

in downtown Worcester to its 1857 glory, and he was a leader in many other organizations—the United Way, the New England Science Center, Mohegan Council, Boy Scouts of America, and more.

The last ten years of his life were sometimes less smooth than his friends wished. He was less active in the newspaper world—primarily a matter of choice but nevertheless a wrenching change. He retired in 1989, after forty-six years with only two newspaper companies. He was periodically sidelined by illness. His wife, Louise, had struggled for eighteen years with heart problems that limited their travel together. She died in 1990, six months before what would have been their fiftieth wedding anniversary.

In his later years, Dick divided his time between Worcester and Vero Beach, Florida. He golfed. But he was not one to spend all his time at play. In Vero Beach, he became active in an environmental committee, and he loved that. It kept him in touch with issues and with people; he relished the contact.

When his life ended on June 7, 1991, he was seventy-four. His achievements were many; he had nothing left to prove. Yet he retained his interest in newspapers, in current affairs, in the social and cultural life of Worcester, and in what was happening on every side. The last time I saw him, his smile was as winning as ever. He leaves three children—Barbara Steele-Herman of Carefree, Arizona, Virginia Felch of Oakland, California, and Nancy Ewell of Paros, Greece.

Robert C. Achorn

FRANCIS GUSTAF WALETT

Francis Gustaf Walett, a noted colonial historian and member of the Society since 1965, died October 26, 1991, in Stoughton, Massachusetts. Frank, as he was affectionately known to his friends, had a close relationship with the Society for three decades. At the height of the relationship, during the observance of

the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, Walett wrote a series of syndicated weekly newspaper columns on 'The Press and the American Revolution' and compiled and edited the *American Bicentennial Historical Facsimile Packet*. Both projects were sponsored by the Society and drew on AAS library and staff resources. The series of newspaper columns, covering the press from 1763 to 1783, was cited for achievement by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration. In 1976 the Society published it in book form under the title *Patriots, Loyalists, and Printers*.

As a publishing scholar, Walett did important work on the Revolutionary era. His key article in the *William and Mary Quarterly* in 1949 represented a breakthrough: it showed how Massachusetts Whigs seized control of the Council from 1766 to 1774 and transformed what had been a conservative institution into a radical one under the leadership of James Bowdoin. His editing of the Ebenezer Parkman diary, which Lyman Butterfield once called Clifford K. Shipton's historical 'secret weapon,' made an important colonial manuscript more accessible by bringing it into print. This work, which was first published serially in the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* from 1961 to 1966 and brought together in book form by the Society in 1973, shed significant light on the destruction of Gov. Thomas Hutchinson's home during the Stamp Act riot in 1765. Walett also wrote *Massachusetts Newspapers and the Coming of the Revolution*, published in 1975 by the Massachusetts Bicentennial Commission.

Walett's aim was to write history in a narrative style that would be attractive to general readers as well as scholarly specialists. In this effort he succeeded: his writing style was crisp and attractive, and in his weekly columns Walett reached an audience numbering in the millions. He was particularly pleased by the reaction from people who had never been interested in history before, and who responded to his writings with long letters.

As a professor of history, Walett had a teaching career in a number of New England institutions—Boston University, Clark University, Northeastern University, and Worcester State Col-

lege. He was a full professor at Worcester State from 1957 until his retirement in 1978, and headed the history department for many years. As a lecturer in his classes in colonial history, he was described as 'witty and superb' by one student. Walett received all his training for the teaching profession at Boston University, including his bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

Frank was no sober-sided scholar and had talents that stretched into other, unexpected fields. He was equally at home poring over old documents and banging out jazz on a piano, because he had put himself through school playing in dance bands. His brief career as a semipro baseball player fortunately came to a close when he chose to leave the diamond for the halls of academe. He pursued his hobby of book collecting with a passion and was as well known to rare book collectors as he was to fellow scholars. An outgoing, friendly, generous, and unselfish person, Frank will be sorely missed by those who knew and admired his fine qualities.

He is survived by his wife Helen (Giovaoni) Walett; a son, Air Force Col. Robert L. Faux; a daughter, Nancy Kerns; and three grandchildren.

George A. Billias

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