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## Establishing Local Societies

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1891; Land of Bellview, 1886; Avon Park, 1893

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Portrait of Charles B. Reynolds, gift of E. H. Reynolds

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#### ESTABLISHING LOCAL SOCIETIES

In our last issue mention was made of the activities in the Manatee region, where our members and more than forty others (who have since joined with us in the Florida Historical Society) have formed a group who will work together as the Manatee County Historical Society.

There are other districts in Florida with an equal

historical background of one hundred or more years. In only a very few of these have the history-conscious come together to bring their early history to light, to record it so it will not be lost forever, and to tell their present day neighbors about what has happened right there.

With the thought that other towns and districts might wish to know what has been done in the Manatee section, and something of what is planned there, Miss Eva M. Gates and Mrs. Lillie B. McDuffee were asked to tell us. For many years both have been keeping local history alive. Miss Gates, a granddaughter of the first settler in the region (1841) is chairman of the Judah P. Benjamin Memorial Commission, and has written "Florida's Confederate Shrine" which is the old Gamble mansion near Bradenton. The *Quarterly* has often told of and referred to Mrs. McDuffee's "Lures of Manatee."

Replying to our request Miss Gates writes, "Of course there must be some historical setting to work on, and this section is rich there. . . . There were many Indian mounds along the River. All of these have been destroyed except a large one on Snead's Island. This has been purchased by Mr. Karl A. Bickel, who, I believe, intends to preserve it. For some years Mr. Montague Tallant has been collecting artifacts from the Indian mounds of Florida. . . . Last fall a group of Bradenton citizens became interested in purchasing Mr. Tallant's collection and establishing a museum of these and other historical objects. From this beginning interest spread, though slowly until Mr. Bickel, then president of the Florida Historical Society, with a keen desire to preserve and mark spots that were being forgotten, aroused a like interest in Mr. Walter Hardin ; and the result just had to be a definite organization.

“On January 17, last, Mr. Hardin called a meeting of those interested to hear a talk from Mr. Bickel about the early history of this Manatee section of the peoples and people who have passed this way, many leaving their imprints in some fashion. Those present were asked to join the Manatee County Historical Society and the Florida Historical Society, and almost all of them responded. Later others wanted to be charter members, and so the number grew.

“It is necessary to interest people in their own locality and have a local society in order to arouse interest in the State organization. Most sections of Florida are rich in historical lore, and it only needs some one or two persons historically-minded, to bring these stories before the public. This of course can best be done by the formation of both local and State societies.

“Later the museum committee met and voted to raise the necessary funds to purchase and maintain the Tallant collection and for the preparation of a room in the Municipal Pier for its housing. While this museum project is not a part of the Historical Society, those interested in it are members of the Society.”

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