

long served and deeply loved. He is survived by his wife Kathryn Cousins Washburn, a son, Alexandros, from his previous marriage to Lelia Kanavarioti, and two granddaughters.

The American Antiquarian Society and American historical scholarship are intellectually richer and more genuinely humane for Wid Washburn's manifold contributions. Those of us who were privileged to know him have lost an uncommonly genial, generous, and stimulating friend.

Alden T. Vaughan

STEPHEN THOMAS RILEY

Steve Riley was born in Worcester on December 28, 1908, and died in Wayland on February 15, 1997, the last (but not the youngest) of the numerous progeny of John and Mary (Ward) Riley. Between those dates, Steve lived a glorious life, rich in service to others as librarian and later director of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Although he worked in Boston and lived there and in suburban Weston later, he never forgot his Worcester origins and affiliations.

He was bookish, recalling for me once that as a small boy his favorite reading place in winter was on his stomach under the cast-iron, coal-burning stove in the family kitchen. When in high school, he worked in the Worcester Public Library. That he would attend college seemed foreordained. That he would attend Clark University in Worcester rather than the College of the Holy Cross seemed not foreordained, the former institution appearing dangerously radical to some. But Clark it was to be, Steve graduating *magna cum laude* and with a Phi Beta Kappa key (which I never saw him wear) in 1931 and winning an A.M. degree in 1932. A doctorate in American history followed in 1953, with Clark conferring his fourth degree, an honorary L.H.D., in 1981. He spoke at Clark that spring on enlarging the holdings of manuscripts at the MHS, prompting a wonderful story headline in the

April 1981 *Clark University News*: 'Collecting is "the life of Riley."' He served Clark as a working trustee, 1963-74, thereafter in an honorary capacity.

Steve's American Antiquarian Society affiliation was almost as strong as the Clark connection. By the time of his election to membership on October 17, 1951, he had done Army service in World War II as a cryptographer in Egypt and Iran and never (so far as is known) touched a keyboarded writing device thereafter. Whenever he could, he visited Jerusalem, to him the 'Holy City,' then under British rule, and with both Arabs and Jews hating their common enemy. Having been there myself well after the war was over (and others had taken place), we would compare notes on its more irenic aspects: geography, buildings, and luminous sunset glow. When elected to AAS, he was already librarian of the MHS, already the husband of Alice Amelia Riehle, whom he married on July 2, 1949, and already courteously answering mail inquiries from distant would-be scholars, myself among them.

Gracefully, Steve accepted numerous calls during the 1950s to serve with others to distribute, collect, and tabulate votes for new AAS members, a chore for those new in the pecking order and the equivalent of the newest faculty member's being tapped to arrange the annual department picnic. He accepted the assignments with the good cheer that characterized all his work for others. One of his closest friends was Clifford K. ("Ted") Shipton, in the 1950s AAS librarian; the duo went 'to so many conventions together that we were often referred to as the Smith Brothers.' The friendship endured even when the younger man told his friend he could *not* smoke a cigar in the MHS stacks while researching away on his sketches for *Sibley's Harvard Graduates*, an MHS series of which Ted was the author. In 1956 Steve read a paper before the AAS on 'Dr. William Whiting and Shays' Rebellion.' Its opening paragraph is vintage Steve Riley: 'In April 1787, Dr. William Whiting, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas of Berkshire County, was tried before the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts on charges of seditious

libel and seditious remarks and was found guilty. That is one of the facts in the narrative of Shays' Rebellion at which historians have paused, curious, before passing along to better-documented events. Now the intriguing story of the seditious Judge can be told from certain of his manuscripts which were recently acquired by the Massachusetts Historical Society.'

For AAS, Steve produced on request moving memoirs of Robert Earle Moody and of William Henry ('Pat') Harrison in 1987. Together, Steve and I in 1965 wrote for AAS a memoir of Professor James Blaine Hedges, whom Steve had had at Clark as an undergraduate and I as a graduate student at Brown University later. As Jim Hedges was an important influence on each of us, we welcomed the joint assignment, Steve treating the Hedges years at Clark and I those at Brown. Steve's prose evoked the place and the man: 'At Clark Jim Hedges handled nearly all of the American history courses, including his famous History of Westward Expansion. His classes were small—Clark had a total student body of about 300 in his time—which was exactly the way he wanted it. He never liked lecturing to throngs, preferring the give-and-take of small groups. His students remember his lectures as brilliant and above all provocative. He liked nothing better than to have his interpretations challenged and would deliberately goad his students into taking issue with him. But out of those encounters came a greater awareness of what he was trying to do. He opened the eyes of countless young scholars to the meaningfulness of America's past in a way they have never forgotten. When he left Clark to go to Brown there was general sadness but an awareness that this had to be. Thirty years later he confessed to one of his aging students that his happiest days in teaching were spent at Clark.'

For Steve and me, AAS meetings in Worcester, especially those in autumn, were like a gathering of the clan. The Boston contingent included the book people, the bookish ones, the collectors, the librarians, the bibliographers, and, once in a while, some academics, too. From Providence came Thomas R. Adams, head of

the John Carter Brown Library (to us 'JCB' Adams, to distinguish him from *our* Tom Adams, MHS president), amateur historian and collector Albert Lownes, and, later, bibliographer John Alden; from Princeton, M. Halsey Thomas, editor of the Samuel Sewall *Diary*. It was a happy time, and Steve Riley loved seeing his friends as much as they loved seeing him. After the AAS paper and lunch elsewhere in the city, we would drive Halsey Thomas to the local Greyhound Bus station for his return to Princeton, then off Steve and I would go to his favorite orchard in the area for a bushel or so of apples for winter eating. Then home to Weston and Belmont, and all of this accomplished in daylight. Only later did AAS decide on late afternoon meetings, much to the dismay of those geriatric members unhappy at the thought of driving home a distance in the dark.

Steve Riley's first love was the Massachusetts Historical Society, which he served as assistant librarian from 1934 to 1947, librarian from 1947 to 1962, and director from 1957 to 1976, when he was named director emeritus. The American Antiquarian Society was not far behind in his affections. He was a generous and faithful AAS member, was present at virtually every April and October gathering in Worcester, and attended his last meeting in October 1990. His sense of fun manifested itself when he used to twit Ted Shipton, and later Marcus A. McCorison, Ted's successor, about combining the AAS and MHS into a single superb entity holding both printed and manuscript materials and headquartered in Boston, of course. Nothing came of the suggestion, designed to raise hackles in Worcester. Or was Steve serious as he teased Ted and Marcus? If so, imagine the possible Colossus on the Charles, a kind of Library of Congress East in all but name.

In Boston as in Worcester, we miss Steve Riley like mad. He educated all of us, and we are better for his interest in us. His legacy is large, and we are grateful that he passed among us, none more so than his beloved Alice Riley, his wife of forty-seven years, who survives him.

Malcolm Freiberg

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