

It might reasonably be expected that such a community would be acutely conscious of its historic past and would have attended long since to the due preservation and to the dissemination of a knowledge of its records. In certain ways this historic consciousness is undeniably manifest. The local press carries articles catering to the historical interest of its readers more frequently, probably, than is the case in most other communities, particularly of the Middle West; and even the advertisements frequently exploit some local historical theme. Unless these alert interpreters of public opinion are mistaken, there exists among Detroiters a widespread historic interest which the seller of such prosaic commodities as bonds and real estate does not hesitate to invoke. Yet the fact must be admitted that until recently the community, as such, has done comparatively little in the way of preserving and exploiting its historical records.

Quite different will be the story, however, in the years that are before us. In 1914 Mr. Clarence M. Burton of Detroit, who for upward of forty years had been assiduously engaged in developing the chief library of Detroit local history in existence, presented his great accumulation of material to the Detroit Public Library to be administered by that institution for the public use and benefit. Here is not the place to catalog the Burton Historical Collection, but without detracting from the value of the mass of material in print that has been brought together, it may fairly be said that the real heart of the Collection, at least from the scholar's point of view, is the great accumulation of manuscripts. In these scores of thousands of documents is preserved in large part the story of the past of Detroit and the Northwest. The life of a generation of mankind is short, and its memory is even shorter. The life of the city continues from age to age, and its history is to the community what memory is to the individual. Without memory there could be no civilization and no progress. Here in these records, henceforth to be guarded and fostered by the city itself, acting through the agency of its Public Library, is the memory of Detroit.

Manuscript records, however, are both rare and fragile, and their study and elucidation is in itself a profession. In