

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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BIENNIAL REPORT OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1957

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE 1957 SESSION OF THE
WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE:

In submitting its Biennial Report, as required by law, the Washington State Historical Society will report substantial progress during the past two years, but at the same time will take opportunity to call attention to the importance of giving more attention to the preservation of our state's historical heritage.

The Washington State Historical Society was organized in 1891, incorporated a few years later and in 1903 was created a Trustee of the State for certain purposes, by the adoption of S.B. 125, found in Chapter 177. This law reads as follows:

CREATING THE WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY A TRUSTEE OF THE
STATE FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES.

AN ACT relating to the Washington State Historical Society; creating
it a trustee of the state for certain purposes.

Be it Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Washington:

SECTION 1. That the Washington State Historical Society, a corporation existing under the laws of the State of Washington, be and the same is hereby created trustee of the state for the intent and purposes hereinafter mentioned, viz.:

1. That it shall be the duty of the said society to collect books, maps, charts, papers and materials illustrative of the history of this state, and of its progress and development.
2. To procure from pioneers authentic narrative of their experiences and of incidents relating to the early settlement of this state.
3. To gather data and information concerning the origin, history, language and customs of our Indian tribes.
4. To procure and purchase books, papers and pamphlets for the several departments of its collections, climatic, health and mortuary statistics, and such other books, maps, charts, papers and materials as will facilitate the investigation of the historical, scientific and literary subjects.
5. To bind, shelf, store and safely keep the unbound books, documents, manuscripts, pamphlets and newspaper files now or hereafter to come into its possession.
6. To catalogue the collections of said society for the convenient reference of persons having occasion to consult same.
7. To prepare bi-ennially for publication a report of its collections and such other matters relating to the work of the society as may be useful to the state and the people thereof.
8. To keep its rooms open at all reasonable hours of business days for the reception of citizens and visitors without charge.

SECTION 2. That the books, maps, charts, relics, memorials, collections and all other property of the Society now owned or hereafter acquired, shall be held by the said Society perpetually in trust for the use of and benefit of the people of the State of Washington.

SECTION 3. That the Governor, Secretary of State and State Treasurer shall be ex-officio members of the Board of Curators of the said Washington State Historical Society, authorized and empowered to vote upon all questions coming before the said board for its action.

In a state where advancement is apparent in every direction, it is very easy to take history for granted, to say that some day in the future it will be time to pause and give more attention to the circumstances under which our commonwealth was born, the story of development. It has been truly said that: "To know what it cost to place the stars in our flag is to steel ourselves to the task of keeping them there".

The 42nd star belongs to Washington. Our state has been signally honored in bearing the name of the man without whom there could be no United States of America and no state to bear his name. This Society conceives its prime duty is the direction of attention to the history of this state and its preservation. This is a task that cannot be taken for granted if done adequately. To discharge this responsibility adequately calls for a realization of the importance of this work by the entire

state, and, particularly by the members of the State Legislature. It cannot be delegated to any other state nor to any other Washington agency.

Washington is recognized as one of the foremost states of the Union in the fields of education, highway construction and welfare services, and our industrial progress in recent years has been phenomenal. It seems in order to suggest, therefore, that Washington should emulate the work of certain other states in the preservation of own history, for this is an undertaking in which no other state can be expected to be interested.

When a community sets a new record in some field of activity the value of a united citizenship is at once recognized. Local and state history can play an important role in assembling such citizenship. Morale is important in times of peace as well as in times of war, and as we know more of the foundation of our state, pride in her development and determination to have a greater part in that development follow naturally. The importance of intensifying our faith in America in a period such as we face today is emphasized every day. It is likewise important to intensify our faith in Washington and one of the most valuable agencies in attaining this goal is a knowledge of the traits of citizenship which have made up her foundation.

It must be recognized that the average American knows comparatively little about American history and it can be said as truly that the average citizen of this state knows comparatively little about Washington history. When a state has grown as rapidly as has Washington, with citizens coming to her borders from every part of the nation and many nations of the world, this is not to be wondered at, but realization of this fact should stir forward-looking leaders of the state to do something toward remedying this situation.

A State Historical Society is one of the first agencies that can be enlisted in this important undertaking, but the same vision which has brought about phenomenal progress in other fields must be extended to the field of Washington history. The

purpose of a state historical society is three-fold; (1) to collect, (2) to preserve materials relative to state history, and (3) to tell the Washington story.

It seems proper to state that whereas a few years ago the State Historical Society of Wisconsin had a very small staff, today its regular staff numbers more than 75 persons. Ten years ago the staff of the Historical Society of North Carolina numbered eight, and in 1954 this number had been increased to 31; today the staff of the Minnesota State Historical Society is nearly 50. Fifteen years ago the staff of the Washington State Historical Society numbered five, with the exception of a maintenance staff of two; and today the number is exactly the same.

Washington is one of 16 states in which state historical societies operate a museum. With the exception of a small addition which came through the W.P.A., the building occupied by this Society was almost entirely a gift of citizens interested in the preservation of our state's history. While it has received no less than three national awards in recent years in the field of history, it should be readily apparent that progress in this field has not kept pace with advancement in other fields of Washington progress.

We call attention to numerous fields of activity in which the Society has participated during the past biennium.

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ATTENDANCE HAS It is very evident that interest in history is on the increase
INCREASED STEADILY in this country. Tourists visiting Washington have been coming
to the Society's museum in increasing numbers. During a three hour period on a Sunday afternoon during the past summer, cars from 18 different states were parked at the museum. Not infrequently these visitors have found the museum so interesting that another day has been added to their Washington stay. Visitation by Washington citizens has likewise increased steadily each year. Total visitation is annually close to 75,000, although visitors should not be regarded as the only means of recording the value of a state historical society.

REACHING SCHOOLS The teaching of Washington history is a required subject in our
OF WASHINGTON schools. The modern museum is one of the finest teaching devices
yet developed. Naturally, there is a limit to what a staff of six can do in modern-
izing a museum, but the fact that during the past year more than 600 groups of school
age visited the museum is indicative of progress. Just a few years ago there were no
organized tours. Our receptionist, who is actually teaching Washington history, is
now kept busy a greater part of the day with school groups, a large percentage of
which are brought to the building by bus from a radius of 100 miles or more. The
Society is trying to present the dramatic story of Washington's past through actual
relics of the past, pictures, paintings, dioramas, charts and maps. Young Washington
is taken back to the days of exploration and fur trading, to the days of the covered
wagon, and we believe a very favorable impression is made upon young minds which will
some day shape the destiny of Washington. This is one of the most important
services rendered by the Society.

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COUNTY SOCIETIES One of the goals of the State Historical Society is a local
INCREASING STEADILY society in every county of the state. This goal could be
attained easily with a staff that would include at lease one field worker. Of
necessity, therefore, progress in this field must be slower without field representa-
tion, but it has been steady. New societies have been organized during the past two
years in Adams, Chelan, Walla Walla, Lincoln and Snohomish counties. Additional
societies will be organized through the cooperation of the state society during the
coming biennium. These county societies are automatically, as organized, members of
the State Society. There are now local societies in nearly half the Washington
counties.

NEW COUNTY One of the goals set up for local societies is always a local museum.

MUSEUMS It is quite remarkable how soon this goal is being realized in some districts. Yakima will dedicate very soon a splendid museum. A new museum will be opened in Port Angeles during this year. Orcas Island is moving forward steadily on an ambitious museum project that sees two units of a five-unit program completed. Cashmere is at work on a museum project and this is true also of Snohomish County. A project has been started in Grant County. It is well to bear in mind that local museums are already found in Bellingham, Port Townsend, Kelso, Port Orchard, Wenatchee, and of course the state supported institutions in Spokane and Olympia, with an excellent museum in Seattle.

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PARTICIPATION IN The State Society is always happy to participate in programs having to do with Washington history. In 1955 the Director served as Northwest Chairman of the Lewis and Clark Sesqui-Centennial; he is a member of the Peter Binford History Foundation board, state chairman of the American Association for State and Local History Award program, a member of the Washington Highway Historical Marker Commission and the Historical Sites Advisory Board. Naturally, the Society is called upon frequently from other parts of the country for information on certain phases of Washington history.

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PACIFIC NORTHWEST In April will be held at Pullman the ninth Pacific Northwest HISTORY CONFERENCE History Conference. This Conference was initiated by the State Society, which still sponsors the event, bringing together teachers and historians from Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and British Columbia. An approach is being made to Northwest history on a regional basis. At last year's Conference, which was held in Tacoma, a new sub-agency was created, the Council for Regional Research in Progress.

OUR LIBRARY IS Some of the most important services rendered by a state historical society are through its library. While much more could be done with a larger staff, valuable service is being rendered through this Society unit. Calls for information come from all parts of the country. We have an outstanding collection of photographs and negatives and this can also be said of our map collection. Valuable manuscripts are being acquired steadily and as rapidly as it is possible the Library itself is being modernized. Our Library has been recognized as a repository for historical records of the forest products industry by the American Forest History Foundation. Recently in connection with his work of research for the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company, Dr. Norman Thomas brought to light an unusually fine collection of pictures and slides having to do with the logging industry taken by the late John D. Cress. These have come to us as a gift from his daughter, Mrs. E. A. Harmeling of Auburn. The sum requested for the Library is extremely nominal compared with the scope of service rendered.

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PUBLICATIONS The Society's Publications Committee is embarking upon an ambitious
PROGRAM program of publication under the leadership of Mr. John M. McClelland, Jr., editor of The Longview Daily News. The Committee has explored a number of extremely important periods in the early history of the state, studying manuscripts touching on these periods, heretofore unpublished. Special study has been made of material having to do with the history of Fort Vancouver. It is expected that this material will be published at an early date, and will make a very favorable impression nationally. There is no other organization in a position to expand these phases of Washington history.

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MUSEUM MONTH Something new was undertaken in this country during the past year--
NOVEMBER
1956 Museum Month, in which some 250 museums participated. Your Society entered this observance with enthusiasm and received truly outstanding cooperation

from local press, radio and television. It was stated by the national chairman that your Society received more newspaper publicity than any other society in this country. Such support is invaluable.

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"THIS WEEK IN WASHINGTON HISTORY" A year ago the Society inaugurated a new feature service for use by Washington newspapers, under the title "This Week in Washington History". Most of the papers of Washington have requested this feature, which, while brief, is very valuable in turning back the pages of Washington history. This service has been prepared in our Library.

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MANY CHANGES Since our last report many improvements have been worked out by our IN OUR BUILDING maintenance staff. Three pioneer rooms have been built on the second floor and a new pioneer scene added. On this floor is also found a new display of Washington rocks and minerals made possible through the All Rock Hounds Pow Wow Club of America. This enthusiastic group of hobbyists are displaying most effectively one of Washington's resources and will add during the next few months a unit that will make the entire display one of the finest in America. On the fifth floor two new exhibit halls have been developed, one for old musical instruments and the other for our fine Oriental collection. A splendid women's section is nearing completion through the generosity of a friend of the Society.

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BEQUESTS AND Without bequests and gifts, progress would be at a much slower pace. GIFTS IMPORTANT The most important bequest of the past year was the \$50,000 bequest of the late S. A. Perkins, for many years very active in the Society and its President for 10 years. This will be used in developing a memorial hall in a new wing. The Society received many gifts of artifacts during the year, most of these having to do with early Washington history. Special mention should be made of the gift of a collection of autographed photographs by the late S. A. Perkins. This collection was

recognized as one of the largest collections of its kind in America. As the activities of the Society expand more bequests of this kind may be expected.

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BOARD ORGANIZATION As a part of this Report is included a roster of the Officers
IS STATEWIDE and Board Members of the Society. This is done to show that the Society is truly statewide. Every part of the state is represented on the Society's Board of Curators. Members of the Board are selected because of their interest in Washington history, their standing in their part of the state and willingness to devote time to the work of the Society.

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ADDITIONAL SPACE It would not be fair to the work of preserving our state's
AN URGENT NEED history not to leave with the Legislature an awareness of the need for additional space. Individual cooperation with the state in meeting this need is certain. The present building was completed in 1915 and nothing has been added save the partial fifth floor through W.P.A. Through the development of a very reasonable expansion program, this state would have one of the most interesting historical museums in the entire country. This is not said with the thought of bringing pressure to bear, but simply as a statement of a fact which we are sure members of this body are interested in. Considering the state's great educational program, for which millions are spent annually, the state's investment in her State Historical Society is extremely modest.

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SPECIAL EXHIBITS When the Ferry Museum was deeded to the State Historical Society
A REGULAR FEATURE a continuation of that body's interest in art was mandatory. Special exhibits are hung in the gallery each month. During Museum Month the paintings, all new, were devoted to incidents and places in Washington history. The Society has been able to give encouragement to an increasing number of Washington artists through the special exhibits.

AN INVITATION TO VISIT THE BUILDING In the rush of a legislative session a visit to the Society's building in Tacoma may not be possible, but during the year the Society cherishes the hope that every member of the Legislature may find it possible to visit our building and see first-hand what is being done toward preservation of Washington's historical heritage and dissemination of the Washington story. Few, if any, historical museums are more strategically located than Washington's building overlooking Commencement Bay. Until one enters the building it is difficult to believe there are five floors.

Throughout the building there are nearly 20 exhibits that have been sponsored by individuals or companies. This cooperation has played a large part in making possible the development which has been completed during the past dozen years. Other special projects are under consideration. Development of this type and constant changing of displays makes it possible to say truthfully that no single visit in a month or year will suffice. An increasing number of citizens are finding regular visits most rewarding. Time spent in the Library will prove most interesting. In addition to the hundreds of books, maps and manuscripts, the Society owns the famous Asahel Curtis collection of more than 40,000 photographic plates and negatives, one of the finest collections of its kind in the entire country.

The hours are 9 to 5 daily except Monday, when the building is closed, and from 2 to 5 on Sunday.