

# A Man Of History

By Alva E. Lewis and Mark McIntyre

It is difficult for us to realize just how important written histories have been to man's society. History courses in schools and historical societies depend upon written histories in order to teach and verify past happenings. Books such as *The World Book Encyclopedia*, almanacs, and yearbooks are forms of written history. Often students and teachers alike feel the need to refer to a book when in doubt about past events. From this use, it is hoped that man will be able to prevent future disasters by viewing examples from the past. But just how have such books come into the making?

The answer is a group of people known as historians. This group has constantly recorded man's doings, both good and bad. However, this group isn't numerous and historians aren't an everyday attraction. Northeast Missouri is fortunate enough to have such people. One of them is Dr. David DeArmond March.

David D. March was born in Gorgana, Panama, in 1911. His father was a United States District Judge who served in the Canal Zone. David's family moved to a farm in Bates County in 1913. Here he enjoyed farm life. His family soon moved again, this time to the town of Butler which is the county seat of Bates County.

After his high school education in Butler, young David attended Southwest Missouri State University and George Peabody College for Teachers. At Southwest he earned a B.S. in Education and graduated from there in 1933.

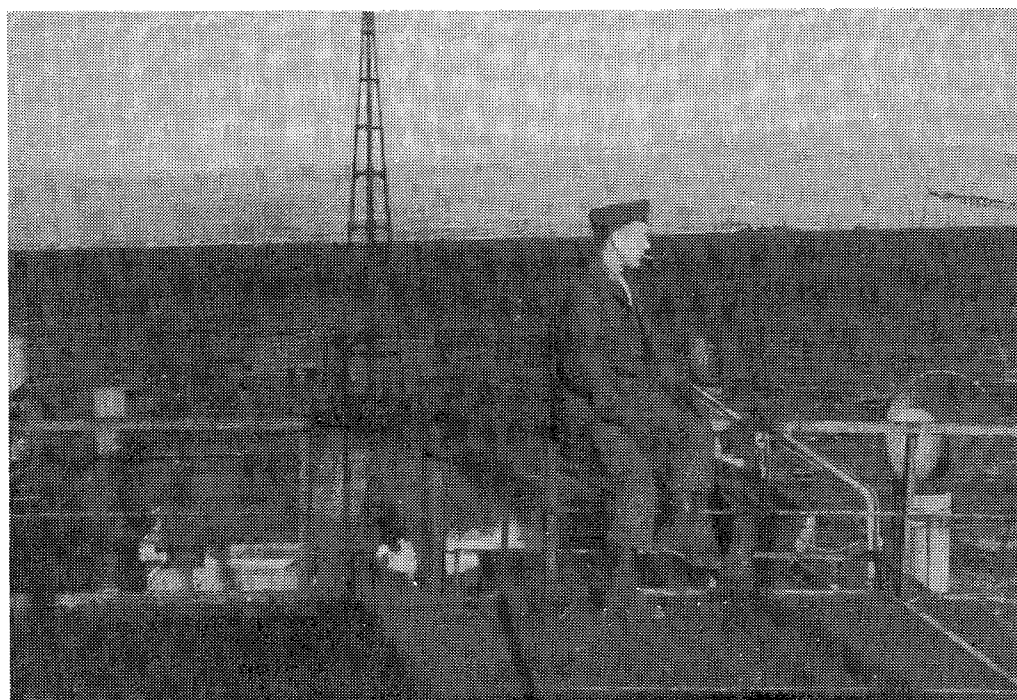
After completing a year of schooling at George Peabody College for Teachers, David moved on to the University of Missouri for higher level history training. In 1941, he received a Master's Degree in History. David continued his education off and on at M.U. until 1944 when World War II forced him away from his studies.

In 1944, Mr. March went into the Army and completed his basic infantry training at Camp Roberts California. Soon afterward, he was shipped to Camp Chaffey Arkansas for armored infantry training. Now that he was a fully trained combat soldier, Private March's educational background was noticed and he was given orders to report to the Pentagon for special training in recording combat history.

After this training, David was made a sergeant in the historical branch of the Army. He and a friend were assigned to the Office of Chief Engineers, AFPAC. Their duty was to record the combat history of the Second and Third Special Brigades. Sgt. March saw no direct combat, but did tour nearly every major island in the Phillipines chain.

"It was awfully hot down there," Dr. March stated, "and the mosquitoes would eat you alive. My friend Millard Rogers and I often went down to Manila Bay to escape the heat and insects. One evening a jeep drove by and its occupants shouted, 'Cheer up fellows, the WAR is OVER!!!"

During the turbulent years immediately following WW II,



Sgt. March on board a ferry. "The Japanese crew was very nice to us, considering we were recently at war with them."



Photo above: Dr. March soon after becoming Professor Emeritus of History in 1977.

Sgt. March was stationed at General McArthur's headquarters in Tokyo, Japan. While serving at this post, David and his colleagues visited several Japanese cities. Among them were Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Cebu City.

"We had fun escaping from officers in those days. They liked to show off their rank to the ladies and would often bully us NCO's. Since they couldn't stand the thought of my buddy and I being on our own, one or more would try to take command of us. In fact in order to get anything done, we would have to avoid those ranking gentlemen."

After he was honorably discharged from the Army in 1946, David returned to the University of Missouri to continue his professional education. While attending M.U., he taught classes in political science while working towards a Doctorate (Ph.D.). He received his Ph.D. in 1949.

The preceeding fall Dr. March began teaching at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri. At this school his title was Professor of History. Professor March taught there during the fall and spring terms from 1948 to 1955. During the summers of this period, he taught at various universities in Missouri.

Dr. March first came to Kirksville in the summer of 1949, returning each summer until 1952. While teaching at NMSU Professor March served on the summer history staff.

"Things have changed a lot since then," stated Dr. March. "The town has grown quite a bit. Several factories have moved here and the college has increased tremendously in size."

During the summers of 1952, 53, and 54, Professor March served on the summer staff at the University of Missouri. In 1955 he taught at Southwestern Missouri State University, again on the summer staff. Then, in 1955, Dr. March returned to Kirksville, this time to stay.

Dr. March taught at NMSU from the fall of 1955 to the fall of 1977. His first title was Professor of History, which he retained for 22 years. In 1977, Professor March retired to become Professor Emeritus of History. Even in his current state of retirement, Dr. March sometimes gives special lectures to students who are involved with history, and still has the respect of both students and peers.

"Dr. March knows more about American and Missouri history than anyone I have known," stated Dennis Daniels, a former student of Dr. March. "He has a reputation for being a teacher who is demanding but who is also a nice guy. I believe that he truly enjoys teaching history to his students."

"Dr. March was always academically stimulating," said Professor of History Walter Ryle IV, a former student and colleague of Dr. March. "His knowledge is very great in depth. His lectures are very thorough. David's humor is also very keen. He was demanding of his students but he also loved us for what we were. He set an excellent example for future teachers."

Successful teaching hasn't been Dr. March's only occupation; he is also a noted historian. From his earliest beginnings in WW II, he has continually recorded history in written form.

To this date, Dr. March has produced numerous articles, all of which pertain to something of historical importance. His first privately written article was "The Missouri Radicals and the Re-Election of Lincoln," which appeared in *Mid-America* in July of 1952. Several of his articles have appeared in *The Missouri Historical Review*. They include "The Campaign for the Ratification of the Constitution of 1865," which appeared in April of 1953, "The Admission of Missouri," appearing in the Sesquicentennial Issue during July of 1971, and "Sobriquets of Missouri and Missourians," in April of 1978.

From 1972 to 1977 and then from 1979 to 1982 Dr. March was a member of the State Advisory Council on Historical Sites. During that time he helped to get several sites in Adair County on the National Register of Historic Places. These include St. Mary's Church in Adair, the Parish Place in Kirksville, the Adair County Courthouse, the Grim Building in Kirksville and the Cabins Historical District near Novinger, Missouri.

Dr. David DeArmond March has done a great deal for our community and surrounding area. He has made a profession of teaching history. He has also helped to record the history of Missouri with his many articles and his four-volume book, *History of Missouri*. Thus, David March deserves recognition as one of Missouri's and Adair County's most important historians.