

Obituary

WILLIAM ROBERTSON COE

William Robertson Coe was born in Worcestershire, England, on June 8, 1869, a son of Frederick Augustus and Margaret (Robertson) Coe. He was educated at Albion Academy in Cardiff, and brought to Philadelphia by his parents when he was fourteen. Two years later he entered the Philadelphia office of the insurance firm of Johnson and Higgins, and ten years later he went to the New York office. From 1910 to 1916 he was president, and from 1916 to 1943, chairman of the board, of this company. He had other business interests, such as the Wyoming Land Company, and was a director of several corporations.

About 1915 Mr. Coe bought the Shoshone Stud near Lexington, Kentucky, where over the next twenty years he raised some of the best racing stock in America. Another hobby was horticulture, and on his estate, Planting Fields, at Oyster Bay, he built up a collection of fifteen or twenty thousand varieties of rhododendrons and azaleas, and other plants to a similar extent. His most famous collection, however, was that of Western Americana, which he began with the purchase of Buffalo Bill's Wyoming ranch in 1910. Relying heavily on the guidance of Edward Eberstadt, he built up a collection of manuscript Western Americana which can never be equalled. Beginning in 1943, he gave this material to Yale, where he also endowed a professorship in the American Studies Program. In 1948 he gave Planting Fields, then valued at \$4,500,000, to the State of New York

to serve as a laboratory for the Long Island Agricultural and Technical Institute at Farmingdale.

The University of Wyoming in 1948 gave Mr. Coe an LL.D., and Yale gave him an M.A. the year following. He was elected to the American Antiquarian Society in April, 1948, but in spite of the best of intentions, he never got to a meeting. The combination of his years and his previous commitments kept him away, but he sent gifts in his stead. After a long illness he died at Palm Beach on March 14, 1955, survived by his widow, the former Caroline Graham Slaughter, and by four children, Robert Douglas Coe and Henry Huttleston Rogers Coe of Cody, Wyoming, William Rogers Coe of Glen Cove, Long Island, and Countess Natali Mai Coe Vitetti of Rome.

C. K. S.

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