BOOK REVIEW

The State Historical Society of Missouri A Semicentennial History.
By Floyd C. Shoemaker. (Jefferson City: Mid-State Printing Co., 1948. Octavo, 193 pp. $3.50.)

This small and compact volume is a most excellent presentation of why and how a state historical society. It is such a complete compendium of the inceptions, struggles, aspirations, individual leadership, growth and final victory in building a state historical society that it should be a "must" reading for every governor, legislator, board of directors for historical societies and all historical society secretaries and staff members in every State of the American Union.

The last five or ten years may be called a new awakening in worth and growth of state historical societies. One must make the distinction between a state historical society and all other kinds. A state historical society may be defined as a state supported institution maintained by appropriations out of the State treasury by the legislators of the State, and whose general functions are outlined and set forth in the Statutes of the State. Around this nucleus of endowment or support by the State there may be brought monies from membership fees, and personal gifts of money and material. But to be a state historical society it must have its support and rootings in the laws and the taxes of the State.

Mr. Shoemaker in most meticulous fashion sets forth the slow process of getting governors, legislators and leading men and women of a State to comprehend the worth and far reaching service, even the essentiality for a state historical society. He reveals with perfect clarity that a few zealous men and women in any State can do the job provided they have lofty aims, earnest devotion, unyielding will and practical plans.

The author states in the first sentence of the preface that "it was a surprise to find that only three similar works on other state historical societies had been published." These remarks held no surprise for the Secretary of the Oklahoma Historical Society. He has been impressed through many years of the sluggishness permeating the life of the historical societies. Even now many States of America have no such thing or if it is in being it is merely existing.

A quotation from the preface is helpful for this review. "The writing of a history of a state historical society presents some unusual problems to a professional historian because of the almost
bewildering variety of subjects to be considered." In a short
review like this that statement reveals that one can only offer
the reader a brief symposium of the highlights and the growth of
the Missouri Historical Society as set forth by Mr. Shoemaker.

The Missouri Historical Society was established in 1898. Mis-
souri failed to fully recognize the cultural significance of his-
torical societies for eight decades; however sixty-five historical
societies in Missouri of local sort were founded from 1790-1860. From
1850 to 1910 nearly fifty state societies were organized or reorgan-
ized; the middle west and the west leading. Admission of new states
in the 1880's and 1890's advanced the historical society movement;
four out of seven of these new States organized state historical
societies within six years; one within twelve; one within eighteen
and one twenty-four years before becoming a State. *Oklahoma founded
its Society in 1893, twelve years* before statehood. Dr. Shoemaker
says: "The procedure followed in founding the State Historical
Society of Missouri was similar to the action taken in Kansas in
1875 and in Oklahoma in 1893. The framers of the constitution
of the State Historical Society of Missouri quite obviously took
that of the Wisconsin society of 1854, as revised in 1858, as a
general guide in brevity and phraseology and that of the Okla-
ahoma Society, which closely followed that of the Kansas society
of 1875, in respect to such matters as ex-officio and editor mem-
ers and a large number of directors."

On page 24 the author reveals that a young State may do
very great things in the development of older States if those
States are not beyond the point of receiving advice and counsel,
for he says, "certainly, the constitutions of the state society of
Wisconsin and of the territorial society of Oklahoma (which was
largely taken from the state society of Kansas) enriched and
guided the framers of our own charter." Those sentences contain
a great tribute to Missouri and Oklahoma in building state his-
torical societies. Oklahoma went to Kansas for example and guid-
ance; Missouri went both to Kansas and to Oklahoma for guid-
anee and counsel.

Machinery of the Missouri society serves to remove the man-
agement from partisan control. Actual beginning of the enlarged
activities of the Missouri Society took place September 1, 1901
with an Assistant Librarian, salary $60.00 per month, and the
Secretary secured a stenographer at an expense of not to exceed
$125.00 from April 29 to September 1; thus the great and remark-
able history of the state historical society of Missouri was launched.
Surely looking upon the present status of this society at Columbia,
Missouri, in the year of our Lord 1949, with its large and cap-
able staff of historical experts lead by Dr. Shoemaker serving
now for thirty-four years as Secretary, with its national world-
wide renown for its rich archives, for its great historical museum, for its collection of pictures and portraits and for its compelling force in every avenue of Missouri life and extending its influence throughout America, it is an encouraging note to every historical society in America.

With the demand for brevity in this review it is wholly impossible to set forth the value of detailed information found under the four divisions of this volume—The Beginnings, 1898-1901; The Foundations, 1901-1914; Building A State Historical Society, 1915-1940; Fruition and Maturity, 1941-1948: The Modern State Historical Society. It must be sufficient to say, with careful reserve, that Dr. Shoemaker in this book offers a complete, practical and even fascinating measuring rod for every State historical society in this country. If someone would develop a fund whereby the publisher, Mid-State Printing Company, Jefferson City, Missouri, could send a copy each to every director, secretary, and staff member of the State historical societies in the United States it would be money more than well spent.

The volume is well indexed and on fairly good paper; it is splendidly illustrated throughout.

The Oklahoma State Historical Society has already used a great many of the facts and statistics found in the volume and will continue to do so through a period of years. It is only by comparison that growth is measured and Dr. Shoemaker has furnished every historical society of the United States a wealth of comparison.

—By Charles Evans

_Oklahoma Historical Society_