

## *Obituaries*

### JAMES FRANKLIN BEARD, JR.

James Franklin Beard, Jr., the editor and biographer of James Fenimore Cooper, was born in Memphis, Tennessee, on February 14, 1919. His parents were James Franklin and Anna B. (Shipley) Beard. After graduating from the high school in Bristol, Tennessee, he came north, to the metropolis of New York, for college. After taking his A.B. with honors in philosophy from Columbia in 1940, he remained on Morningside Heights to earn his master's in English the next year before going on to doctoral work at Princeton (Ph.D. in English, 1949). He taught at Princeton from 1943 to 1948, then went to Dartmouth College as an English instructor in 1948. He was promoted to assistant professor in 1951, remaining in Hanover four more years before moving to Clark University in Worcester as an associate professor of English. Promotion to full professor came in 1962 and an appointment as research professor of English in 1987. He was director of graduate studies in English from 1965 to 1980 and chaired the department from 1980 to 1985.

Jim Beard's academic life was full of honors. He held Guggenheim Fellowships in 1952-53 and 1958-59 and a National Endowment for the Humanities senior fellowship in 1967-68. He was an American Antiquarian Society-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellow here in 1978-79.

The focus of Jim's scholarly life over four decades was the writings and life of James Fenimore Cooper. His single-minded devotion to this work resuscitated the author's scholarly and popular reputation. He became, in the words of Henry S. F. Cooper, Jr., the novelist's great-great-grandson, 'the dean of Cooper schol-

arship.' His first major Cooper project was to collect and edit Cooper's letters and journals. This work began in the 1940s and it took him to libraries and to the Cooper family seat in Coopers-town, New York, where he 'sorted out a trunk full of James Fenimore Cooper papers,' according to Henry Cooper. In doing so, he won the respect and valuable cooperation of the novelist's descendants. By 1951, Beard's work on Cooper brought him into contact with the American Antiquarian Society. From AAS, he obtained photocopies of Cooper material and visited to research the records of Cooper letters contained in the Society's voluminous files of auction catalogues and other collections. This early work culminated in the publication of *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper* in six volumes by Belknap Press of Harvard University Press from 1960 to 1968.

Jim Beard had a long and mutually beneficial association with the American Antiquarian Society. In the last generation or two, few if any of the Society's scholarly members have been as actively engaged as readers in the library and, in general, in helping to advance the Society's mission as was Jim. When he joined the English department at Clark University in 1955, one of its attractions was its proximity to the collections of AAS, which already included strong holdings of nineteenth-century American literature, particularly of Fenimore Cooper. AAS continued to be a factor in his remaining at Clark as well. As he once told director Clifford K. Shipton, 'I have used virtually all the large research libraries in the East, but I have found no other library which could match yours for my particular purposes. . . . If the collections are fine, the staff is worthy of it in every way; and I think you are to be congratulated in the caliber of the staff you have assembled. It has helped me to solve many problems I could not have solved by myself, often without my asking; and I cannot recall working in any library where the competence and friendliness of the staff was greater.'

Jim was elected to membership in AAS in 1962, which 'delighted' him. The Society became a collaborator on Jim's next

major Cooper project, the 'definitive' edition of Cooper's literary works, *The Writings of James Fenimore Cooper*, volumes of which are still being published by the State University of New York Press. This collaboration took formal shape in 1967 when AAS joined Clark University in institutional sponsorship of the edition. The Society's principal contribution to the project was to serve as its main library resource. To the considerable collection of Cooper works already on the shelves, AAS director and librarian Marcus A. McCorison added hundreds of editions and copies, dozens of them unique exemplars, as part of a concerted effort to make the Society's Cooper collections the best anywhere in order to assist the scholarly efforts of Jim and his editorial associates. These new acquisitions went beyond the Society's normal collecting scope to include many copies of foreign editions of Cooper, including editions published in Russia. In addition, AAS obtained a Hinman Collator, an expensive mechanical and optical device used by literary scholars to detect and record textual and printing variants in multiple copies of a work as a means of establishing its definitive text. This machine was put to use by many of Jim's editors in examining Cooper editions belonging to AAS and copies borrowed from other repositories for comparison. Today, AAS owns some 1,300 volumes of Cooper's novels, travel books, and other works published in America and abroad throughout the nineteenth century. It has catalogued these titles in RLIN, a national computerized bibliographical data base, where the records are available to scholars and librarians worldwide.

AAS assisted Jim Beard and his colleagues on the Cooper project in other ways as well. As noted before, Jim himself was awarded an AAS-National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, which enabled him to spend 1978-79 in residence at AAS working on his third major Cooper project, a biography of Cooper. The Society also gave short-term fellowships or research associate appointments to some half dozen scholars doing scholarly editing work on various volumes of the Cooper edition. Jim presented papers at AAS meetings and for the *Proceedings* and sat on Society

committees. He also served two terms as a member of the Advisory Board of the Society's Program in the History of the Book in American Culture upon its establishment in 1983. He was honored for his signal contributions to American literary scholarship at a dinner party at the Society's Goddard-Daniels House on June 5, 1985.

For his part, Jim assisted AAS in achieving its preeminence as a repository of Cooper material and Cooper scholarship. Through his good offices, AAS forged links with members of the Cooper family, including Paul Fenimore Cooper, Jr., who was elected to membership in AAS in 1972. When Cooper died prematurely in 1988, he left many of his famous ancestor's manuscripts to the Society. Jim himself donated many items from his own collection on Cooper to AAS.

Jim Beard had not been well in the last several years. He died December 14, 1989, leaving behind a formidable shelf of scholarly production, but, sadly, without having completed his long-in-progress critical biography of Fenimore Cooper. He is survived by his wife, Eleanor M. (Williams) Beard, and two daughters, Anne S. Greene and Mary W. Beard. A memorial service was held for him in Antiquarian Hall on January 20, 1990, which was attended by relatives, friends, and colleagues from many parts. In his remarks on that occasion, Marcus A. McCorison, the Society's president and librarian, identified the sources of Jim Beard's achievements: 'Meticulousness and regularity are the tell-tales that suggest the iron discipline that marked his scholarly work. Discipline and passion—passion was the other element in the amalgam that marked his commitment to the study of the life and works of James Fenimore Cooper. To take Fenimore Cooper as the subject of his life's work was typical of Jim Beard, I think. Cooper, if not despised by the academic literary community, was ignored and considered only fit for children's reading. Real people, as Mark Twain demonstrated, did not read Cooper. Here was one of the prime designers of American literature and of our national myth relegated to the intellectual dust bin. Ignoring popular

trends and the received wisdom of his peers, Beard set out to rectify our mistaken apprehension of Cooper's worth.'

John B. Hench

## JULIE CHASE FULLER

When Isaiah Thomas created the American Antiquarian Society in 1812, Worcester was a town of 2,500 residents. Thomas was one of those who helped launch more than a century of remarkable expansion. Worcester grew to a city of 200,000 before its population began to recede in the 1950s. Industry prospered. Colleges and cultural institutions were established. Eleven years after Thomas died in 1831, some of those he had known in the town joined with others to found the Worcester County Mechanics Association. It grew, and by 1855, its members started building a fine new lecture hall and auditorium. 'The Mechanics' Hall' was opened in 1857 on the Main Street site of the home of Daniel Waldo.

For seventy-five years, Mechanics Hall flourished. Then it fell on lean times. By the 1970s, it had been closed by fire inspectors and was deteriorating rapidly. The Worcester Heritage Society (now Preservation Worcester), recognizing that the Hall of the Worcester County Mechanics Association was one of Worcester's most significant buildings, in 1972 nominated Mechanics Hall for designation as a National Historic Place and commissioned and paid for a study that verified its importance as 'the finest hall, as distinct from theater, remaining in the United States from the pre-Civil War decade.'

Enter Julie Chase Fuller. At fifty-five, she was ready to start a second career. She was chosen from eighty-one applicants to become executive director of the Worcester County Mechanics Association in 1977. Community leaders then rallied in a fund drive led by Richard C. Steele, and Mrs. Fuller oversaw the complicated

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