

1974 he lent pieces from his private collection to 'Silver in New France,' an exhibition arranged by Jean Trudel at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa. He was also a member of the National Club in Toronto, and the Arts Club in Montreal.

Langdon's initial correspondence with AAS, in 1973, concerned Canadian book trade labels. He was elected to membership in October 1973, and generously donated to the Society manuscripts, copies of letters and documents, bookplates, silver, and books during the time in which he was a member, and at his death he left a generous bequest to the Society.

Langdon gave his collection of early Canadian church and domestic silver to the Royal Ontario Museum, and much of his library, including more than 1,000 books on silver, to the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto. He had written in 1978 of 'a little trouble' with his heart, but hoped to attend the Society's spring meeting. John Langdon died on September 27, 1981, at the age of seventy-eight, and is survived by his wife.

Kathryn Buhler

### JOHN FRANCIS McDERMOTT III

John Francis McDermott, an authority on the French and Spanish colonial period in the Mississippi Valley, was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on April 18, 1902 to John F. and Mary (Steber) McDermott. He received his A.B. and A.M. degrees from Washington University, and in 1924 married Mary S. Kendrick; they had one son, John Francis IV. He stayed on at Washington University in various teaching posts from 1924 to 1971—as instructor to associate professor of English until 1961, then as associate professor of American cultural history to 1963. After thirty-nine years at Washington University, he moved on to a position as the first research professor in the humanities at Southern Illinois University. He retired to adjunct professor status in 1971.

Concurrently with his teaching positions, McDermott held research grants from the American Philosophical Society, Michigan State University, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Henry E. Huntington Library, and other institutions. He was a Guggenheim Memorial Fellow in 1954, and received awards from the French and Spanish governments and from academic societies in those countries; he was a commandeur in the *Palmes Academiques*. He was honored with a D.H.L. degree from the University of Missouri in 1977.

He was a prolific writer, the author or editor of over forty books and hundreds of articles, mostly on Midwestern and Western history and art in the eighteenth century. The books that he wrote include *Private Libraries in Creole Saint Louis* (1938); *Glossary of Mississippi Valley French* (1941); *The Lost Panoramas of the Mississippi* (1958); *George Caleb Bingham, River Portraitist* (1959); *Seth Eastman, Pictorial Historian of the Indian* (1961); and *Seth Eastman's Mississippi: A Lost Portfolio Recovered* (1973). The books that he edited include several works about Washington Irving and Lewis Carroll.

Perhaps because McDermott was a member, trustee, or president of so many organizations (Missouri Historical Society, trustee 1950–59; American Folklore Society, councillor 1958–60; National Folk Festival Association, president 1953–61, to name a few) he was not frequently involved in the American Antiquarian Society affairs. He was elected to membership in April 1961, but attended only the annual meeting in 1967, at which he read a paper entitled, 'Travelers on the Western Waters.' It was subsequently published in the *Proceedings*. He also represented AAS at the inauguration of John Carrier Weaver as president of the University of Missouri in 1967. He was generous in making gifts of his own books to the Society, and in making annual contributions toward operating costs.

At the time of his death, McDermott was president of the St. Louis Westerners and the William Clark Society, both of which groups he had helped found. He had almost finished

work on a biography of his ancestor Pierre Laclede, founder of St. Louis, on which he had worked much of his life. He died April 23, 1981, and is survived by his wife and son, a brother, Marion, and three grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

#### DAVID CHAMBERS MEARNS

David Chambers Mearns was born in Washington, D.C., December 31, 1899, to William Andrew and Mary Beard Chambers Mearns. He attended both George Washington University and the University of Virginia, but graduated from neither; his only degree was an honorary LITT.D. bestowed by Lincoln College in 1960. He joined the staff of the Library of Congress in 1918, as chief assistant to the superintendent of the reading room, and married Mildred Sellers Haines in 1929. They had one daughter.

Mearns was to stay on at the Library of Congress for forty-nine years. By 1943 he had become director of the reference department. Two years later his wife died. In 1951 he became chief of the manuscript department, the position for which he is best known and which he held until his retirement in 1967; concurrently he was the incumbent in the chair of American history and assistant librarian for American collections. He married Mary Hume Richardson in 1951.

Mearns represented the Library of Congress on the National Historical Publications Commission for thirteen years. He brought growth to the manuscript department, including its expansion into cultural history, the history of science, and other less traditional areas, and under his stewardship the presidential papers program and the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* project began. Upon his retirement, he received high tribute from past associates. Archibald MacLeish, a former librarian of Congress, called him 'the rarest treasure in the Library of Congress,' and Luther H. Evans, another former librarian of Congress, wrote, 'You were for me

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