Our knowledge of past achievements depends upon the preservation of public records. The Historical Society was founded to aid in this service but it has learned that its task is indeed difficult. For some reason the performance of this duty has been beset by more hindrance in Pennsylvania and Philadelphia than in many less vital centers. A mass of sad comments could be quoted but two will do to underline the danger.

Many years ago important public documents were sold on occasion by a faithless employee of the Commonwealth to private collectors. One such bought manuscripts at auction which he later discovered belonged at the capital in Harrisburg. Being a patriot he returned them. When some time later they were again on sale they were purchased and not returned.

The second sad commentary was made by someone who has had much occasion to consult records in the city halls and court houses of Pennsylvania. He declared recently that of the records in the sixty-seven counties, those in the Philadelphia City Hall and Court House were the worst cared for of all. Surely this is not a comment to stir local pride.

Recent happenings show that improvement is possible. Some years ago a number of historians became disturbed because the
records of the Commonwealth were so scattered among the multiple
offices at Harrisburg. Some actually were stored in old buildings and
even under bridges. Relatively few were in the cramped quarters
allotted to the State Archivist. Stirred by this unsatisfactory situa-
tion, the Pennsylvania Historical Association, the Pennsylvania Fed-
eration of Historical Societies and the State Historical Commission
began the study of the archival problem and inaugurated a dis-
cussion of the sad plight. Then in 1944 the William Penn Terce-
tenary Committee crystallized the issue by recommending to Gover-
nor Martin the building of a unit in the capitol center at Harrisburg.
This would house the archives of the Commonwealth and the State
Museum and serve as a fitting permanent memorial to the Founder.
It will long be marked as a great day in the annals of the Common-
wealth when on January 2, 1945, Governor Martin appeared before
the legislature and recommended that such a memorial be created
and submitted a budget to implement his recommendation. One
dream of the founders of The Historical Society seems about to come
true.

The Governor's proposal reminds us even more particularly of the
Philadelphia problem. In 1900 a survey of city and county records
was made and printed. Recent chance inquiry shows that some of
them, records of the early city councils before 1854, cannot now be
found. Would it not be well to have a committee appointed represent-
ing The Historical Society and the city and county authorities to
study this subject and report on more effective methods of handling
the valuable documents which tell the story of the rise of Penn's
great city?

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