THE
Pennsylvania
Magazine
OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

Editorial

Although founded in 1824, the Society is celebrating its 175th anniversary in 2000. The founding meeting occurred in December 1824, but the Society really took form over the next year. Over five years ago when HSP officials started planning the 175th anniversary celebration, they decided that it should be an ongoing event extending from December 1999 through December 2000. The signal event of 1999 was the reopening of HSP to the public in August, with a striking new reading room and many behind-the-scenes improvements intended to provide better service to the public and improved security for the collections. These changes in the building were, however, only the first in a series of planned improvements to HSP's facilities that will be implemented over the next few years—well past the 175th anniversary. The anniversary itself, it was decided, would focus on three publications.

The most ambitious of these publications would be a history of the Society showing how a small, private, nonprofit library founded in the early nineteenth century coped with the vastly different conditions of the last three quarters of the twentieth century. The Society engaged Sally Griffith, historian and former professor of American history at Villanova University, to undertake the formidable task. Early this year she completed the manuscript, which will be published this fall by the Society. This compelling case study in institutional development and survival will appeal to all members and friends of the Society and, we believe, to many others as well. It is a story told with honesty and compassion for all those people over the years who worked so hard to make HSP one of the most important independent research libraries in the nation.

The second publishing project is a new cumulative index for *PMHB*, for which the Society has had increasing requests in recent years. The first cumulative index, published in 1954, covered the first 75 volumes of the magazine (1877–1951). The new index covers the next 48 volumes (1952–1999) and will make the contents of this near half-century of *PMHB* scholarship more accessible to researchers. Both the index and Griffith's *History* will appear this fall. Look for further information in the magazine and the *Correspondent*.

The third publishing project for the 175th anniversary is this special issue of *PMHB*. Former president Susan Stitt first proposed the idea for an issue that would deal with the Society's long search for a permanent fireproof building for its collections, with the evolution of the neighborhood around 13th and Locust, and with the significance of the Society's collections to the study of American history and the building arts. Because of her own involvement with the renovations to the building, Susan was the obvious choice as author of the first piece. George Thomas, because of his extensive work on Philadelphia's built environment, was commissioned to write the article on the neighborhood. John K. Alexander, a well-known historian of Philadelphia's early history, agreed to assess the significance of the Society's manuscript collections to the study of American history. Architectural historian Jeffrey Cohen was invited to write about the holdings in local institutions—including and especially those of the Society—that are so useful to architectural historians, preservationists, and others with a need to know building histories and the ever changing uses of the land. In addition to the authors, we are also grateful to those friends and neighbors (see *Sponsors*) whose financial contributions helped to make this issue possible.

One does not lightly tamper with the design of a journal as venerable as *PMHB*. On the other hand, it has undergone changes in the past, and the first issue of the year 2000 seemed an appropriate occasion to update the journal's appearance. Among other things, we wanted a cover design that would be more distinctive and, frankly, more eye catching. I am grateful to Jill Garner, until recently assistant editor of *PMHB*, whose considerable design skills are reflected in the new cover design.

Ian M. G. Quimby