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Article Summary: This is the text of the address made by the Robert W Furnas, President of the Nebraska State Historical Society, to its members at the Society's annual meeting in January of 1880.

ANNUAL ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT ROBT. W. FURNAS,

At Annual Meeting January, 1880.

“The study of history deserves serious attention, if only for a knowledge of transactions, and inquiry into the eras when each of them happened. Yet it does not concern us so much to know that there was once such men as Alexander, Cæsar, Aristides, or Cato, or that they lived in this or that period; that the empire of the Assyrians made way for that of the Babylonians, and the latter for that of the Medes and Persians, who were themselves subjected by the Macedonians, as those were afterward by the Romans. But it is of high concern to know by what methods those empires were founded; by what steps they rose to that exalted pitch of grandeur which we so much admire; what it was that constituted their true glory; and what were the causes of their declension and fall.

“It is of equal importance to study attentively the manners of different people, their genius, laws, and customs, especially to acquaint ourselves with the character and disposition, the talent, virtues, and even vices of those by whom they were governed, and whose good or bad qualities contribute to the greatness or decay. Such are some of the advantages which history presents, causing to pass in review kingdoms, empires, and men, thereby instructing us in the arts of government, the policy and maxims of civil society, and the conduct of life that best suits all ages and conditions. We acquire a knowledge of the manner in which arts and sciences were invented, cultivated, and improved. We discover and trace their origin and progress.”*

We make as well as study history. The general object of this organization, as presented in its constitution, is to encourage historical research and inquiry, spread historical information, especially within the state of Nebraska, and to embrace alike, aboriginal and modern history. The more particular objects, however, are to collect into a safe and permanent depository manuscripts, documents, papers, and facts possessing historical value worthy of preservation. To en-

* Rollin's History.

courage investigation of original remains, and provide in due time a complete scientific exploration and survey of such as exist within the borders of our own state, as well as the establishment of a library of books and publications appropriate to such an institution, with convenient works for reference, and also a cabinet of antiquities, relics, etc., etc., as all other states have done. This, as many of you are aware, has been commenced at other times, by other men, and the undertaking permitted to die for want of means or interest—perhaps both. There are many good reasons why this organization should and can be made a success. First, for reasons already given, Nebraska should make and preserve a historical record. For another equally and important reason the work should no longer be procrastinated. Many of the men and women, who first set foot on the soil now embraced within state limits, those who were present at Nebraska's birth, and who have been continuously with it to the present, are still alive. They are possessed of valuable historical facts and data. From these living eye-witnesses only can they be obtained. In the inevitable course of nature, a few more setting suns at best, and they will be gathered to their fathers. Much that is valuable, and which can now be had, will be forever lost. For this particular reason all the earlier historical matter possible should be made of record without further delay. One of the first duties of this organization should be to devise means by which this can be accomplished. This I cannot too strongly urge upon the members.

The secretary's report, which is the official record of this society, will inform you in detail what has thus far been accomplished.

The want of means has impeded efforts the officers have felt should be made to accomplish the objects of the association. Few men who manifest an interest in such matters are so circumstanced that they can afford either the time or means to carry it forward at their individual expense. The membership is quite limited, and therefore revenue from that source meagre. As it is an enterprise in nowise personal, but purely of a state character, there should be obtained from that source at least sufficient means to meet essential cash demands. A bill, making a small appropriation, passed the last legislature, but by some misfortune failed to become a law.

Among other provisions made at the organization of the state was one looking to the formation and fostering of a historical society. A

block of lots in the city of Lincoln was reserved and appropriated for that purpose, known as "historical block." There was organized about that time the "Nebraska State Historical Library Association," which was one of the organizations I have referred to. Through the efforts of those feeling an interest, and to hold the real estate named, this society was revived on the 20th of last month. Whether desirable or advisable to unite the two state historical organizations is a matter for consideration on the part of both.