

Sparko

Chicago, Jan. 2, 1896.

(10)

Dear Dr. Harper:-

Although aware that numberless projects are brought to your attention and that my position in the University of Chicago makes the action presumptuous, I venture to place with you this memorandum which may recall to your mind the subject presented below should occasion arise at any time when you would wish to investigate further.

While in Harvard, I was much interested in the work of the Old South Meeting House as conducted by Mr. Edwin D. Mead and since then have given the subject much attention. You are of course aware of the good it has done and is doing for the young people of Boston. From observation here and the little conversation I have had with citizens no less than from the tone of the public press, I am led to believe that the time is ripe for some such action in Chicago; not a copy but an improvement on the Boston plan; a modification which should recognize not young Emersons but young Americans; an extension into the adjacent fields of Civics and Sociology. In a recent letter, Mr. Mead informs me that Dr. Gunsaulus and Principal Belfield are much interested if not actually ready to begin this work here; but I believe that its home and even its inception lies in the University of Chicago.

If what I have written is not opposed to your thought and purpose and if the subject should arise in any connection, I should esteem it a favor to be called upon to submit a plan of procedure

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If what I have written is not opposed to your thought and purpose and if the subject should arise in any connection, I should esteem it a favor to be called upon to submit a plan of procedure

as it lies in my mind; this either oral or written.

Expressing my deep interest in the broad spirit in which the work of the University is conducted, I beg to remain,

Very respectfully yours,

To Dr. W. R. Harper,

Pres. University of Chicago,
Chicago.

Edwin E. Sparks,
(Univ. Extension Dept.)

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Very respectfully yours,

Edwin C. Spencer,

To Dr. W. R. Harper,

(Min. Extension Dept.)

Pres. University of Chicago,

Chicago.

Sparks

(27)

Chicago, January 18, 1896.

If Dr. Harper will pardon my thoughtlessness in not sending at the time a copy of the issue of Public Opinion to which I took the liberty of calling his attention, I will give myself the pleasure of forwarding one with this note. The writing is directed mainly toward the work of the public schools but will disclose something, I trust, on the general thought of a better training in national history and civic duties.

Again expressing my appreciation of the time given ^{me} from a busy life, I beg to remain,

Very respectfully,

To Dr. William R. Harper,
The University.

Edwin E. Sparks.

Harper

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Edwin S. Spencer

To Dr. William R. Harper,
The University.

Sparks

Chicago, Jan. 8, 1896.

Pres. William R. Harper,
Chicago.

(11)

My dear Sir:-

Complying with your request of the 4th inst. which awaited my return yesterday, I hasten to write out and beg leave to submit herewith a rough and undigested plan of the thought I had in mind about a public educational movement among the young people of Chicago. Of its practicability I am not at all convinced; of its desirability, there is no question in my mind. No doubt Dr. Judson and Dr. Small would be able to add many and more valuable suggestions. From a report which I have recently chanced upon, I am inclined to think that some such work has been attempted heretofore in Chicago and that possibly Mr. Belfield, of the Manual Training School, was interested. Of its degree of success or failure I am uninformed.

Chicago has no Old South to give a home and a name to the undertaking; it must depend upon public halls. Yet this has the advantage of taking the work nearer its constituency. Opportunity was lacking in the unexpected call for any estimation of probable expense; however I should have known better than to broach any subject to President Harper unless prepared for instant action.

If no further action seems possible, I beg to offer my thanks for the hearing.

Very respectfully yours,

Edwin E. Sparks.
(5740 Monroe Ave.)

3 min 25 sec
(2540 Morris Ave.)

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For the hearing.

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Pres. William R. Harper.

Chicago, Jan. 8, 1896.

*Historical
Museum*
The University of Chicago.

April 23, 1897.

Sparks.
128

My dear Dr. Harper:-

I have to thank you for the "copy" for programme of the first Convocation as an addition to the proposed Museum. It leads me to think that similar material for illustrating the growth of the University is daily being destroyed because its value has not been brought to public attention. Many students have valuable negatives showing appearance of parts of the campus before the erection of later buildings. When these students leave the University, the chances for securing prints from such negatives become very slight. This is but one instance. Before the close of the term I shall hope to have an interview with you in which some definite plan may be arranged.

I have had one thousand copies of a slip made, one of which I enclose. If you know where one or more would be useful at any time, I shall be glad to supply them.

Thanking you for the very kind manner in which you have met ^{with} the suggestion, I beg to remain,

Very truly yours,

Dr. Wm. R. Harper,

The President's Office,

University of Chicago.

Edwin E. Sparks

— The latest addition is a copy of the "wall paper" newspaper printed in Vicksburg during the siege of that city in 1863.

April 23, 1937

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The President's Office,

University of Chicago.

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printed in Vicksburg during the siege of that city in 1863.

THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL MATERIAL IN THE MIDDLE WEST.

Reprinted from *THE DIAL* of April 16, 1897.

Among the many phases of American history awaiting local investigation and record, few present so broad a field with such varying aspects, and thus far so little occupied, as the intermigration of the American people, the contributions of different race elements to various communities, and the evolution of existing government and society from them. In less than two and a half centuries, of which period over one century was consumed in crossing the Allegheny mountains, the people have traversed the three thousand miles of the continent, have swept three civilizations from their path, have carried with them always the image of the old home to be reproduced in the new, have invented forms of transportation and manufacture as necessity or opportunity offered, and have constantly evolved law and orderly self-government from the rude and jostling fragments of empire. Like "a deluge of men driven by the hand of God," wave after wave came on, in regular order; the Indian-fighter, the trapper and hunter, the trader, the fugitive and half-breed, the claim-jumper and squatter, the poor shiftless farmer, the moderate home-maker, the prosperous agriculturist, the small artisan, the exploiter and capitalist, the mill and factory army, and, last of all, the varied population of the great city, with its educated and professional classes, its wealth, and its proletariat.

But however picturesque this shifting panorama may be, it begins to have national weight and national interest only after its cycle is complete. Especially is this true from the standpoint of the investigating student. Sufficient time must elapse to allow the attendant circumstances to crystallize and the results to be manifest before investigation becomes profitable. Hence the wave which bears the student must be the last, and, indeed, must await its own peculiar agencies. Although it is a worthy boast of the emigrant that he went "to plant the common schools on distant prairie swells," yet intensive education comes only with the library, the college, and the university. For the Middle West, the cycle seems now complete. The colonization from the Eastern section is finished; the uncouthness of the West exists almost solely in the belated wit of the newspaper paragrapher; and the Universities of Chicago, of Wisconsin, of Kansas, are as much realities as those of Harvard and of Yale. But the work accomplished in the two regions cannot bear a comparison. Nearly every phase of self-government, the different phenomena of industrial development, the relative values of various social organizations, the evolution of national feeling from local prejudice,—all these have been thoroughly examined and the results recorded in the region lying east of the Alleghenies. West of that line the field is largely untouched. The older universities have long lists of historical "studies" and "annals"; in the newer ones the work has scarcely begun.

Obviously, the possibility of research work is in direct ratio to the material which has been preserved for it. The settlers in the older States, proud of their individuality, before the levelling "union" idea and larger means of transportation had done so much to efface sectional lines, possessing largely an agreement of tastes and motives, were more likely to preserve memorials and tokens of their daily lives than the more heterogeneous West, the product of all races and all ideas. Local pride was more easily aroused and material more easily preserved where the birth of civilization was the result of a religious or æsthetic principle, rather than crude materialism; where the nucleus of a village or city was a beautiful site or picturesque water-power, rather than a large industrial plant, the mouth of a mine, or that perfect type of uncouth materialism, a "boom" town.

Yet to a certain extent the newer region will profit by the example of the older. The necessity

of greater effort in the future for preserving this historical material will be more appreciated, its educational value better understood, and more effort made by institutions of learning to collect and properly care for it. For forty years the Wisconsin Historical Society has been engaged in such labor, with the result that Madison is now the Mecca for local investigators who can afford to travel. Yet the rarity of the case but proves how much more might be done if other agencies would bring similar influence to bear on their constituencies; and it also calls attention to the necessity of employing every means, as that society has done, to bring people to a realization of the value of this material and so prevent its further destruction. People are commonly willing to place their possessions at the disposal of students; but, naturally, they have no means of knowing respective values. A gentleman near the Mississippi carefully preserved a bound volume of some religious periodical of the last century (because of its date), and threw away a large and hence valuable collection of anti-slavery pamphlets which he had accumulated during his connection with that movement. The popular idea of historical material clusters about the word "relic." Nearly all the libraries of the Ohio and the Mississippi valleys have museums of varying size and value; but, embodying as they do articles nearest the affections and the curiosity of the people, their treasures consist largely of spinning-wheels, old furniture, Indian curiosities, and portraits of first settlers. Pamphlets and newspaper files are not so well known as are samplers and stone arrow-heads. Illustrations of the development of political and industrial life—broad-sides, posters, medals, badges, campaign song-books, ballots, banners, paper money, account books, photographs of historic events, public letters of prominent men, proclamations,—such things as these are rarely considered of sufficient value to find a place in a museum.

How to bring this matter to the attention of the general public, and thus insure the preservation of what has thus far escaped, is a practical problem that may well engage the attention of historical teachers and students in the Middle West. One often hears stories of the unconcerned destruction of manuscripts, pamphlets, and papers, of priceless value. The writer was once just too late to save a file of Richmond papers published during the trial of Aaron Burr. In another instance, a file of a Chicago daily from 1860 to 1880 was used gradually to kindle fires,—and this in face of the fact that to-day there is not open to the student in the city of Chicago a complete file of a Chicago daily paper back of the destructive year of 1871. The librarian of the Public Library at Keokuk, Iowa, has collected and bound a number of valuable pamphlets, largely Kansas-Nebraska and "abolition"; but the case is so unusual as to demand special notice. Although praiseworthy, the collection is pitifully meagre compared with similar ones to be found in almost any large library in the older States. There is pressing need of work to be done in collecting and preserving the material out of which students and historians are to describe the making of the West. If it be true that each generation creates afresh its heroes and idealizes a new territory, it would seem that the time has fully come when the political emancipation of the Mississippi region is sufficiently advanced to warrant its intelligent study in the light of the men who have accomplished its development. The renewed interest in Lincoln as a man and a statesman, and the reflected light on his not unworthy foeman, Douglas, the present regard of Cass, of Benton, and of other leaders, foretell the coming political investigation as clearly as the new study of internal improvements, the consequent migration of people, and the origin and growth of towns and local government, foretells the future lines of industrial and social inquiry. Some systematic method must be devised by which the material for such studies shall be preserved. EDWIN E. SPARKS.

The University of Chicago.

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My dear Dr. Harper:-

The very kind reception which a former plan of mine met at your hands tempts me to lay before you a project for an American History laboratory. I am aware of the impossibility of doing justice to the plan, especially to its extent, by condensing it in writing; but I have elected that method as less expensive of your time. Should the thought seem of any worth and a proper time arrive for taking it up, I should be pleased to appear before you or any Board or persons to explain more in detail and to show the little which I have collected by means of my own resources.

My work in Extension teaching has brought to my notice quite an amount of material which can be secured when the small sum necessary for binding and framing is available. The graduate students-- especially of the summer quarter-- will be valuable agents in this collecting and I see no reason why the plan should call for more than a few hundred dollars, scattered over several years. I have no doubt that the thought would appeal to some American citizen able to bear the entire expense if it could be brought to his attention.

My only request at present is your personal approval of the project so that I may say as much in soliciting, since immediate

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Very respectfully yours,

Samuel J. Rinehart

Dr. Wm. R. Harper,

The President's Office,

REGENT LINEN, W. S. & L.
MADE IN U. S. A.