Pennsylvania Politics, 1817–1832*, by Philip Shriver Klein (1940)

It will be observed, in the list of publications, that different types of works have been emphasized in different years. From 1935 to 1938, the Society published only one book, a monograph. In 1938, 1939, and 1940, two of the publications consisted wholly or in part of documentary collections. In 1941 and 1942, all the books issued were guides; and the surplus funds of this Committee for both 1942 and 1943 will be used for the publication of the cumulative index to the Pennsylvania Magazine. In a word, during the past few years the Committee has stressed the publication of guides with a view to making the various collections in the Society’s possession better known. As soon as the index to the Magazine can be brought out, however, this part of the Committee’s program will have been completed; and the Committee may thereafter focus its attention on other types of publications. All publication programs for the duration, of course, will be limited by the amount of paper which is available.

Richard H. Shryock, Chairman