

## County Historical Societies

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ISSN 0003-4827

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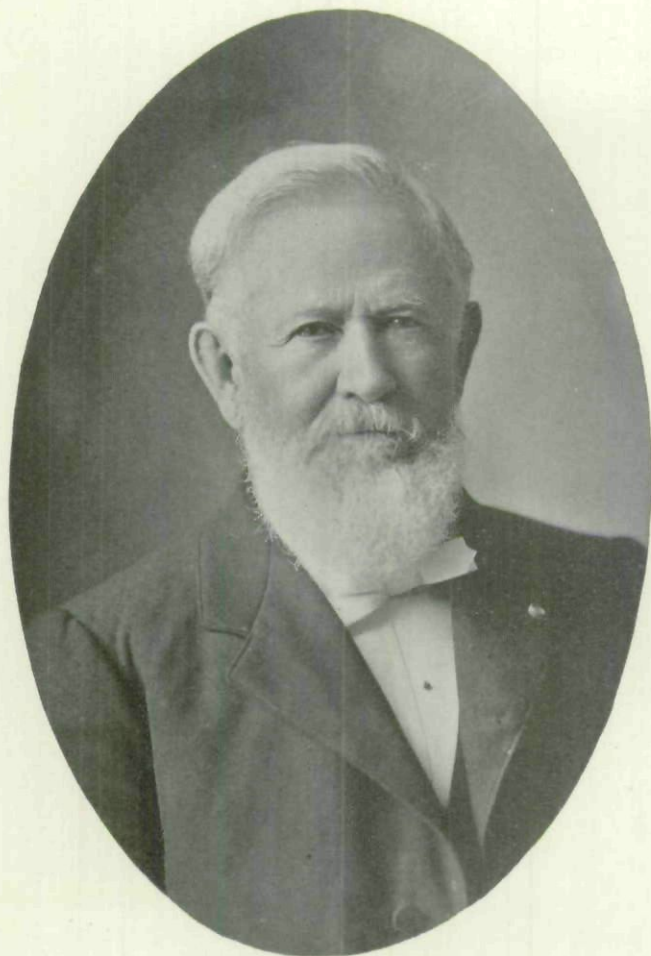
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### Recommended Citation

Dungan, Warren S. "County Historical Societies." *The Annals of Iowa* 6 (1903), 55-62.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.2908>

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*Yours Truly*  
*Warren S. Dungan*

HON WARREN S. DUNGAN.

State senator Ninth General Assembly; Lieutenant-Colonel Thirty-fourth Iowa Infantry, 1862-1865; member Iowa House of Representatives Eighteenth and Nineteenth General Assemblies; State senator Twenty-second and Twenty-third General Assemblies; Lieutenant-Governor, 1894-1895. This portrait was engraved from a photograph taken on his 80th birthday.

## COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETIES.

BY COL. WARREN S. DUNGAN, CHARITON, IOWA,  
*President of the Lucas County Historical Society.*

On the 10th day of June, A. D. 1901, a County Historical Society was organized in Lucas county, with gratifying results thus far. This was the first county historical society organized in Iowa, and its success is being watched, with much interest, in all parts of the State.

What are the objects and benefits of such a society? Blot out the past history of the world and the midnight darkness which at once surrounds you gives a practical illustration of the value of the light of history. Whatever use the present makes of the light which history sheds upon its pathway measures the benefits of such a society.

We are all justly proud of Iowa. And for what? For what she has done and for what she is. The archives of the State contain much of the story of her splendid career. While much, very much, of what would have been of supreme interest to us now, and to those who will succeed us, has been lost forever because never written; it has passed away with the memories which alone contained it. The county society, becoming auxiliary to the State Historical Department, can garner up much that would otherwise go into oblivion. . . . The people of Iowa are justly proud of this department. It represents one of the highest achievements of her civilization. . . . No citizen of Iowa can go through and view the collections in this department to-day, without wondering at their extent, variety and great value, nor go away without increased pride in the State possessing so inestimable a treasure. Should not every citizen of Iowa take an interest in this great work and do what he can to advance the interests of this department?

I suggest one way by which this can be done: Organize a county historical society in each county in the State. We claim for Iowa the first place among our sister states for in-

telligence, as well as a leading place in many of our agricultural products and, indeed, for the habit of getting to the front almost everywhere, why not bend our energies to place our historical department to the front also?

To this end do not depend wholly upon the State organization, but have a society in every county in the State and gather the material for a full and generous exhibit of the part taken by your county in building up so grand a State.

The future has demands upon us. Surely one of these will be that we furnish it with a full and correct story of the present. The county society can meet these demands more fully than the State society, and some of these where that society must otherwise fail. The State society will contain but little of the biography of the so-called "common people," the people who made the State what it is, but it will be largely confined to the biography of those who held high official positions, and to those who have distinguished themselves by their achievements in the field of statesmanship, art and literature, in war and in peace; while the local society will furnish the State society with the biography of these, if any be found in the county, it will, in addition thereto, place in the county archives the lives of the men and women, who, by their toil and energy, and courage, made the county what it is—the people whose memories appeal most strongly to the pride and gratitude of their descendants and of their successors in the county.

While we all delight in the story of the lives of great statesmen and great heroes, do we not all take an equal interest and often a peculiar delight in the story of the lives of those united to us by "the mystic cords of memory"—of ancestors, of friends of our youth, of neighbors who shared with us the hardships and privations incident to the settlement of a new country; or of those who stood shoulder to shoulder with us on many a sanguinary battlefield, although their names are so obscure as never to receive favorable mention on the lists in the archives of the State.

Remember with what eagerness and persistency the descendants of our revolutionary ancestors, and those of colonial times, are to-day searching the records for evidence of their ancestor's loyal service to the cause of liberty, upon which to base their eligibility to membership in the patriotic civic societies of the present. Not only provincial, national and state archives are being examined for that purpose, but those of counties and townships, churches, tax lists, muster rolls, entries in Bibles and the engravings on tombstones, pictures and every scrap of writing or printing which may cast any light upon the subject of inquiry.

Is it practicable? Wherever you can find a few men and women with public spirit enough to take hold of this matter and conduct its affairs, there you will also find patriotic men and women who will be liberal enough to commence and continue the work to final success. In what county in Iowa can you not find more than a few of such intelligent and patriotic citizens who will devote a little of their time and means for the accomplishment of so noble an enterprise? Surely there is not one. The extent of the success achieved depends upon the zeal and financial ability of the members of each particular society. There is no necessity for a large outlay to begin and carry forward to success the affairs of the society. Better begin with limited means than not to begin at all. The interest will grow as the work progresses.

Had there been county historical societies in colonial and revolutionary times such as we propose, what infinite satisfaction would the perusal of their records afford their descendants at this time. The county society gathers up all that is attainable of the past history of the settlement and growth of the county, and of each part thereof, by those most interested and who alone know the facts, before they go into oblivion; and, in addition thereto, it gathers up and preserves in durable and accessible form the current history of the county and its people. From the county society can be selected all that would be of state-wide interest and contrib-

uted to the State Historical Department, and the residue, which will be the greater portion, may be kept for local reference and for the use of the future historian of the county.

As an example, take the society in Lucas county. We adopted a constitution and by-laws, and elected officers. We depend upon the membership fees, annual dues and voluntary donations for funds to conduct the society. The officers of the Chariton free library offered us room in the library for our collections free of charge. Miss Margaret W. Brown, the librarian, was chosen curator. No officer receives pay for services.

Our beginning has been small but the progress has been satisfactory. We have two other associations in this county, working along parallel lines with our society: The Old Settler's and the Veteran Association, both have, by resolution, become auxiliary to the county society, and donate to it all the material they accumulate of biography, history and all that pertains to the civil and military affairs of the county, past and present.

I conclude:

1. That an efficient county historical society can be conducted on a successful basis with a small outlay at the beginning.
2. That such a society in each county in the State would be of great service to the State Historical Department.
3. That it would be of peculiar and of very great advantage and interest to the citizens of the several counties.
4. That it would be of incalculable interest and value to the future historian of the county.

The county society, in its gleanings, need not be confined to that which relates alone to the county, but may include matters of state and national interest.

The periodical publication of a society's accumulated matter must be governed by the financial demands upon it.

Speed the day when a county historical society will exist in every county of our beloved Iowa!—*Bulletin of the Iowa Library Commission, Vol. 2, No. 4.*

## PIONEER PROTECTION FROM HORSE THIEVES.

BY JAMES E. PARKER.

At a meeting of the citizens of Douglas township, at the Red School House, Clay county, Iowa, on the 15th day of November, A. D. 1870, for the purpose of organizing a society for the mutual protection of its members from the depredations of horse thieves, the following business was done, to-wit: On motion Samuel Mills was chosen temporary president, and J. J. Duroe temporary secretary.

The above words quoted from the minutes of the society, as kept by its secretary, J. J. Duroe, illustrate the spirit with which the Sioux Rapids Vigilance Committee was formed. At this time the country about Sioux Rapids in the southern part of Clay and northern part of Buena Vista counties was sparsely settled. Communication was very slow, and it was seldom that the stolen property was ever recovered, and still less often that the thief was apprehended. The settlers who were, with but few exceptions, poor, could ill afford to bear the loss of a horse.

In the fall of 1870 several horses were stolen in the community, of which no trace could be found. The people were thoroughly aroused, and for their own protection, decided to take matters into their own hands. After discussing the question among themselves a call was issued for a meeting at the Red School House, November 15, 1870. J. J. Duroe and Samuel Mills were two of the prime leaders of this movement. At this meeting Samuel Mills was elected president of the society, David Watts, vice president, Peter Dubois, treasurer, and J. J. Duroe, secretary. A committee consisting of Samuel Mills, J. J. Duroe, and David Watts was chosen to draft a constitution and by-laws and report at the next meeting, after which the society adjourned.

On November 29th, at 6 p. m., the society met pursuant to adjournment, and the committee on by-laws made the following report, which was unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, Several horses have been stolen in this vicinity; and, whereas, it is very difficult to reclaim the stolen property or to arrest the thief;

therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Clay and Buena Vista counties, do hereby agree to unite in a mutual society to protect ourselves from the depredations of horse thieves; and we do further agree to be governed by the following laws, with such amendments as may be hereafter made by the society.

ARTICLE 1. The officers of this society shall be a president, whose duty shall be to preside at the meetings of the society, call special meetings whenever he may think best, and give all orders for the reclaiming of any stolen horse or the capture of the thief. A vice president who shall perform the duties of the president whenever that officer shall be absent or unable to serve. A treasurer who shall hold, account for, and pay out on the order of the president, countersigned by the secretary, all the funds of the society. A secretary whose duty it shall be to record all the proceedings of the society and countersign the president's orders on the treasurer.

ARTICLE 2. The terms of each officer shall expire whenever the majority of the society shall require a change of officers.

ARTICLE 3. No person shall be admitted a member without first paying one dollar to the treasurer.

ARTICLE 4. Each member shall obey all orders of the president.

ARTICLE 5. It shall be the duty of every one, as ordered by the president, to go at any distance not exceeding fifty miles, at his own expense, in search of a stolen horse or to catch a thief.

ARTICLE 6. If any person shall go more than fifty miles in search of a stolen horse or to catch a thief he shall be allowed a reasonable compensation for his extra service.

ARTICLE 7. The officers shall be elected by the members of the society and shall be elected by the majority.

ARTICLE 8. It shall be the duty of each member to keep a written description of all his horses, and he shall deliver to the president as soon as any horse shall be stolen a minute description of such horse.

ARTICLE 9. The word horse shall be construed to mean horse, mule or ass.

ARTICLE 10. If the owner does not within ninety days receive his stolen horse the society shall pay him two-thirds of the value of his horse.

ARTICLE 11. The president shall appoint three disinterested persons to appraise the value of the lost horse, whose duty it shall be to report the true value of such horse to the society.

ARTICLE 12. The president shall not offer as reward for the recovery of any stolen horse and capture of any thief more than fifty dollars.

ARTICLE 13. The constitution may be amended at any regular meeting by a majority vote of the society.

ARTICLE 14. If a stolen horse is recovered at any time after ninety days it shall be the property of the society unless the owner shall within ten days after the recovery, pay to the treasurer all money he may have received from the society in accordance with Article 10.

ARTICLE 15. Any member refusing or neglecting to obey the orders of the president, or refusing or neglecting to pay the treasurer the amounts



that shall be assessed to him by the society, shall be expelled and not admitted thereafter.

ARTICLE 16. Annual meetings shall be held on the last Saturday of October of each year.

Those who signed their names to the by-laws as charter members were Samuel Mills, Ephriam Sands, J. P. Mills, W. J. Cinzier, Samuel M. Mills, David Watts, Peter Dubois, Jesse E. Mills, John Jones, Robert Jones, J. J. Duroe.

There being a large number living in Buena Vista county who wished to join, the next meeting was held at Sioux Rapids, November 5th, at which time the following were received as members: Abner Bell, T. G. Thomas, John Fancher, David Halkney, David Evens, W. R. Thomas, Gilbert, Halver-son & Co., Thomas Evens, Francis Kidman, Stephen Dubois, John Watts, J. E. Francis.

At this meeting a rule was adopted that "every horse of this society shall be branded on the left shoulder with a figure 3."

As soon as the society was organized hundreds of hand-bills were printed and scattered broadcast over the country. On these bills were printed in large letters "*Horse Thieves, Beware!*" Then followed a short statement to the effect that a society had been organized with the avowed purpose of ridding the country of horse thieves, which was signed by the officers and members of the committee. The notices had the desired effect. The horse thieves took warning, and for several years not a single horse was stolen in the community. The society continued to hold meetings and publish notices from time to time to let every one know that it was in working order; but as the years went by and no horses were stolen, and the community became more settled, interest began to wane. No notices or bills had been published for some time when suddenly in the fall of 1879 two or three horses became missing, among the losers being O. G. Tabor who never discovered a trace of his lost property.

Immediately all was excitement again. In response to a

call from the president a meeting was held at the post office in Sioux Rapids, October 4, 1879, at one o'clock p. m. G. W. Struble was elected vice president, and John Halverson, treasurer, to fill vacancies. David Tillet, O. G. Tabor, G. W. Struble, and Knudt Stennison were admitted as members; and for the benefit of those who wished to join before the next meeting, "The treasurer was instructed to receive members into the society on their payment to him of the required admission fee of one dollar; provided persons so admitted shall be subject to a majority vote of the society for confirmation or rejection." A motion was carried that the society be known and called the "Sioux Rapids Vigilance Committee," with its headquarters located at G. W. Struble's hotel at Sioux Rapids. A hundred handbills were ordered printed and the country again posted with notices.

At the next meeting J. M. Hoskins, Chas. Cuthbert and S. Olney, Sr., were received into membership.

These were the last members admitted to the society, and although its organization was kept up for some time afterward, its history as an active force may well be said to have ended with the winter of 1879-80. The object for which it had been organized had been accomplished. During its whole history not one of its members lost a horse, nor was it ever called upon to bring a thief to justice. And what justice the captured thief would have been brought to is well expressed by the words of one of its members: "We never had occasion to hunt down a thief after we organized, but if we had captured one we all knew what would have happened to him. He would never have stolen another horse!"

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THE Michigan Constitutional Convention have adopted a clause extending the elective franchise to Indians and their descendants and have adopted a resolution extending to the people, as a separate proposition, the question of extending the same to the African population.—*Western Democrat, Andrew, Iowa, Sept. 6, 1850.*

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