

Obituaries

ROBERT DECHERT

Robert Dechert, lawyer and collector, was born the son of Henry Taylor and Virginia Louise (Howard) Dechert in Philadelphia on November 29, 1895. Dechert graduated from Lawrenceville in 1912. At the University of Pennsylvania, from which he took an A.B. in 1916, he was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. His further education was interrupted by army service during the First World War, during which he rose to the rank of captain in the Seventh Infantry and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry in action at Le Charmel, France, in 1918. Still on active duty, he attended St. John's College, Oxford University, in 1919. He returned to Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania Law School following his discharge and earned his LL.B. degree in 1921. The University, on whose board of trustees he later served and in whose law school he taught courses from 1923 to 1942, awarded him an honorary LL.D. in 1958.

Following admission to the bar in 1921, Dechert began his law practice in Philadelphia as an associate in the offices of Hepburn, Dechert & Norris. From 1930 to his retirement in 1968 he was a partner in the firm of Dechert, Price & Rhoads. His specialty was insurance law and he was for a long time associated with Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company as counsel, vice president, and trustee. He was active in the pertinent bar associations and organizations of insurance company counsels, as well as in numerous local civic groups. A Republican, Dechert served in President Eisenhower's Defense Department as general counsel from 1957 to 1959.

Dechert's avocation was collecting books. He built over the years a distinguished collection in the fields of Western

Americana in general and the French regime in Canada and Jesuit Relations in particular. When retirement and ill health prompted a move to a smaller residence, Dechert discontinued collecting and gave his fine collection to the library of the University of Pennsylvania.

Dechert's bookish interests made him a prime candidate for membership in the American Antiquarian Society. He was duly elected at the annual meeting in October 1962. He attended two meetings within five years, but world travels, business commitments, and, eventually, the infirmities of age prevented him from getting to any others, much to his mortification. He served on the membership committee for a time in the 1960s and gave advice during the Philadelphia phase of the Society's development program in the early 1970s. He was, in addition, a former chairman of the Associates of the John Carter Brown Library.

Robert Dechert died in Philadelphia on November 8, 1975. He had married Helen Hope Wilson in 1922. She died in 1950. Dechert is survived by the two sons and two daughters of that marriage as well as by his second wife, the former Helen Branson, whom he married in 1951.

John B. Hench

RICHARD WALDEN HALE, JR.

Richard Walden Hale, Jr., archivist and historian, was born in Boston, August 5, 1909, the son of Richard Walden and Mary Newbold (Patterson) Hale. His father was a founder and partner in the important Boston law firm Hale & Dorr. The family's roots went deep into Massachusetts history; two of Hale's ancestors, Edward Winslow and Susannah White, came over on the *Mayflower* and were among the first Pilgrims to marry in the New World. Hale prepared for college at Milton Academy. He graduated from Harvard in 1930

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