

## A Guide to Business Records in Wisconsin

The State Historical Society of Wisconsin has made a survey of business records in the state and has prepared a guide to records which together present a practical example of how historical societies and businessmen can cooperate in providing materials for research in the history of business. The project was under the direction of Dr. Clifford L. Lord, Director of the Society. At the request of the Editor, Dr. Lord has sent to the BULLETIN the following statement about the survey and the Guide:

The Guide to Business Records in the state of Wisconsin was recently opened for scholarly use by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. This Guide is the result of a questionnaire sent to some 6,000 fabricating firms throughout the state asking for 12 specific categories of records (minutes of stockholders meetings, minutes of boards, general correspondence, policy files, labor contracts, war contracts, photographic materials, etc.), to what dates the records of the firm were still extant, and to what dates they would be accessible with or without restrictions to qualified scholars for research purposes.

The questionnaires were answered by over 48 per cent of the firms approached and the large majority indicated that with the exception of current records, and with certain restrictions, the files would be available for research purposes. The project was endorsed by the Wisconsin Manufacturers Association and by several leading industrialists including David C. Everest, who two years ago offered the annual \$1000.00 prize for the best book length work on Wisconsin economic history.

The Guide is housed in the Research Department of the Society, 816 State Street, Madison 6, Wisconsin.

### Editor's Column

It has been said that nothing is constant in business except change. New products, new processes and machines, new organizations, new management methods, and the like, are a part of the normal life of a competitive and dynamic business. The timing, as well as the form, of the adoption of the new—often accompanied by scrapping of the old—varies with conditions and men. This question of the adoption

of something new—the ability to see and to respond effectively to changing conditions or opportunities—not only determines the degree of success but may even involve the life or death of a firm, an industry, or a whole business system.

Two articles in the present issue of the BULLETIN deal with this question of innovation in business. The first, "Management and Innovations: The Winchester Repeating Arms Company, a Case Study," by Professor Harold F. Williamson of the Department of Economics of Northwestern University, considers the adoption by one manufacturing concern of a radical innovation in marketing. Professor Williamson has done extensive research in the records of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company about which he writes in this article. The second, "Innovation and Management Policies—The Textile Machinery Industry: Influence of the Market on Management," by Professor Thomas R. Navin of the Graduate School of Business Administration of Harvard University, deals with the question of innovation in design in the textile machinery industry. Professor Navin's book on *The Whitin Machine Works* was recently distributed to members of the Business Historical Society.

The above articles were presented at the joint session of the Business Historical Society, Inc., and the American Historical Association held in Chicago on December 28 in connection with the annual meeting of the American Historical Association. The chairman of the session was Professor John E. Jeuck of the School of Business, Chicago University, joint author of the recently published history of Sears, Roebuck & Co. entitled *Catalogues and Counters*.

One weakness of the American work in modern business history has been its preoccupation with American business. One article in the present issue illustrates how closely American business was tied to business in England, and also shows that influences flowed not only from east to west across the Atlantic but also in the reverse direction. W. Woodruff, the author of "Origins of an Early English Rubber Manufactory," is Lecturer in Economic History at Nottingham University. Mr. Woodruff is writing a history of the rubber manufacturing industry in Great Britain.

The forgotten man in the history of railroads is the businessman, according to Professor Charles J. Kennedy of the College of Business Administration of the University of Nebraska. In his article, "The Early Business History of Four Massachusetts Railroads," he presents a sample study of the part businessmen played in the beginnings and early operation of railroads.

A course in business history has been added to the curriculum of the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University. The instructor is Professor Mills Gardner Clark.

The small businessman receives much attention in a manuscript which in December, 1950, won for its author, Dr. Reynold M. Wik, the Beveridge Fellowship, which is awarded annually by the American Historical Association. In the manuscript entitled "Steam Power on the Farm, 1870-1920: A Chapter in Agricultural History," Dr. Wik deals in large part with threshing machines and their owners and operators, writing from actual business records and the reminiscences of threshermen.

The terms of the 1951 competition for the Albert J. Beveridge Memorial Fellowship of the American Historical Association have recently been announced. The Fellowship is awarded annually for the best original manuscript in English, either completed or in progress, on American History. Information about the Fellowship competition may be obtained from Professor Arthur P. Whitaker, Chairman, Committee on the Albert J. Beveridge Memorial Fund, 208 College Hall, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 4, Pennsylvania. Professor Henrietta M. Larson, Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, is a member of the Committee and will answer any requests for information sent to her.