

the academic world. He said that both Anna and he benefited from the marriage: Anna got into *Who's Who* and he got into the *Social Register*. Bob enjoyed telling of the occasion when one of his Chestnut Hill friends, whom he had known for some time, said to him: 'Bob I understand that you have written a book.' His comment was, 'I knew I had made it.'

Raised as an Episcopalian, Bob became a convinced Friend during his Swarthmore years. After his move to Chestnut Hill, he became active in the Chestnut Hill Meeting, where he met Anna. He also played a vital role in the Meeting during particularly difficult times.

Although he could appear to be austere, especially to young nephews, Bob was at heart a gregarious man, with a delightful sense of humor. He was president of two of the numerous clubs to which he belonged: The Philobiblon and the Franklin Inn. A Philadelphian, and a distinguished one, Robert E. Spiller was proud of that and of the University of Pennsylvania, to which he brought so much distinction.

Thomas R. Adams

### NICHOLAS BIDDLE WAINWRIGHT

Nicholas Biddle Wainwright, local historian and editor, was born in Saranac, New York, on July 12, 1914, son of Clement Reeves and Eugenia (Dixon) Wainwright. He grew up in the family house in Ambler in suburban Philadelphia and, after early schooling in the neighborhood, went off to Saint George's School in Newport, graduating in 1932. He entered Princeton in the Class of 1936 and, following graduation and a brief stint with an insurance company, he joined the staff of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, where he was to spend his entire adult life except for military service.

As assistant librarian at HSP during the golden years when Julian Boyd was in charge there, Wainwright corresponded with

Clarence Brigham at AAS on an exchange of newspapers, Brigham to trade some late nineteenth-century files of newspapers of Lewistown for some issues of the *Oracle of Dauphin* from the period 1799 to 1808. They continued to correspond regarding other newspaper holdings for Brigham's magisterial history and bibliography of American newspapers printed before 1820. It was also in the early forties that Wainwright edited a couple of pieces for the *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, the HSP journal, and went off with his unit, the First Troop, Philadelphia City Cavalry, into active service and spent the war in the States before being discharged in 1946.

Returning to the Historical Society, he reopened his correspondence with Brigham, asking for information for a survey of views of Philadelphia. Wainwright continued his contribution of edited items for the *Magazine* and edited a history of his military unit. During the 1950s, he was editor of the *Magazine* and contributed some of the pieces published there, notably the long series of excerpts of the diary of Sidney George Fisher, an eccentric and opinionated Philadelphia snob of the nineteenth century. During this period Wainwright was commissioned to write the histories of such local institutions as an insurance company, the electric company, a church, and a bank. He did a study of Philadelphia lithography and a biography of George Croghan, a Pennsylvania frontiersman.

Wainwright had taken a master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania in the early fifties and was given an honorary degree from Dickinson College in the late fifties.

Wainwright was elected a member of AAS at the April meeting in 1960 and for the next couple of years was a faithful attender of meetings, giving a paper on Sidney George Fisher in 1962. During the sixties he continued to write on such subjects as the house and furniture of the Cadwalader family, the sketch book of James Biddle, and the history of his church in Gwynedd in Ambler.

In the early seventies, the Board of the Historical Society voted to make a number of major changes involving fund-raising, build-

ing renovation, and broadened public involvement through such means as exhibitions celebrating the hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the society and the two-hundredth anniversary of the nation, this latter in cooperation with the Library Company of Philadelphia and the American Philosophical Society. Finding this prospect, and that of increasing administrative duties, less congenial than his writing and editing, Wainwright made plans for retirement from the directorship, which he did in 1974, maintaining the editorship of the *Magazine* for another few years. He had plenty of writing and editing to do, including the retrospective view of that century and a half of collecting by the Historical Society, published in 1974, and a revised edition of the catalogue of the society's paintings and miniatures.

A man of distant reserve in most public circumstances, he was as happy as he could be in the company of his life-long acquaintances in those institutions that were so much a part of Philadelphia's past. He lunched early, and often alone, at the Philadelphia Club every working day at the society, a block away. During the season he spent a day a week at the State in Schuylkill fishhouse on the Delaware next to Andalusia. He also was involved in a neighborhood country club and with the First Troop. He had written the histories of many of these local institutions along with that of a private fishing club in Rhode Island. He was also a member of the Walpole Society.

Increasing poor circulation restricted his activities recently in even this congenial circle, and he resigned from the editorship of the *Magazine* he had served so single-mindedly. His health worsened with the outset of cancer, and his last years were powerfully and painfully prolonged.

He died on October 23, 1986, at his 'home in the country,' as he always put it. He is survived by his wife, Christine Henry, whom he had married in the fifties, and a daughter. The memorial tribute voted by the Board of the Historical Society created a memorial fund, the proceeds of which would benefit the library of the society.

James E. Mooney

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