

# *Obituaries*

## RICHARD LEBARON BOWEN

Richard LeBaron Bowen, historian and manufacturer, was born on April 4, 1878, in East Providence, Rhode Island, son of Thomas LeBaron and Clara (Carpenter) Bowen. After his years in the local schools he studied for a while at Brown University and then moved down the hill to the Rhode Island School of Design where he graduated in 1898. Shortly afterward he served during the Spanish-American War and then went to work in the textile business, rising by 1912 to vice-president and general manager of the O'Bannon Corporation. After a decade during which he served a term in the Rhode Island House of Representatives he left the firm to found and head the Coated Textile Mills in Providence and toward the end of the twenties founded and headed the Bowen Mills of Pawtucket.

His interest in local history was fostered during the thirties and early in the forties Bowen wrote to the Society for sources for his history of Rehoboth. Librarian Clifford Shipton suggested he 'run up to Worcester and copy out yourself such sections as you find of interest' from the materials here. Bowen was happy with the suggestion but was a little slow in getting to the library. In the meantime he had gotten to work on the colonial currency of Rhode Island and its counterfeiting which he saw through the press in 1942 and asked Clarence Brigham, whom he had known when Brigham was with the Rhode Island Historical Society before coming to our Society, if he would review it for a journal. Brigham had to beg off because he was busy indeed with his work on newspapers. Bowen con-

tinued to turn out his work on local history, his next contribution being a study of the signers of the Providence oath of allegiance, another hundred-page book. His next work was a genealogical article, one of many to appear in the *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*. Also in this period Bowen and Sydney Philip Noe exchanged letters about colonial currency.

In 1945 the first of four volumes of his *Early Rehoboth* came out and Shipton wrote Bowen to say that he thought the work was 'scholar's history' and that he was looking forward to the volumes on the eighteenth century. Shortly thereafter at the Boston meeting in April 1946 Bowen was elected to membership in this Society and he wrote in reply that 'no greater honor could come to any man.' In the first few years he had a fine record of attendance at meetings but in a few years it slipped considerably because of a bad heart which 'made it necessary for me to avoid all excitement.' In the late forties Bowen's index to the twenty-one volumes of the early records of Providence was published at a time when he was president of the Rhode Island Historical Society. The index was a by-product of his having had to compile an index of the records in order to do his history of Rehoboth, the fourth volume of which came out in 1950. Also that year Bowen had published an article on armorial silver.

Throughout the fifties he kept in touch with the Society through the mails and with a generous annual contribution. In April 1951 at the spring meeting he was host for luncheon. He continued to write that his health was slowly improving and that he would be back in circulation soon. In the late fifties he wrote from Bowen Farm in Rehoboth that he was 'writing continually and have much work in progress, including four more books which I am in hopes of living long enough to publish.'

In 1957 and drawing upon a life's effort in local history and genealogy he published a handbook for Massachusetts records

and the next year an article on the tax revolt of 1690 in Plymouth colony. In 1959 Bowen published *Collected Papers*, a compilation in book form of a number of articles and reviews he had written dating back twenty years. His membership in societies reflected his interests very well, as he was a corresponding member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, vice president from Rhode Island of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, member of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, and a Fellow of both the Society of Genealogists of London and the American Society of Genealogists.

At an annual meeting of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts Bowen had a 'little upset' which turned out to be 'only a combination of a big dinner, too much pipe, and the pressure of a boiled shirt on a full stomach' but Bowen took it to be 'Nature's little warning to an old fool to slow up and take it easy. To one who has always prided himself on his ability to do two men's work it comes a little hard to follow the doctor's orders,' for Bowen always said that 'I would rather *wear* out than *rust* out.' On August 9, 1969, and at ninety-one years Richard LeBaron Bowen did wear out. He is survived by a daughter and a son and many in Rhode Island and elsewhere who are indebted to him for his work in the sources of local history.

J. E. M.

#### SYDNEY PHILIP NOE

Sydney Philip Noe, numismatist, was born in Woodbridge, New Jersey, on April 4, 1885. Starting college late he graduated from Rutgers in 1910 and three years later took his master's there. Ten years later he studied for a year at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. In the meantime he

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