

THOMAS WINTHROP STREETER

Thomas Winthrop Streeter was born in Concord, New Hampshire, on July 20, 1883, a son of Frank Sherwin and Lilian (Carpenter) Streeter. From St. Paul's School he went to Dartmouth College, where he was graduated in 1904, and thence to the Harvard Law School. He began practice in Boston with Choate, Hall and Stewart, and later became senior partner of Streeter and Holmes. The men who knew him as a law student and fledgling lawyer remember the impression of extraordinary ability which he gave.

In 1917 Mr. Streeter went to New York as president of the American International Corporation, and during the next two decades he had a remarkable business career in Mexican and Texas oil, Alaskan gold, and investments. From 1931 to 1935 his time was largely taken up by his duties as representative of the New York State Superintendent of Banks in the liquidation of the Bank of the United States. His other ventures into government were as Chief of the External Relations Branch of the Division of Purchase, Storage and Traffic of the War Department, in 1918, and as first Chairman of the New Jersey State Aviation Commission in 1931.

Mr. Streeter was never a man who could do anything without becoming intensely involved intellectually. His Texas business inevitably led him into the happy pursuit of collectable material relating to that area in the period 1795-1845. He read everything which he collected (except, perhaps, the first edition of *Mein Kampf*), and lightly pencilled evaluations on the covers. His curiosity was boundless. An interesting title in the catalogue of a dealer in old books would set him to reading, compiling a bibliography, and often to collecting in that field.

In 1939 Mr. Streeter announced that he was going to retire from business in order to devote his time to his

historical interests, but nearly two decades passed before he could clear himself of his offices. In the meantime, he was assuming responsibilities in direction and management of a dozen of the leading research libraries of this country. He was an active "Friend" of those which had such organization, a member of the visiting committees of the Harvard, Yale, and Princeton libraries, treasurer of the New York Historical Society, and sometime treasurer and president of the Bibliographical Society of America. On the more social side, he was active in the Club of Odd Volumes, the Grolier Club, and the Walpole Society. Probably no man in our generation was more usefully active in more bibliographically important institutions than he. Very properly Dartmouth awarded him a Litt.D. in 1946, and the California Historical Society gave him the Henry R. Wagner Memorial Award for his great Texas bibliography.

Mr. Streeter's first contact with the American Antiquarian Society came in 1932 when Mr. Vail asked his aid in compiling the Texas section of Sabin's Dictionary. His correspondence with Mr. Vail, Mr. Brigham, and myself for the three decades which followed fills three boxes. There are communications on all kinds of bibliographical topics, and list upon list of books which he was giving us. The scope and bulk of his giving to us can be comprehended only by going through my annual reports as librarian. Despite its bulk, this was carefully selected material of high quality, and we were by no means the only institution enjoying this truly unrivalled bounty.

Mr. Streeter was elected to the Council of this Society in 1942, and as its junior member he was of great help to me, saving me from serious errors in dealing with gentlemen of an older and very different generation. I profited greatly from his advice as to how to prepare a report, how to speak in public, and even how to please a hostess. It amuses me

to hear myself today speaking in Tom's tone when I pass on this sound advice to younger men. During his terms as vice president, 1949-1952, and president, 1952-1955, his advice on important policy matters was, time has shown, correct. Always his advice was given in such a way as to inspire gratitude and not offence: "This looks to me like the wrong policy, but of course you are much closer to it than I." He never offered advice as to our collection policy, feeling that we "were closer to it," but deliberately bought in the same fields material which his institutions could not afford, with the intention that his holdings would supplement theirs when they became available.

The company of bookmen was always the source of great satisfaction to Tom, and he provided in his will for the kind of wake which he, in anticipation, enjoyed to the utmost. His vast collection of Americana, the most important ever to be offered, will be dispersed at a series of auctions which will be congresses of bookmen. Against the proceeds of the sale, the libraries with which he was most closely connected are by his will given credit, so that they can bid in open competition for their wants.

Mr. Thomas Streeter died suddenly, as he would have had it, at his home in Morristown, New Jersey, on June 12, 1965, leaving his wife, Ruth (Cheney) Streeter, four children, and numerous descendants. That sentence awakens years of affectionate memory for many of us.

C. K. S.

EARL GREGG SWEM

The nation suffered the loss of one of its most noted librarians and bibliographers in the death of Dr. Earl Gregg Swem on April 12, 1965, at Louisville, Kentucky. Dr. Swem had been a member of the American Antiquarian Society

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