

FOSTER STEARNS

Foster Stearns, for twenty years an interested and generous member of this Society, died June 4, 1956. He was born at Hull, Massachusetts, July 29, 1881, the son of Frank W. Stearns, long a confidential adviser to President Calvin Coolidge. He was graduated from Amherst College in 1903 followed by a master's degree at Harvard in 1906. He was married June 22, 1905, to Martha Genung, daughter of Professor John F. Genung of Amherst College.

Foster Stearns' career was prominent in several fields. Trained as a librarian, he served the Boston Museum of Fine Arts from 1913 to 1917, when he became Massachusetts State librarian. After distinguished overseas service, he served as librarian of Holy Cross College from 1925 to 1930, when illness forced him to resign, and removed to Hancock, New Hampshire. His interest in Holy Cross was largely due to his espousing of Catholicism. Born a Protestant, he served as an Episcopal rector for a time, but became a Catholic in 1911. His father was also a convert. Foster was a devoted churchman. He was a papal chamberlain to Pope Pius XI, and a Knight of Malta.

He entered public life in New Hampshire in 1937, first as a state representative, followed by three terms of service in the United States Congress, representing New Hampshire. In 1945 he gave up his seat in Congress to run for Senator, but was defeated by the late Charles W. Tobey who had been Governor of the State and United States Senator for one term. From St. Anselm College in 1952 he received the degree of LL.D.

Foster Stearns was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society in 1936. His interest in the Society was intense and constant, and a source of reciprocal pleasure to the officers of the Society who regarded him as a close and

valued friend. In 1937 we had an opportunity to purchase the Hiram Bingham collection of Hawaiiana, but we could not afford it. Mr. Stearns united with the late James M. Hunnewell in acquiring the collection and presenting it to the Society. His interest in Hawaii arose from the fact that William Richards, missionary to Hawaii, was his great-grandfather. He frequently sent Hawaiian imprints from family holdings, as well as other valued material. He was a born collector. To our annual appeals for gifts to income for current expenses he responded promptly, nearly always the first to answer. In one humorously apologetic letter referring to his quickness in replying he remarked "He who gives quickly will have to give again." He contributed over \$500 since his election to membership. In 1954 he established a Foster Stearns permanent fund which at the time of his death amounted to \$1000. But the support which he manifested was not what made him a beloved member, so much as his pride in membership, his anxiety to attend meetings, and his highly personal friendship.

C. S. B.

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