

## RICHARD GIMBEL

Richard Gimbel, collector and curator, was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on July 26, 1898, the son of Ellis and Minnie (Mastbaum) Gimbel. He studied in Europe and was a member of the Class of 1920 at Yale where he had joined the Field Artillery as a private and from whence he went off to the First World War with the 79th Division and rose to first lieutenant. War over he returned to New Haven and finished up Phi Beta Kappa with highest honors, then took a trip around the world before joining the family retail store, Gimbel Brothers, of which his father had been chairman. He was early put in charge of the construction and organization of a Philadelphia branch and he traveled to get ideas for it, settling in the late twenties in Philadelphia.

Gimbel's first interest in our doings came in the early thirties when he wrote to the Society's Librarian, R. W. G. Vail, concerning Vail's article on the *Ulster County Gazette* to which he had a correction to make. He soon got around to asking about our Poe material in which he had a strong and abiding interest as he did in American literature generally. Gimbel lived in Poe's Philadelphia house which he had made into something of a shrine, furnishing it with literary and personal relics of the poet. Brigham responded by offering to send along a copy of the Poe bibliography he had been working on. Brigham also invited him to stop by and see the library. Gimbel did in August of 1933 and they talked about their shared interest in Poe, their talk leading to a sale of duplicates and discards to Gimbel to add to the collections at Poe House.

In 1935 he quit the firm and moved to Miami where he ran a store very successfully. In a letter a little later in the thirties he sent Vail some information on the origins of our national anthem and also noted that 'my latest hobby is collecting the

works of Thomas Paine' and he wanted to stop by this library on his way to Maine that summer to see what we had. Though in Miami, bibliographical queries continued to chase him, providing a pleasant diversion from 'living in Florida and being pestered continually with war Extras.' News in the 'war Extras' was soon about Pearl Harbor and Gimbel was off to war. Having transferred from the Artillery in 1940, he spent part of the war flying with the Eighth Air Force over Europe and while on the ground between missions he continued his collecting in London's blitz-disarranged bookstores, adding an aeronautical collection to his earlier hoards. After the war he stayed in the Air Force and in 1951 was on the faculty at Yale as Professor of Air Science and Tactics, retiring there from the service two years later as a colonel and taking up work in the library where he had been a trustee.

As his peripatetic life in uniform had moved him out of Philadelphia, Gimbel had set up a foundation for literary research at the Poe House which he later gave to Philadelphia as a museum together with its collection. Settling in New Haven made it reasonable for Gimbel to take research trips to Worcester more often and he grabbed at the chance.

In honor of Brigham's seventy-fifth birthday he sent to the Society a copy of a rare Paine book and Brigham was delighted, for 'because of the size of our Paine collection, it is somewhat of an event to obtain a title that we lack.'

At the spring meeting in 1953 Gimbel was elected to membership in this Society and he attended over half our meetings since then. Throughout the fifties Gimbel corresponded bibliographically and at length with Brigham and Clifford K. Shipton and primarily on Thomas Paine matters, more than one might be led to expect from his title in the Yale Library hierarchy, 'Curator of Aeronautical Literature.' In honor of outgoing and incoming Presidents of the Society, Thomas Winthrop Streeter and Brigham, he presented the first edition of *Common Sense* to the Society in 1955, 'one of the most

valued gifts that we have ever received.' His bibliography of Common Sense was published in 1956 by Yale. In the late fifties he continued to correspond on his non-aeronautical interests which had come to include Paine cartoons and moon hoaxes. At the October meeting in 1959 Gimbel read a paper, 'The Resurgence of Thomas Paine,' and in the *Proceedings* for 1960 the hundred-page catalogue of an exhibition at Yale by Gimbel on the occasion of the Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of Thomas Paine's death was printed.

Recently he was at our meeting in the spring of 1970 at Winterthur from which he rode back to New Haven on a bus taking a number of members back to Worcester. On that bus were the Shiptons who were also, a couple of months later, on a Grolier Club tour of German libraries with the Gimbels when in the evening of May 26, Gimbel had a heart attack and died the next day in a Munich hospital at seventy-one years old. As he had had a number of heart attacks the last few years, his death was no surprise, but family and friends on the tour felt the shock of loss keenly indeed. Richard Gimbel is survived by his widow, two sons, five daughters, twenty grandchildren, and a large number of friends who miss this extraordinarily diverse bookman with a puckish sense of humor.

J. E. M.

#### JAMES OWEN KNAUSS

Born in Coopersburg in 1885 and brought up in that area of rural Pennsylvania, James Owen Knauss left the hillsides of home for Lehigh University where he took his bachelor's degree in 1910 when nearly twenty-five years old. He taught for a short time in the high school in Catasauque, Pennsylvania, before leaving home for Cambridge and a master's degree from Harvard in 1913. That fall he joined the faculty of Penn State where he taught while working on his doctorate on Pennsylvania Germans. It was to that purpose that in mid-

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