

## JOHN EDWIN POMFRET

John Pomfret, a colonial historian and institution leader, died in Camden, South Carolina on November 26, 1981, after a brief illness, at the age of eighty-three. He was one of the more senior members of the Society, having been elected to membership in 1957. His scholarly work took several directions, but he was perhaps best known for his studies of the colony of New Jersey, which culminated in four volumes: *The Province of West New Jersey, 1609-1702* (1956); *The Province of East New Jersey, 1609-1702* (1962); *The New Jersey Proprietors and Their Lands, 1664-1776* (1964)—which won the State and Local History Award; and the more general study, *Colonial New Jersey, a History*, which he completed in retirement and published in 1973.

Pomfret was born in Philadelphia in 1898 and completed his undergraduate and graduate training at the University of Pennsylvania. He became a member of the department of history at Princeton University in 1925 and taught there for twelve years, the last two serving also as an assistant dean. In 1937 he moved to Vanderbilt University, where he spent five years as dean of the Senior College of Arts and Science and Graduate School.

In 1942 Pomfret became president of the College of William and Mary, where he worked hard to improve the academic standing of the college. Williamsburg was an especially appropriate place for him at that time. He took such a major part in the formation of the Institute for the Study of Early American History and Culture that he has sometimes been called its founder. He was responsible for converting the *William and Mary Quarterly* into a quarterly publication with national scope and high excellence in the field of colonial history.

Pomfret resigned from the presidency of the College of William and Mary in 1951 in connection with a controversy over the athletics program. He became director of the Henry E.

Huntington Library and Art Gallery, where he continued for fifteen years until reaching retirement age in 1966. At the Huntington, he concentrated his efforts in two areas. First, he worked to improve and enlarge the program for publishing scholarly books, and he devoted personal attention to work in progress and to the manuscripts submitted for publication. Second, he endeavored to attract distinguished scholars to the permanent research staff. Two members of AAS, Allan Nevins and Ray Allen Billington, became senior research associates at his invitation, and A. L. Rowse and John M. Steadman also joined the permanent staff. Mr. and Mrs. Pomfret added a very welcome attitude of friendliness to the social atmosphere, and they did much to bring readers, staff, and Friends of the Huntington Library into a warmer relationship.

Upon retirement, the Pomfrets moved to Carmel, California, to the house they had bought several years earlier. They had a happy life there for more than ten years, with much sociability, bridge playing, bringing books to conclusion, and gardening. When the domestic details became burdensome, they moved to an apartment in South Carolina (Mrs. Pomfret's native state), first in Columbia—where Jack enjoyed the use of the Historical Society—and later in Camden.

John Pomfret is survived by his wife, Sara Wise Pomfret, by a son, John Dana Pomfret (general manager of the *New York Times*), and by two grandchildren.

James Thorpe

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