

Obituaries

WORTHINGTON CHAUNCEY FORD

Worthington Chauncey Ford, historian and member of the Council of this Society for many years, died March 7, 1941, on board the steamship *Excalibur*, which was bringing Americans back from Europe. He was born at Brooklyn, February 16, 1858, the son of Gordon Lester and Emily Ellsworth (Fowler) Ford. He traced his ancestry to a long line of scholars well known in the literary annals of this country. His father, a lawyer and railroad president, gathered a notable library of American books and manuscripts which now is to be found in the New York Public Library. His mother was a poetess and essayist. His grandfather, William Chauncey Fowler, wrote works of philology and genealogy. His great-grandfather was the noted lexicographer, Noah Webster, and back further in the ancestral line was Charles Chauncy, second president of Harvard College.

Worthington Ford received his early education at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. He entered Columbia University with the Class of 1879, and won honors in Classical and European languages while specializing in history and economics. Increasing deafness compelled him to withdraw at the end of his junior year. After two years on the editorial staff of the *New York Herald*, he became chief of the Bureau of Statistics of the State Department in Washington in 1885, where he served for four years. After working on a history of political economy for some time he became chief of the Bureau of Statistics with the Treasury Department in 1893.

In 1897 he became chief of the department of documents of the Boston Public Library, where he remained for five years, also lecturing on statistics in 1901 at the University of Chicago.

In 1902 Mr. Ford was chosen chief of the division of manuscripts at the Library of Congress. Here he had the opportunity to exercise his talents in his chosen field of American history. As far back as 1886 he had been writing monographs and contributions to learned publications on historical topics, and from 1889 to 1893 he had edited the monumental *Writings of George Washington*, in fourteen volumes. But now it was his privilege to live with tens of thousands of manuscripts which he could both appreciate and interpret. During the six years of his incumbency, the manuscripts in the Library of Congress more than doubled in extent and in importance. Not only private gifts of notable collections were acquired, but great bodies of manuscripts, such as the Washington papers and the papers of the Continental Congress, were transferred to the Library from various federal departments. An outstanding service was the launching and editing of the *Journals of the Continental Congress* from 1774 to 1789, of which he issued the first fifteen volumes carrying the *Journals* through 1779.

In January, 1909, he left the Library of Congress to become editor of the Massachusetts Historical Society, and thus entered upon the second phase of his historical career. Here he labored with industry and success for a period of twenty years. The amount of material which he personally edited and wrote and contributed was prodigious—twenty volumes of *Proceedings*, ten volumes of *Collections*, and extra volumes such as Bradford's *History of Plymouth Plantation*, the *Education of Henry Adams*, and the *Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts*. The volumes in the regular series of *Collections* meant a vast amount of editorial

research on his part, especially the comprehensive work on *Massachusetts Broad­sides to 1800*. He also projected the valuable series of photostat reproductions of newspapers and rare Americana which connected the name of the Society more with this useful collection of library aids than that of any other institution. Scarcely a meeting of the Society passed without a contribution by him on some important historical topic. He found time also during this period to give a course on historical manuscripts at Harvard University, to edit the first two volumes of the *Catalogue of the John Carter Brown Library*, and to write the annual reports of that Library from 1918 to 1923. Through all these years, too, he generously gave to scholars everywhere the advantage of his experience in helping to solve their problems.

In 1929 Mr. Ford resigned to enter an even wider field. He accepted the appointment of director of the European mission of the Library of Congress, which had been established in 1927 and was engaged in the vast operation of gathering throughout Europe photographic reproductions of documents relating to America. In this position he labored for six years, most of the time with his headquarters in Paris, supervising the work done by assistants in the various European countries. Over a million pages of documents were photographed for the Library of Congress, thus making available for students a hitherto unexplored mass of the source materials of American history. After he had reached the age limit fixed by Congress, in 1932, he continued his invaluable services to the Library of Congress for three years by acting as European agent-at-large. He then retired to live quietly in France, and to make at least one visit to America previous to his final decision to return to this country.

Mr. Ford married Bettina Fillmore Quin of Washington on

October 11, 1899. She died April 26, 1931, in Paris. He was survived by two daughters, Mrs. William A. Ellis, of Bloomfield, New Jersey, and Mrs. John W. Lowes, of Cambridge, Massachusetts. Of his several brothers and sisters, the only survivor is Emily Ellsworth Ford Skeel.

Worthington Ford was visited with many honors during his long career. He received the honorary degrees of M.A. from Harvard in 1907, of Litt.D. from Brown University in 1919, and of LL.D. from the University of Michigan in 1920. He was elected president of the American Historical Association in 1917, honorary fellow of the Royal Historical Society, fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and member of the American Institute of Arts and Letters, the American Philosophical Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, and several local historical and literary organizations.

As an author and editor, Mr. Ford wrote continuously for over fifty years. His earliest book was the two volume *American Citizen's Manual*, 1883. For the next twenty years he wrote many monographs on American eighteenth century history, and upon Washington. One of his most useful publications during the period was his two volume work listing British officers serving in America from 1754 to 1783, published in 1894 and 1897. After he assumed the editorship at the Massachusetts Historical Society, the number of his contributions increased, and among the most important were his bibliography of the Massachusetts House Journals, and that of the Laws, which appeared in the *Publications* of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts. For the Club of Odd Volumes he produced *The Boston Book Market, 1679-1700*, in 1917, and *The Isle of Pines, 1668*, in 1920. With a zest for accuracy and a grace in style, all that he wrote was readable, as well as historically valuable.

Mr. Ford was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in 1907. His continued interest in the Society and his prominence in the field of history caused his election to the Council in 1915. Here he served until his resignation in 1929, at the time of his departure for Europe. For the *Proceedings* of the Antiquarian Society he wrote "The Campaign of 1844" in October, 1909; "Some Papers of Aaron Burr" in April, 1919; and "The Isaiah Thomas Collection of Ballads" in April, 1923. He was much interested in the Society and especially in the growth of its Library. His attendance at Council dinners was always welcomed by his fellow members, as he was entertaining in conversation and had a fund of literary and historical reminiscence. In Mr. Ford was united a scholarly mind and a knowledge of human nature—a keenness for living properly and well—and above all, an outstanding vigor, yet gentleness, of character.

C. S. B.

HOLLIS FRENCH

Hollis French was a son of John James and Frances M. (Stratton) French of Boston, where he was born on June 26, 1868. He attended Boston English High School and was graduated at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1889. Six years later he began his work as a consulting engineer in Boston, and in 1898 joined in the establishment of the firm of Hollis French and Allen Hubbard. Since 1931 the firm has gone under the name of the Office of Hollis French. These houses under his direction were responsible for the building of many New England power plants and some of the new buildings at Yale.

Mr. French had varied interests. He was vice-president of the New England Grenfell Association, director and

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