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SUMMARY OF FIFTEEN YEARS AS DIRECTOR OF THE

WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

August 9, 1958

A Director cannot accomplish very much alone. He must have a team working with him. I have been fortunate in the personnel on our staff, and the Society has also been. As my connection with the Washington State Historical Society as active Director draws to a close, I would like to review briefly the past 15 years, a period which will remain in my memory as one of the most interesting periods of more than fifty years of very active life.

In turning back the pages to 1944 I want to begin by paying a very high tribute to my predecessor, the late W. P. Bonney. He carried forward the work of this Society in the face of very great difficulties. It would be impossible to find a man more loyal to this Society than Mr. Bonney. He brought together a great number of Washington and Northwest artifacts. Many accessions have been received in the succeeding years but during the earlier years it was possible to secure many things not available today and Mr. Bonney overlooked no opportunity to bring to this building material that would strengthen the work of the Society in the preservation and dissemination of Washington and Northwest history.

In the earlier days of the Society it was not easy to convince members of the Legislature that history was important. While this building had been erected almost entirely through the gifts of interested citizens, it lacked many things today regarded as essential. The building had no elevator and no heating plant, simply a pipeless furnace suitable for a five-room house.

In paying tribute to the work of Mr. Bonney before 1944, I would be remiss if I did not pay tribute to the work of the late S. A. Perkins during those first years of my directorship. Mr. Perkins spent all of his time during the 1945 and 1947 sessions at Olympia and to him more than anyone else are we indebted for today having an adequate heating plant and an elevator capable of serving our needs. He also worked tirelessly toward getting more nearly adequate financial support. We are still far from the goal but will ever remain indebted to Mr. Perkins for the work he did in those early Legislative sessions and up to the time of his last illness. He served the Society 10 years as President and I found him never too busy to discuss the problems of this Society.

Nor would I overlook the wonderful contact I had with Mr. Weyerhaeuser during the three years he served as President. One of the busiest men in the Northwest, Mr. Weyerhaeuser never was too busy to discuss the Society's problems, either in his office or in the building, which he visited very frequently. When he took office he knew very little of the work of the Society but as the months passed he became intensely interested in our work. I never will forget my contacts with this great citizen.

The Presidency of this Society has called busy men to service and this has been true of Mr. Odlin, who will be readily recognized as one of the busiest men in this state. It has been a privilege to work with Mr. Odlin. He has been a tower of strength for the Society and we have been extremely fortunate in being able to command his services.

Selection of a Board of Curators is something that should never be left to

chance. Ours is a State Society and its Board should represent different parts of the state and members should also be deeply interested in the preservation of the state's history and its dissemination. Through the years an excellent Board of Curators has been brought together and it has been a privilege to work with the men and women of this Board. Some outstanding men and women have passed on to their reward during the past 15 years, but they will not be forgotten by me.

A Director cannot accomplish very much alone. He must have a team working with him. I have been fortunate in the personnel on our staff, and the Society has also been fortunate. We have the same number of people on our staff that we had in 1944--at the moment less--but the work load has increased many times. This would not have been possible without individual members of the staff being efficient and loyal to the Society. Our's has not been a changing staff and for that reason it has been possible to carry forward a continuing program of development. Without loyalty to the Society we could hardly continue our staff through the years for we are still considerably below the salary level at Olympia for comparable work.

During the past 15 years the Society has carried forward numerous important historical responsibilities. In 1946 we joined with the British Columbia Historical Society in sponsorship of the Boundary Treaty Centennial, directing attention to an event of very great importance not only to the Northwest but to the civilized world. In 1953 the Society directed the state's observance of her Territorial Centennial. An effort was made to carry that event and its significance into every community in Washington through Schools, newspapers, radio, television and organizations of all kinds. It is very easy to look back and think of things that might have been done, but with the very small amount of money made available the record is one the Society need not be ashamed of. Many communities in Washington became acquainted with the State Historical Society for the first time. Maintaining a tangible contact with every part of the state is a problem particularly before a Society located some distance from the center of the state. In 1955-56 the Society participated in the Northwest observance of the Lewis & Clark Sesqui-centennial. No money had been appropriated for this work so it was necessary to call upon many agencies for cooperation. Currently, at the request of the Governor, the Society is sponsoring the observance of the Theodore Roosevelt Centennial. No money was appropriated for this sponsorship so it has not been possible to do too much, but the Society has been happy to go as far as its limited budget might permit. All of these events have played a part in the preservation of Washington history and its dissemination. We should keep before us constantly that Washington is one of the fastest growing states in the Union, that many thousands of our citizens know next to nothing of what was involved in adding the 42nd star to our nation's flag. Centennial events are coming up now all over the state and the Society will do well to cooperate with them as much as possible. I have put together a few pages of suggestions for communities undertaking anniversary celebrations and these are being called for frequently.

From my vantage point it has been possible to evaluate one of the goals set by this Society--a local society in every county in Washington and, when conditions warrant, a local museum. If preservation of Washington history is to become more than a phrase, it must take root at the local level and it is extremely difficult for this to happen without active encouragement and direction from the State Historical Society. This is the procedure in other states and it is the proper procedure here, in my opinion. Fifteen years ago there were no active county historical societies. Today there are societies in no less than 21 of the 39 counties and several more are in the formation stage. Of necessity, progress has been somewhat slow in this field without a staff representative available to cover the state. It has been necessary to wait until some one in a county writes for advice as to procedure. Under the circumstances the results are far beyond expectations. Valuable assistance has been promised by the

State Federation of Women's Clubs, which has a committee set up to assist in the organization of historical societies in counties where there is none at present, also the Daughter of Pioneers. The development of local museums has been phenomenal. Of course they are not perfect. State funds are not available and probably will not be in the foreseeable future, and time is required to develop financial support through local governmental agencies. Progress at this point has been splendid, boards of county commissioners being quite ready to recognize the value of museums in which relics from the local area are displayed. Some excellent museums have been developed in a very few years, notably Yakima, Kelso, Port Townsend, Port Angeles, Walla Walla, Cashmere, Wenatchee, Cathlamet, Vancouver, Colville, Port Orchard, Eastsound, Everett, Moses Lake. Volunteer work is featured in all of these projects. Washington now has the best law in the United States empowering local governments to cooperate with local historical societies and museums.

Something more seems warranted above saying that museums are to be found in certain communities. In each case outstanding community cooperation has been involved with our Society rendering service whenever possible.

Yakima, city and county, were challenged to meet a gift of \$65,000 and given 18 months in which to reach the goal. The goal was set at \$85,000 to allow for interior development. The newspaper and radio support given this project was something to be proud of. The goal was reached in less than six months and today Yakima has a truly outstanding museum. When the first museum was started by the Daughters of Pioneers in the basement of the City Hall, the ladies had a display case with nothing in it. This new museum is full, and with Yakima Valley historical artifacts.

Up at Eastsound on Orcas Island, a group of history enthusiasts set out to put together a museum. Five pioneer cabins were donated by the owners, but these had to be moved to the museum site in Eastsound and put into condition for museum use. Three cabins are in place, put in first class condition and filled with local relics. Hundreds of hours of work have been donated, also money needed. Two more cabins will be moved as soon as the local group can get together sufficient labor hours and dollars. They are doing a great work.

Port Angeles worked out a unique plan. I attended the organization meeting about 10 years ago, suggesting a museum as a goal for the future. Under their plan, Society members raised money for material and the Manual Training Department of the High School did the work. The boys gained experience and the community gained a fine museum located on National Park land. It will be used jointly by the Historical Society and the National Park Service. The museum was dedicated early this summer.

At Port Townsend a very aggressive society has a museum in the City Hall. It has grown to such an extent that the city council has given the Society additional space.

One of the state's finest examples of community cooperation is found at Cashmere, where the Chelan County Historical Society was organized last year. The city has opened a new park in a very strategic location near the new highway and river. Every civic organization in Cashmere has had a part in the project. The number of donated hours is now up in the thousands and the building will be completed in the very near future. Both city and county governments will participate in support of the museum.

Speakers familiar with early Washington history are always on safe ground in calling attention to the determination of pioneers. This trait was not allowed to expire a century ago. In Wahkiakum County R. G. Hughes of Cathlamet had been working for years toward a historical Society and museum. Last spring work was to start.

A man was to do a little blasting for the basement. When the blast went off the results were many times beyond expectations. It would have been easy to guess that the Wahkiakum County Historical Society would be out of business for some time, but not those folks. In an unbelievably short time Mr. Hughes reported that the building was enclosed. How they did it would be a good guess, but they did it. The building will be used by the Society and city library.

Kitsap County, one of the first organized, has had a couple of rooms in the courthouse, filled with this Society's surplus cases; The city of Bremerton has recently given the Society space for a museum in a new city park.

The Island County Historical Society was re-activated last Spring and a program has been worked out with the State Parks Commission for development of the building at Fort Casey, which has been taken over by the Commission. This should work out very well.

The Snohomish County Historical Society has just been given a building by the government, and can now go ahead with museum plans upon which they have been working for a number of years.

The Walla Walla County Pioneer and Historical Society has recently been given space in the City Hall and a very creditable museum will result.

Up in Colville the Society has a museum in the Library building.

In Clark County the Seroptomist Club has developed an excellent museum in Grant House on the Barracks Grounds. Grant County Historical Society has the ground for a museum at Soap Lake and results can be expected at any time.

A new museum at Moses Lake houses the Adam East collection but the Society can claim no credit for this fine project.

It would be difficult to say too much for what has happened through the years in Cowlitz County. First it was the organization of the Society. Then one of this Society's cases in the corridor of the courthouse. Next several of our cases in the P. U. D. office in Longview. Then half the third floor in the courthouse annex, and last year the entire floor. Many of this Society's surplus cases are in the museum down there. They now have a splendid museum, one which will draw many visitors and hundreds of school children in their study of Washington history.

Pacific County Society has a good museum start and has rendered valuable service in marking historical spots in the county.

Historical societies are at work in Adams, Grays Harbor, Lincoln and Benton Counties, Benton being a new society. The first organization meeting has been held in Mason County, and the second is set for August 12. Preliminary steps have been taken in Skagit County and talk is under way in several other counties, where meetings probably will be called this fall. The first meeting has been held in Auburn for Southern King County.

In naming the local societies and museums above, I have listed ones in which this Society has had an active part. I have attended most of the organization meetings and along the line our office has been able to help these new groups. The balance of the distance to the goal of a local society in every county should not be difficult to attain. Women in the State Federation, which has a committee at work, Daughters of Pioneers, local newspapers and other civic groups can be brought into the picture.

No mention has been made of the societies in Spokane and Olympia, nor the Seattle Historical Society in that city. We can claim no credit for the splendid progress they have made but I have enjoyed the finest possible association with the directors of these societies.

It would seem to be in order to call attention to changes that have taken place in the building during the past 15 years. A former director of a large state historical society said in 1943 that our's was the worst museum mess in the country. He didn't realize the handicaps under which the Society functioned--lack of money and personnel. We still lack both money and adequate personnel but progress is being made at that point. However, it might be well to keep in mind that we have the same number on the regular payroll that we had 15 years although the work load has increased many times.

Changes have been made on every floor. In some instances the second series of changes has been made and more can and should be made. The first floor is still given over largely to pioneer transportation and life, although rearrangement has made possible the inclusion of many additional relics. The logs for the pioneer school were given by the St. Paul & Tacoma Lumber Co., while the city of Tacoma gave the development of the first power exhibit.

The second floor has seen a pretty complete change. We have some excellent bird habitat exhibits, which include eggs from the Bowles collection, this display was made possible by the Washington Hardware Co. and G. E. Karlen. On the same floor we have the Ben Cheney cougar-deer habitat, developed by John Gipple and Kenn Johnson. This habitat would be a credit to any museum. In the adjoining hall are found three pioneer rooms, which prove very popular. Here also is the remarkable exhibit developed by the Rock Hounds under the leadership of C. H. Robinson, Jr. I have never seen a finer example of dedicated work than has been given this project by the Rock Hounds. The Fluorescent exhibit is the finest in the United States. It would have a value of at least \$25,000 in donated labor and specimens. At the time this report was written it was nearing completion after many months of work. On this floor the marine section is getting a face-lifting at the present time. The Propeller Club of Tacoma is joining in the development of this section and the Society will have good reason to be proud of the results.

The third floor has seen more memorial cooperation than any other. The late S. A. Perkins took on the development of the photographic mural and other development of Washington Hall, investing about \$15,000 in the project. If duplicated today it would cost four or five times as much. Two beautiful United States and Washington flags were given by G. E. Karlen. In McCormick Hall memorial alcoves were possible. Today it might be possible to develop this hall along different lines but 15 years ago no funds were available and changes seemed very necessary. Sponsoring alcoves were Mr. and Mrs. W. L. McCormick, Edward Cushman, Mr. and Mrs. Frank H. Lamb, the Northern Pacific Railway, Brown & Haley, Mrs. B. E. Buckmaster, L. T. Murray, and Mr. and Mrs. Chapin Foster. In this hall we also have the replica of the Liberty Bell, a gift of the State Savings Bond division, and outside the replica of the Statue of Liberty, gift of Rainier Council, Boy Scouts of America.

On the fourth floor we have the Indian-Alaska sections. A group of Yakima pioneers are responsible for a very valuable Indian tepee exhibit, and Arthur N. Ballard of Auburn gave the model of a Coast Indian house. On this floor is located the Library which has undergone a pretty vigorous program of face-lifting.

The women's section on the fifth floor, the gift of Mrs. Henry O. Wheeler is the only memorial gift but the floor has been radically changed. Instead of a art

gallery, occupying the entire floor; we now have a smaller but very popular art section, an Oriental section and one devoted to pioneer musical instruments as well as the women's section.

To the late Joseph Long, Sr. we were indebted for the lawn north of McCormick Hall, and to the Capital District Garden Clubs for the shrubbery around the building. Without their help these improvements would have been impossible at the time. J. P. Weyerhauser Jr., was responsible for sandblasting the stone columns and front of our building, together with other help.

Through the Society's News-Letter, started in 1945, it has been possible to assist local societies by acting as a clearing house for them. Through the News-Letter these local societies are able to know what other societies are doing. This has proven of great value to them. At least, that is what they say. I am convinced that encouragement of local societies and providing them with a clearing house of information is one of the most valuable services we render, and by all means should be continued.

The Society has enjoyed the most cordial relations with the means of communication in this state--newspaper, radio, television. My long association with the press in Washington has made it possible to maintain contacts easier than might otherwise have been possible. Newspapers of the state have been quick to give the Society publicity. This has been particularly true of the Tacoma News-Tribune. More and more over the state, newspapers are featuring local history. Newspapers with magazine sections, such as the Seattle Times, Spokesman-Review, Tacoma News-Tribune, Wenatchee World, Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, and others have featured Washington history in their magazine sections week after week. Whenever possible I have taken occasion to compliment them on this work. The Seattle Times has featured a magazine cover in color featuring Washington history, week after week for years. Members of the Board are located in these cities and should take occasion to compliment editors on their interest in Washington history. This will pay rich dividends.

One of the most important services rendered in recent years has had to do with the public schools within a radius of 100 or more miles. About eight years ago a couple of teachers from the Highline district visited our building one Sunday afternoon. They asked if schools were permitted to send classes to visit the building. They were told that a program of face-lifting was in progress so we had hesitated sending out an invitation to schools for visits. They asked if there would be objection in case they could get the buses. They secured the buses and that started it. No formal invitation has been extended to the schools because the word has spread so efficiently that no formal invitation has been necessary. Upwards of 600 school groups visit the building in the course of a year. They are given a guided tour with attention directed to Washington and Northwest history. Visits are booked weeks and even months in advance and it is now very rare for a class to come without advance registration. The Pierce County Superintendent's office, in conjunction with the Seattle Highline District, made a very fine survey of the building and produced an outline which is sent to all schools planning a visit in their areas. Thus, the teachers know what to expect and can prepare their classes for the visit in order to get the most out of it. Many parents come in on Sunday with the word, "Johnny, or Mary, wouldn't give us any peace until we promised to come." We have just about reached the point where a second receptionist efficient in this field of service, is needed. During the spring it is necessary to turn down many classes because we cannot handle them properly. The importance of teaching Washington History to our young people cannot be over-emphasized, and to come in contact with relics having to do with the early days of our state, makes a deep impression on our young people.

Pictures were taken throughout the building about 1943. During the past year Mr. Taplin has taken pictures at the same spots where the camera was placed at that time, so far as possible. This album shows what has been done in the development of the interior of the building during the past 15 years. It should be noted that in the pictures of the museum before 1944 there is every evidence of a wealth of material for display. This sentence, therefore, ties in with my tribute to the foundation laid by the late W. P. Bonney, to whom I have stood indebted during the subsequent years. There never has been a time when the need was not apparent for development of the interior of this building. That need exists today, although there is a pretty solid foundation on which to build. With the staff we have been planning to put more education into the exhibits on the different floors. That is not an overnight job. It requires study and research and with such a limited staff, time is required. It has seemed important to first get the house in order and then go on to add education to the exhibits.

For at least 10 years a possible new wing has been in the picture. The late Mr. Perkins and I discussed it many, many times and he left the Society \$50,000 for the development of one floor in a new wing. It was discussed frequently with the late Mr. Weyerhaeuser. At his direction, tentative plans were drawn. Models were built of two floors which called for somewhat unusual treatment, at least in our 'dreams'. When the Governor called for capital outlay programs that might be projected over a period of years, this Society was in a position to be first in submitting such a plan. The blueprints already drawn were submitted, together with information requested by the Budget Department. A hearing on this proposal was held July 16th so everything that could be done up to the present time has apparently been done. This does not mean that the Society's project has been approved. Our's was the second hearing scheduled, in a ten-day schedule of hearings. Final action will rest with the Legislature, which will have to provide funds for the state's capital outlay program.

This project cannot be taken for granted. It is a necessary project. This state is near the top in educational construction. With the teaching of Washington history compulsory, it is very important that the center of the state's historical preservation be just as modern and up-to-date as any other educational unit in the state. That is all the Society has proposed, that the state's historical program be kept in line with other educational development. I have said many, many times in Talks that the man who wrote "To know what it cost to put the stars in our flag is to steel ourselves to the task of keeping them shining there" wrote something which citizens of this state should keep in mind. We have been very busy growing to a great state, but we simply cannot reach the heights we might otherwise attain if we neglected the history of what went into placing the 42nd star in our flag. Members of this Board have it in their power to ultimately, if not very soon, to get this additional wing. The Pierce County legislative delegation will be in the front line trenches and can be counted on to do its part if they know the complete story. Keeping them posted will be the task of this Board.

During this period the Society has not been in a position to re-enter the publication field. Earlier books published by the Society, notably "Building a State", have proved exceedingly valuable in the study of Washington History. This is particularly true of "History of Fort Vancouver", which was published last year. While this volume may not qualify as a 'best seller' it will ever remain one of the best sources of information on the period of history based upon Fort Vancouver and the Hudson's Bay Company.

Something should be said as to visitors in general. Fifteen years ago you could count the Sunday attendance on the fingers of a couple of hands. Today we think nothing of the Sunday attendance running into several hundreds, with figures above

1,000 quite frequently. More and more Tacoma people are visiting the building and making it a point to bring their guests to the building. The out-of-state visitors, however, continue to increase at a gratifying rate. Many states are represented on our registration pages, and an increasing number of foreign countries. Within the month a Michigan college professor and his family visited the building. He said that no less than four times in driving across the state, he was told to visit our building. That's a top-quality compliment very much appreciated. The out-of-state visitors are, as a rule, very appreciative and go out of their way to pass along compliments to members of the staff.

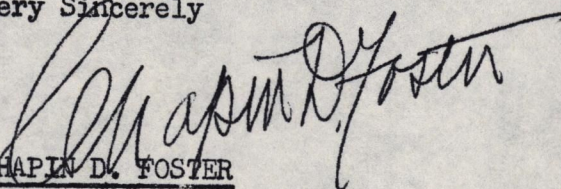
It has been noted that the size of our staff has remained stationary for 15 years, even though our appropriations have increased quite steadily. Our's is a part of the state's educational system, a very important part. Other branches of this system are securing appropriation increases with each succeeding legislature. It would seem that this society should not hesitate in putting its case before the Legislature, members of which are becoming increasingly conscious of the value of history, its preservation and dissemination.

Several years ago, somewhat as an experiment, a series for newspaper use "This Week in Washington History" was inaugurated. Our Library has done the research on this project. A very substantial number of papers use the service and more are using it all the time. Recently a lady told the Director that the series is giving her a new interest in Washington history. When it seemed that a new release might not reach him in time, an Eastern Washington editor wrote to urge speed--that he hadn't missed an issue since it started. This service falls into the category of "preservation and dissemination" and also gives the name of this Society some very fine circulation over the entire state. There will be real disappointment among editors if this service is ever discontinued.

It probably is not within the province of a retiring Director to offer too much advice to members of a Board of Curators. We have a great Society to which has been committed a great responsibility in Washington. Initial responsibility rests with the staff but members of the Board can be of inestimable value by keeping closely in touch with the work of the Society. Members of the Board are the public relations representatives in their areas. It is important that they keep as closely in touch with the work of the Society as possible. Attendance at Board meetings is hardly enough. Those living at a distance can keep in touch by mail, and when in the vicinity of Tacoma pay the Society headquarters a call. Those living near Tacoma can make frequent visits and those living in Tacoma should cultivate the museum-visiting habit. All of this will pay rich dividends for the Society and for the state.

I am confident this report will be taken in the spirit in which it is written. For 15 years I have lived very close to this Society's project, being here during the day, naturally, but also evenings and off-days. Such a schedule cannot but develop a very intense interest in the work of the Society and its future possibilities. I speak for my successor your heartiest support and am confident that he will render the Society a service of which it will be proud. The Board has honored me with the title of Director Emeritus for life. That means that as long as I live I can be called upon for whatever advice and service to the Society I can render.

Very Sincerely


CHAPIN D. FOSTER

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