THE ANNUAL MEETING

December 1 marked the date of the Annual Meeting of the Society, held as usual in the Laws Auditorium of the University of Cincinnati. Some one hundred and fifty members and friends appeared for the short business meeting and the program, which consisted in the reading of three papers on Cincinnati history written by members of the Society. The annual election of officers and board members resulted as follows: President, Lucien Wulsin; Vice-Presidents, John J. Rowe, Lee Shepard, and Joseph C. Dinsmore; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Russell Wilson; Corresponding Secretary, Cornelius J. Hauck; Treasurer, Lawrence C. Bucher, and Director, Virginius C. Hall. Curators elected were: Mrs. William T. Buckner, William T. Earls, Herbert F. Koch, Mrs. John H. Skavlem and Robert M. Galbraith. Curators Emeritus elected were: Harry F. Woods, Beverley W. Bond, Jr., Robert L. Black, Joseph S. Graydon and Chalmers Hadley.

It was with much regret that the Society accepts the resignation of our former President, Chalmers Hadley, whose term for several years has marked a constant advance in the affairs of the Society. We are indeed fortunate to be able to turn to one of our long time members, Lucien Wulsin, whose well known ability and leadership is confidently expected to carry the Society into still higher ground. His election is a fitting tribute to his long membership and interest in the affairs of the Society.

After the business meeting and program, a social hour occupied the attention of the members and guests. Mrs. John H. Wulsin acted as Chairman of the arrangements.

The annual report of the Director follows:
Once upon a time I thought that life in a library must be a sedentary existence, compounded in equal parts of sitting, reading and writing. I was wrong, insofar as this library and this Society are concerned.

Take the present year for instance: in addition to the fundamentals of collecting, preserving and making available our resources, we published a quarterly Bulletin of eighty pages each, prepared an annual meeting with program and tea party, set up a spring exhibit at the Taft Museum, held ten meetings of the Board of Directors, made talks before various clubs, engaged in an important archaeological discovery, attended meetings of other societies in town and out of town, promoted rather extensive publicity on historical subjects, conducted a mail correspondence with people in almost every state in the Union as well as abroad, materially increased the number of members of the Society, aided writers in the preparation of articles for newspapers, periodicals, and books, and finally took to the aquatic life with a cruise on the beautiful Ohio.

For better or worse these pleasures and duties were enjoyed and performed by a staff composed of three persons, aided very substantially by the Board of Directors and many other friends. Let me mention a few details, beginning with several experiences in collecting.

Obviously a collector cannot collect everything, not even in the world of Americana; for in that direction lies megalomania and the psychiatrist's couch. Our field of collecting, for the sake of stack space and sanity, is rather well defined. Our broadest classification is "Western Waters, from earliest times to 1787." In this category Spanish, French, and English explorers, settlers and chroniclers are included. Four books in this group which we acquired this year ought to be briefly mentioned: The handsome three-volume first edition of Charlevoix's Histoire de la Nouvelle France, 1744, tells of Father Charlevoix's expedition of 1721–22 up the St. Lawrence, into the Great Lakes system, and finally
down the Mississippi to Biloxi — a canoe trip of heroic proportions.

We have had in the library since 1895 Henri Joutel’s journal of his experiences with LaSalle on that fatal voyage when LaSalle lost his life in the wilds of Texas, in 1687. This French edition, Journal Historique ... is dated 1713. We have recently bought the first English translation, bearing the imprint 1714. It is a scarcer book than the original. It might be worth mentioning that Joutel and Charlevoix (just referred to) met in Rouen in 1723.

Spanish claims in this region seem remote today, yet in the contest for the western world the Spanish were once strong contenders. Among those adventurers attracted to America was a Dominican named Bartholomew de las Casas, eventually the Bishop of Chiapa, and called “the noblest Spaniard who ever landed in the Western World.” In 1552 he began writing a series of tracts telling the horrors perpetrated against the docile West Indians by his fellow countrymen, men who even called themselves Christians. Enemies of Spain were quick to use the information for purposes of propaganda; the tracts were reprinted in many tongues and were used to inflame the mind of the world against the claims of Spain in America. A number of these tracts were published in a single volume in French in 1697; and an English version came out in 1699. We have recently acquired the English text for the Society. It is entitled An account of the First Voyages and Discoveries made by the Spaniards in America containing the most exact relation hitherto published, of their unparall’d cruelties on the Indians, in the Destruction of above forty millions of people ... 

The impact of the French and Indian War on the Ohio country is known to all. Continuing our attempts to add to the resources of the library on this subject, and especially from the French point of view, we have acquired [Abbé Delaville’s] Etat Présent de la Pensylvanie ... 1756. Delaville, commissioner to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, brought out his report in the midst of the struggle, and published it on the continent, probably in Paris. The accompanying map of Pennsylvania is a valuable feature.

During his long newspaper career as editor of the Cincinnati Commercial Gazette, Murat Halstead carried on animated correspondence with many people influential in domestic and foreign
affairs, politicians, editors, authors, and ambassadors. And now by the friendship of Mrs. Jesse Redman Clark, Jr., granddaughter of Murat Halstead, we have come into possession of a choice collection of these letters, besides numerous clippings and notes. They provide sharp insight into the 70's, 80's and 90's.

The heirs of the late Lily Foster Livingood presented to the Society this year the papers of the Lytle Family, beginning with General William Lytle (1770–1831), who came to the West with his father, Captain William, at the age of eleven years. As woodsman, surveyor, speculator in vast tracts of land, militia officer, founder of Williamsburg, Ohio, and friend of Andrew Jackson, he led a life that epitomizes his time. The papers, dating from 1773, cover the correspondence and transactions of four generations. No accurate count has yet been made, but the collection is believed to comprise at least 8000 pieces.

It is not feasible to describe here, even briefly, various other acquisitions of this year; let me mention in passing, however, the fine Popple map of 1773; the letters of Caleb Atwater, geologist, to Parker Cleaveland, from 1819–1821; the collection of 46 hand-drawn plats of Cincinnati and Louisville (land, with succeeding owners and tracts in detail — drawn by the late Wilbert L. Rogers; microfilm of the letters of Moses Dawson to Andrew Jackson; a fine specimen of early Ohio glass (Zanesville, between 1830–40) through the good offices of Mrs. R. N. Speckman and Mrs. Samuel Joseph of the Early American Glass Club of Cincinnati; and a number of other items of interest. Adequate treatment of some of these must wait upon a newsletter to members, which we hope to send out early in the coming year.

As intimated above, the resources of the library are more easily available now than previously. This happy condition we owe to the skill and application of Mrs. Hook, Librarian, and Miss Wuest, Assistant Librarian. Books, manuscripts, maps, and pictures are more adequately catalogued and more accessibly housed. The situation is far from perfect yet, but Mrs. Hook amply demonstrated last summer that the expenditure of money for clerical and stenographic work produced manuscript indexes and biographical data of great value. These tools, ready to hand, will shorten the work and lengthen the life of many estimable citizens of the academic world, bent on research.
Special meetings for members of the Society consisted of the opening of our Daniel Drake exhibit at the Taft Museum, the evening of April 18th, and the annual meeting the previous December here at the University. At the Drake opening, Dr. David A. Tucker was the principal speaker, and Dr. Thomas D. Clark at the annual meeting. This Society remains indebted to Miss Katherine Hanna and the President and Trustees of the Cincinnati Institute of Fine Arts for their generous cooperation. This sentiment is applicable also to the Board of Directors, President, and Faculty of the University of Cincinnati, and especially to Dr. Stanley E. Dorst, Dean of the School of Medicine. Both of these meetings were reasonably well attended. But deficiency in parking space remains the chronic ailment, whether downtown or in the University area. Handsome prizes will be given for a satisfactory solution.

Clubs and societies in Cincinnati and elsewhere continue to call on us for talks on the work of the Society or on aspects of local history. At the annual meeting of the Ohio State Archaeological and Historical Society in Columbus last April, one of the features was a "workshop session," devoted to ways and means of operating an historical society. I talked on collecting manuscripts, illustrating, naturally, from our own collections and experiences.

Visits to other societies often produce ideas for improving our performance at home. Mrs. Hook's visit this year to the Western Reserve Historical Society was especially useful to us.

The approaching sesquicentennial of Ohio statehood (1803-1953) has brought on a stir of preparations in all parts of the State. We have felt the effect here in several ways: Mr. Hadley and Mr. Vitz are heading the program committee for the Cincinnati area; various organizations are drawing on our picture file for illustrations to be used in their sesquicentennial publications; selections from that file will also be used for exhibits and displays commemorating the event. Our spring exhibit is being planned with the sesquicentennial in mind; and most important, the Society will publish a book during the year: A Buckeye Titan by William E. and Ophia D. Smith.

Perhaps, at this point, a short miscellany will be useful as specific examples of what we are doing: For television we lent stage properties such as old calendars, advertisements, and
pictures; to the Detroit Public Library a broadside for their "Uncle Tom's Cabin" exhibit; in our James Albert Green-William Henry Harrison collection every book now has its book plate, especially designed by Maurice R. Rhoades of the College of Applied Arts; microfilming of the Western Spy (1799-1822) is completed, with positives for sale to other libraries; a group of German elementary school teachers, now studying here, came to the reading room to hear a talk on the history of Cincinnati. Researchers from many parts of the country come to the library; as I write this two graduate students from the history department of Miami University are working at one table, a Ph. D. candidate from Rice Institute, Texas, at another; and so it goes.

One evening in October a telephone call from Mrs. Philip Hinkle, bringing me a message from her brother Henry Gest started a chain of events that resulted in two front page stories in the Times Star, inside stories in the Enquirer and the Post, and the re-location of an important historical site. I mean of course, the discovery of the powder magazine of old Fort Washington. A detailed account will appear in the January Bulletin by Richard C. Knopf, Raymond S. Baby, and Dwight L. Smith. It was Dr. Arthur A. King, a member of this society and a contributor to the Bulletin, who first called into question the traditional location of the fort.

Mention of the Bulletin instantly brings up the name of Mr. Lee Shepard, who has raised it with loving care from a four page pamphlet in March, 1943 to its present state. Volume 10, for the year 1952, consists of four numbers and 333 pages, containing enough variety, we hope, to appeal to many interests among the members. Mr. Edward N. Clopper has aided materially in improving the quality and factual accuracy of the publication by editorial advice, proof reading, and contributing articles. The Board of Directors believe that the Bulletin is valuable in at least two ways: in adding to the recorded history of this region, and in stimulating interest among our members.

On January the first we shall begin a new fiscal year. Mr. Bucher's report shows the financial affairs of the Society in good health. Again, it is the result of abstemious living and even fasting. We are actually doing without a number of things we need: adequate salaries, a full-time stenographer, a small bindery, a
part-time attendant to repair bindings and anoint dry and cracked leather, to mention a few of the most obvious.

But the general situation is cheerful, even exuberant. It reminds me, for some curious reason, of the scene at the levee the morning of November first, just before the Delta Queen cast off for our Louisville cruise. Good friends were hailing each other all over the place, the barometer was high, the sunshine brilliant, the river inviting; laughing, expectant passengers lined the rails, waving good-byes. You might have thought that we were setting out for the Promised Land. I do not know where we are going in 1953; but, as we prepare to cast off, the barometer reading is high.

Virginius C. Hall