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Origin of the Nebraska State Historical Society

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ORIGIN OF THE NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The present historical society was organized at the time, date, and under circumstances as hereinafter indicated. Some thirty or more days prior to Sept. 25th, 1878, the following circular was signed and generally published in state papers:

NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

The undersigned, impressed with the importance of collecting and preserving, in particular, such historical material as shall serve to illustrate the settlement and growth of the state of Nebraska, and knowing that much valuable to that end can now be obtained from living tongues and pens of those familiar from organization, and which may be lost by further procrastination, adopt this method of securing the organization of a state historical society. We call on friends of the object in view throughout the state to meet at the Commercial Hotel in the city of Lincoln, on the evening of Wednesday, September twenty-fifth, 1878, for the purpose herein indicated.

ALVIN SAUNDERS.	GEO. L. MILLER.
A. S. PADDOCK.	J. STERLING MORTON.
ROBERT HAWKE.	J. C. LINCOLN.
R. R. LIVINGSTON.	WM. ADAIR.
D. H. WHEELER.	J. L. EDWARDS.
E. LOWE.	ELAM CLARK.
JOHN L. CARSON.	E. B. FAIRFIELD.
SILAS GARBER.	G. C. BARTON.
FRANK WELCH.	E. H. ROGERS.
ROBT. W. FURNAS.	THOS. W. TIPTON.

The above circular letter was obtained by addressing the following letter to the parties:

BROWNVILLE, NEB., Aug. 12th, 1878.

MY DEAR SIR—Feeling, as I presume every citizen of this state does, the necessity for a state historical association, after some consultation with persons in several parts of the state, it is thought advisable to call a meeting at Lincoln on some day of the State Fair to effect the organization of a "state historical society." Would like your views, and, if favorably entertained, to use your name to such call. Please advise me at your earliest convenience.

Very truly yours,

ROBT. W. FURNAS.

In pursuance of this call the following meetings were held, and the organization perfected:

LINCOLN, NEB., Sept. 25th, 1878.

Pursuant to a call heretofore published, the following named gentlemen convened at the Commercial Hotel, Lincoln, Neb.:

Dr. George L. Miller, Chris. Hartman, and J. T. Allan, Douglas county; Gov. Silas Garber and H. S. Kaley, Webster county; S. R. Thompson, T. P. Kennard, W. W. Wilson, and Samuel Aughey, Lancaster county; Rev. J. M. Taggart and J. H. Croxton, Otoe county; C. H. Walker, Franklin county; Hon. L. Crouse and E. N. Grennell, Washington county; Prof. C. D. Wilbur, Saline county; J. Q. Goss, Sarpy county; D. H. Wheeler and Wm. Gilmore, Cass county; O. T. B. Williams, Seward county; L. B. Fifield, Buffalo county; Rev. L. B. W. Shryock and E. Shugart, Gage county; Wm. Adair, Dacotah county; and Robt. W. Furnas, Nemaha county.

Robt. W. Furnas called the meeting to order, and on his nomination Dr. George L. Miller was elected temporary chairman. R. W. Furnas was elected Secretary on motion of D. H. Wheeler.

Dr. Miller on taking the chair delivered a short, appropriate, and pressing address on the importance of forming a historical society, and regretting that it had not been done before.

On motion of S. R. Thompson, the Chair appointed the following gentlemen Committee on Organization: S. R. Thompson, J. Q. Goss, D. H. Wheeler, J. M. Taggart, and Lorenzo Crouse.

The committee in due time made the following report, which was adopted:

Your committee to which was referred the matter of organization,

report favorably, and recommend that the name of the organization be "Nebraska State Historical Society." That the officers be one president, two vice-presidents, treasurer, and secretary. Also a board of five directors. Membership to be elective, upon the payment of a fee and annual assessment to be agreed upon hereafter. Also that committees be appointed on permanent officers and constitution and by-laws.

In compliance with recommendations of the report the Chair appointed the following committees:

On Permanent Officers: T. P. Kennard, Silas Garber, E. N. Grennell, O. T. B. Williams, and C. D. Wilbur.

On Constitution and By-Laws: D. H. Wheeler, J. T. Allan, L. B. W. Shryock, J. H. Croxton, and Samuel Aughey.

On motion, the meeting then adjourned to meet at same place tomorrow evening.

GEO. L. MILLER,

Chairman.

ROBT. W. FURNAS,

Secretary.

LINCOLN, NEB., Sept. 26th, 1878.

Pursuant to adjournment the meeting convened with the following additional named gentlemen: H. T. Clark, Sarpy county; J. H. Brown, A. Humphrey, J. H. Ames, John Cadman, and A. G. Hastings, of Lancaster county; J. A. MacMurphy, Cass county; Hiram Craig, Washington county; J. J. Budd, Douglas county; F. J. Hendershot, Thayer county; S. A. Fulton, Richardson county; Theron Nye, Dodge county.

Dr. Miller, chairman, being absent, Gov. Silas Garber was called to the chair.

The Committee on Constitution and By-Laws, through Prof. Aughey, presented a constitution and by-laws, which, after being read in full, were adopted.*

Mr. Kennard, from the Committee on Permanent Officers, reported as follows, which report was adopted, and the officers declared duly elected:

*The constitution and by-laws as then adopted, and since amended, will be found in the Appendix to this report.

OFFICERS.

President—Ex-Gov. Robt. W. Furnas, Nemaha county.

First Vice-President—Dr. Geo. L. Miller, Douglas county.

Second Vice-President—Judge E. S. Dundy, Richardson county.

Treasurer—W. W. Wilson, Lancaster county.

Secretary—Prof. Samuel Aughey, Lancaster county.

Corresponding Secretary—D. H. Wheeler, Cass county.

Directors—Gov. Silas Garber, Hon. J. Sterling Morton, Prof. C. D. Wilbur, Dr. G. C. Monell, and Hon. Lorenzo Crounse.

The committee recommend that the President and Secretary be *ex-officio* members of the Board of Directors, which by vote was agreed to.

Meeting adjourned to meet again at the same place September 30th next.

SILAS GARBER,

Chairman.

ROBT. W. FURNAS,

Secretary.

PROCEEDINGS.

As the annual and quarterly convocations are mere business meetings it is not deemed important that the details be given in an annual report. The proceedings of the first meeting are presented in full because of its historic character. Of all others a mere summary is presented.

ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 23, 1879.

Met at library hall, University building, Lincoln. Old officers re-elected. Ordered that Recording Secretary perform duties of both corresponding and Recording Secretary. Matter of Historical block was discussed, and W. W. Wilson, H. T. Clark, and O. T. B. Williams appointed a committee to memorialize the legislature to restore said block to the Historical Society. Secretary ordered to publish in pamphlet form 1000 copies of Constitution and By-Laws, also to have

a book-case made to not exceed in cost \$16; \$20 appropriated to defray incidental expenses of Secretary's office for the year.

Secretary reported that he had corresponded with various individuals in the state with a view to obtain historical matter and data, and had received fair responses. That he had received also historical documents from other state societies. That he had labeled all books and papers received, and properly filed matter obtained in manuscript form. The secretary asked for authority to purchase letter files. Granted. He reported that room could be had in University building free of cost for book-case and other property of the Society. Accepted with thanks.

ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 20TH, 1880.

Met in University chapel, Lincoln. New members elected: Geo. W. Doane, S. G. Owen, L. A. Kent, H. B. Mathewson, John Heth, D. Butler, J. Dougherty, V. Vivquain, and J. M. Woolworth; Rev. Wm. Hamilton was made a life honorary member.

Old officers re elected except J. M. Woolworth, who was elected 1st Vice-President in place of Geo. L. Miller.

The question of Historical block was again brought up, and after discussion a committee consisting of C. O. Whedon, J. M. Woolworth, and J. R. Webster was appointed to examine and report on the legal aspect of the case and to obtain unity of action on the part of the old and dormant "Nebraska Historical and Library Association" and this organization.

Robt. W. Furnas, J. M. Woolworth, H. T. Clarke, J. A. MacMurphy, and S. Aughey, appointed a committee to secure the co-operation of County Historical and Old Settlers' Association with this.

By-Laws of the Society were amended providing for quarterly meetings at such places in the state as might be agreed upon. The first was fixed at Omaha, and Judge Savage invited to deliver an address on the "Discovery of Nebraska."

Secretary allowed \$25 for incidental expenses of his office and a salary of \$100 for the year 1880.

Secretary reported he had, in compliance with instructions, printed Constitution and By-Laws; that the legislature had been memorialized to restore Historical block, but by efforts of citizens of Lincoln the prayer was not granted; that the old society had commenced legal proceedings to obtain said block; that some historical data had been obtained from individuals and county authorities, and filed. The whole number of books and pamphlets received during the year was 83; of manuscripts, 41; of historical newspapers, 51; of those not yet classified, 75. Total, 250.

The Secretary reported considerable feeling in the state as to the diversion of Historical block by the legislature—taking it from the Society and giving it to the city of Lincoln.

ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 11TH, 1881.

Met at University chapel, Lincoln.

Mr. Woolworth presented the following report from the committee appointed to examine the legal status of Historical block matter :

310 SOUTH 13TH STREET,
OMAHA, July 21st, 1880.

To the State Historical Society :

Your committee, to whom was referred the matter of the block number twenty-nine, in the city of Lincoln, claimed to have been appropriated by the state of Nebraska to the purposes of the State Historical Society, have had the same under advisement and report as follows :

1. By an act of the legislature of the state entitled "An act to provide for the the seat of government of the state of Nebraska, and for the erection of public buildings thereat," approved June 14, 1867, the commissioners for selecting the site for the capital were required to make three plats thereof, on which, among other blocks, were to be laid out "public squares or reservations for public buildings," and these plats were to be made public records by filing them in certain public offices.

2. The commissioners, having selected the present site of Lincoln for the purposes of the act, caused plats thereof to be made, on each of which block twenty-nine was designated as the "State Historical and Library Association Block," and on the legend it was thus referred to—"The following blocks are reserved for public purposes: * * * Block 29, for State Historical Library Association, incorporated August 26th, 1867." These plats were duly filed in pursuance of the act. The commissioners, in their report to the legislature of their doings, specially state that the reservation of a block for the State Historical and Library Association had been made.

3. On the 15th of February, 1869, the legislature passed a joint resolution adopting the plat, with "all reservations of public squares."

4. On the 26th of August, 1867, certain persons procured their incorporation under the general laws of the state "for the purpose of establishing a state historical and library association," and it is understood by your committee that that corporation is still in existence.

5. On the 24th of February, 1875, the legislature passed an act donating this block to the city of Lincoln for the purposes of a market.

6. Your committee, after the most careful consideration, are of the opinion that the state had, before the act of February, 1875, divested itself of all right over this block of land, and that the grant to the city of Lincoln was void. It is not clear to your committee whether the association which became incorporated August 26, 1867, and was referred to in the legend of the plats, is entitled to the block. Your committee recommend the passage of the following resolution:

Resolved, That a committee be raised composed of three members of this Society, to be appointed by the Chair, to confer with the State Historical and Library Association, incorporated August 26th, 1867, for the purpose of harmonizing and uniting their interests, and in connection with, or apart from, the said Association to institute proper legal proceedings to have the act of the legislature granting block 29, in Lincoln, to that city, declared by the proper judicial courts null and void.

All which is respectfully submitted.

J. M. WOOLWORTH,
J. R. WEBSTER,
CHAS. O. WHEDON,
Committee.

My only criticism on this report is that I hardly wish to admit a doubt of the title of the old incorporation (see page iv., top). In respect to Mr. Woolworth's judgment, I defer to his opinion.

I am in favor of the uniting of the two societies.

J. R. WEBSTER.

Reported also that the old society had revived and put itself in shape to work in harmony with this organization to secure, if possible, the property in question.

J. A. MacMurphy, J. M. Woolworth, Lorenzo Crounse, C. H. Gere, and C. O. Whedon were appointed a committee to draft a bill and ask its passage by the legislature, recognizing this organization as a state institution, requiring the President to report annually to the governor, as other institutions, and the state to print such reports as public documents.

J. M. Woolworth, J. R. Webster, and C. O. Whedon appointed committee on union of the old and this society.

The President announced that he had much valuable historical matter he would present to the Society when it was in condition to care for and preserve it.

Mr. Woolworth gave an outline account of a historical mantel-piece he was constructing in his new building in Omaha.

At this meeting Dr. A. L. Child, of Plattsmouth, read a paper, "Gold at Pike's Peak—Rush for—Stampede." (This address will be found in its place in the Appendix.)

A quarterly meeting was appointed for April, at Nebraska City, and J. Sterling Morton invited to address it. Also, a meeting was provided for at Plattsmouth, in October, the orator to be selected hereafter. No meetings, however, were held at either of these places.

The old officers were all re-elected.

Secretary reported he had sent out 600 of our circulars, 200 of our Constitution and By-Laws, and had written 211 letters; that he has on file 800 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts; that he encounters increased and bitter opposition because of action of Lincoln people and the legislature in the matter of the Historical block.

Dr. Child presented the organization with a copy of "Fremont's First and Second Expedition, 1842-3-4," for which thanks were extended.

Owing to absence of officers there was no annual meeting held in 1882.

ANNUAL MEETING, JANUARY 17TH, 1883.

Met at Commercial Hotel parlor, Lincoln.

Death of Moses Stocking announced. R. W. Furnas, S. Aughey and W. W. Wilson were appointed a committee on resolutions expressive of the feelings of this Society at the loss of Mr. Stocking.

The old officers were re-elected. The office of Recording Secretary was revived, and Mrs. C. B. Colby elected to fill this place.

W. H. Eller was elected a member of the Association.

The Secretary reported now on hand 925 books, pamphlets, and manuscripts.

R. W. Furnas, David Butler, and C. O. Whedon were appointed a committee to again ask the legislature for recognition as a state institution, and for a small appropriation to collect historical data and matter, and to obtain, if possible, a room in the Capitol building for library and other accumulating matter.

An hour was spent in relating reminiscences, participated in by Messrs. Merritt, Allan, Grennell, Wheeler, Clark, Dinsmore, Mullon, Furnas, and others.

The following is the Treasurer's Report, from organization to date:

SYNOPSIS OF REPORTS

For every year since the organization of the State Historical Society.

Year 1879.

To amount fees and dues.....	\$60 00
By amount paid out on order	54 59
Balance	\$ 5 41

Year 1880.

Balance, as per report of '79.....	\$ 5 41
To amount fees and dues	64 00
	<hr/>
	\$69 41
By amount paid out on order.....	50 80
	<hr/>
Balance	\$18 61

Year 1881.

To balance on hand as per report of '80.....	\$18 61
To amount fees and dues	24 00
	<hr/>
	\$42 61
By amount paid out on order	42 00
	<hr/>
Balance	\$ 61

To the Hon. R. W. Furnas, President of Nebraska State Historical Society:

I have the honor to submit my annual report, as your Treasurer of Nebraska State Historical Society, for the year 1883:

To balance on hand, as per report of '81.....	\$ 61
To amount fees and dues.....	35 00
To cash received of state treasurer, as per appropriation by legislature	500 00
	<hr/>
	\$535 61
By cash paid State Journal for letter heads, as per voucher...	9 00
	<hr/>
Balance on hand.....	\$526 61

Respectfully submitted,

W. W. WILSON,

Treas. Neb. Hist. Society.

LINCOLN, NEB., Jan. 2d, 1884.

This balance is deposited in 1st National Bank, Lincoln, in name of Nebraska State Historical Society, the \$500 to draw 3 per cent interest if left for three months or longer.

HISTORIES OF COUNTIES.

We have collected, and have on file, reliable, detailed histories of the following counties, together with many interesting reminiscences connected therewith. These are entirely too voluminous for publication as part of this report. But will form the basis, as valuable data for future historical use and publication.

Antelope county.

Boone county, prepared by S. P. Bollman.

Butler county, prepared by G. L. Brown.

Colfax county, prepared by Wm. Draper.

Clay county, prepared by Dr. M. Clark.

Cuming county, prepared by E. N. Sweet.

Cass county, prepared by A. L. Childs.

Cedar county, prepared by L. E. Jones.

Dixon county, prepared by Ed. Arnold.

Dawson county, prepared by T. J. Jewett.

Dodge county, prepared by L. J. Abbott.

Douglas county, prepared by E. Estabrook.

Dacotah county, prepared by Wm. Adair.

Franklin county, prepared by M. O'Sullivan.

Furnas county, prepared by W. E. Crutcher.

Fillmore county, prepared by W. H. Blaine.

Gage county, prepared by W. H. Somers.

Howard county, prepared by R. Harvey.

Hamilton county, prepared by L. W. Hastings.

Hall county, prepared by Wm. Stolley.

Johnson county, prepared by Andrew Cook.

Knox county, prepared by A. L. Towle.

Lancaster county, prepared by C. H. Gere.

Merrick county, prepared by J. L. Martin.

Madison county, prepared by Judge M'Callum.

Nemaha county, prepared by Robt. W. Furnas.

Otoe county, prepared by J. Sterling Morton.

Polk county, prepared by A. Nance.

Pawnee county, prepared by J. L. Edwards.

Red Willow county, prepared by Royal Buck.

Seward county, prepared by O. T. B. Williams.

Saline county.

Saunders county, prepared by Moses Stocking.

Sarpy county, prepared by S. D. Bangs.

Webster county, prepared by H. S. Kaley.

Washington county.

Wayne county, prepared by R. B. Crawford.

York county, prepared by F. M. Connelly.