

Obituary

HENRY FRANCIS duPONT

Henry Francis duPont, financier and farmer, was born at Winterthur, Delaware, on May 27, 1880, the son of Henry Algernon and Mary Pauline (Foster) duPont. He prepared for college at Groton School and, with a dozen other Groton boys, went to Harvard with the Class of 1903. There he spent the next three years in class work, the *Cercle Français*, and the Institute of 1770, and the fourth year waiting for his degree to be awarded with the Class. Soon after taking his degree he returned to the farm at Winterthur and he listed his occupation as 'farming' for the next few class reports. He also reported, as the first in a lifetime of directorships, one in the Delaware Apple Company and rather soon another in the family powder company. He also belonged to a number of clubs in New York, Philadelphia, and Washington and some horticultural societies. In those years right after college duPont also 'traveled extensively over Europe and took a long trip through Russia, later visiting many of the Balkan States.'

By the time of his fifteenth year out of college he had become married, in late June of 1916, to Ruth Wales at Hyde Park, New York. He had become director of E. I. duPont de Nemours, General Motors, and the Holstein-Friesian Association. This last job was his real love, for he had on the thousand acres of Winterthur Farms a herd of over three hundred cows which made him, in 1926, the leading owner and breeder on the association's honor list, getting more than two hundred points more than the next highest breeder. Beyond tending the farm he enjoyed golf and tennis, and since 1923, the collection of examples of American decorative art for his family home.

He commuted to an office in nearby Wilmington to do his part in the business world, but gave up the routine for a world cruise in 1936, leaving the country in the hands of a former Groton- and Harvard- and Hyde Park-mate, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, also a member of this Society.

Having done his bit to bring the nation out of its depression, duPont aided the war effort in food production. He noted that a cow from his herd 'completed on June 16, 1942, the highest butterfat record ever made on two-time milking by any cow of any breed or any age in any country through all time.' He also noted in the same report that he had two grandchildren but, beyond listing their names, he did not boast.

Even before his election to this Society in 1944, duPont and Clarence Brigham had had close and rewarding associations through the Walpole Society and at Sturbridge Village. Brigham sent him some pieces of English sheet music that had come his way and which he didn't want. DuPont was enchanted to have them, and to have had Brigham to visit at his farm, but in a telegram to Brigham he noted that another guest 'is convinced you collect footwear, but begs for the return of his slippers.' Brigham sent the purloined slippers off immediately and, whenever he could, returned to Winterthur, most recently in 1955. The correspondence between them often and at length touched matters dear to both their hearts.

In 1951 duPont turned over his house of more than a hundred rooms at Winterthur to a foundation he had established in 1930 and in October it was formally named the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum, duPont having moved to 'a house that I built near the museum.' With the old house the foundation got an indescribably grand collection of furniture, architectural features, and decorative Americana illustrating the American past in arts and crafts. The Museum remained to the end duPont's special benefaction and its great treasures reflect his devotion and his taste. In the fifties duPont referred to himself as 'only a visitor at the museum but still head gar-

dener,' and a good one he must have been, for he held the two highest awards given to non-professional horticulturists. In 1961 Mrs. John F. Kennedy appointed him as chairman of the twelve-member Fine Arts Committee for the White House to find and purchase period items for the president's home and three years later Lyndon Johnson named him to a similar committee.

DuPont visited Worcester for a meeting of the Walpole Society but never attended a meeting of this Society. Instead he supported its annual appeals for funds with a regular check, it being understood that he was reserving his large donations for Winterthur.

In 1967 Mrs. duPont died and at eighty-eight years and after several months of illness Henry Francis duPont died at Winterthur on April 10, 1969. He is survived by two daughters, seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. His long life was a stewardship, the fruit of which remains as a constant reminder of his devotion to excellence.

J. E. M.

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