

since.' This appreciation of Bob's influence is echoed by all who have ever worked with him.

Stephen T. Riley

### LOUIS B. WRIGHT

Louis B. Wright, scholar/librarian, internationally honored for his more than 300 publications on the history and literature of Elizabethan England, colonial America and other topics, as well as for his distinguished service at the Huntington Library and the Folger Shakespeare Library, died February 26, 1984, in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

Louis, who was born in 1899 and bred in small-town South Carolina, retained a lifelong fondness for the people and places of his boyhood. His early experiences there provided him with an inexhaustible fund of humorous anecdotes from which he drew to regale his friends in the strong Carolina accent he never lost. Shortly after World War I, he teamed up with a veteran of the Army Air Corps, purchased an old airplane and, after a few hours of instruction, became one of Uncle Sam's first air mail pilots. A few crash landings later, he decided to return to his studies and in 1920 obtained a B.A. degree from Wofford College in South Carolina. He was attracted initially to journalism and got a job as reporter on the local newspaper in Greenwood, South Carolina. Doubtless it was the time he spent as a journalist that helped him develop that lively and readable style that stood him in such good stead later in his career. After three years of newspaper work, he felt the urge to turn to scholarship and enrolled in the graduate English program of the University of North Carolina, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1926. An appointment to teach in the English Department of the University of North Carolina quickly followed. Except for interruptions to serve as Johnston Research

Scholar at the Johns Hopkins University and to accept a Guggenheim fellowship, Louis continued on at North Carolina and started up the faculty promotion ladder. In 1931 an invitation came from the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, to spend a year as visiting scholar. When the year had elapsed, Louis was persuaded to stay on as a permanent staff member. He remained at the Huntington until 1948, and helped direct the build-up of the Huntington reference collection. Louis also played an important role in the research programs there through his imaginative encouragement of research and through his service as chairman of the Fellowship Committee. As one observer commented later, 'he was able to attract to the Huntington a group of scholars of unusually high caliber. A large percentage of them went on to publish studies of significance, and many attained positions of high influence in colleges and universities all over the country.'

When the post of director at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., fell vacant it was hardly surprising that the trustees of the Folger should consult Louis Wright on the future of the library. So impressed were they by the man and his ideas that they asked him to become the new director. He accepted, and held the position of director from 1948 until his retirement in 1968.

Under Louis's guidance, the Folger Library developed rapidly from what had been essentially a collector's library—known for its treasures of Shakespeareana—into a research library of much broader scope. His announced goal for the Folger was 'to provide . . . a milieu in which keen minds may comprehend and interpret the whole of civilization that produced Shakespeare and his contemporaries.' He set about his task with characteristic vigor, drawing heavily on his experience at the Huntington. One of his first priorities was to provide the Folger with a first-class reference collection which would increase the usefulness of the rare books and manuscripts. He constantly enlarged the core of early English im-

prints (in twenty years he had purchased some 19,000 sixteenth- and seventeenth-century English books for the Folger), but he worked just as hard to acquire relevant Continental imprints, convinced that English civilization could not be understood in isolation from the rest of Western civilization. Under his directorship, more than 22,000 Continental imprints from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were added to the collection.

Louis did far more, however, than increase the size of the collections of the Folger. In the words of President Cole of Amherst College, he 'transformed the Folger . . . into an intellectual center of world renown. . . . I believe no one else could have accomplished so much.' He did it in part through careful nurture of a fellowship program that attracted senior scholars of the first rank from all over the world, as well as fledgling scholars in whom he recognized the potential for significant research. In the period just prior to his retirement, thirty fellows each year helped swell the growing band of scholars working in the Folger reading room.

If Louis was so markedly successful in his efforts to make the Folger Library into a research center of international significance, it was in part because he remained forever an extraordinarily perceptive and productive scholar himself. His range of research interests was extremely broad; indeed, everything interested him. He was fond of quoting Rabelais, who had warned long ago against 'peeping out at life through a little hole.' Above all, Louis spurned scholarship that seemed to be written for no discernible audience, and he encouraged scholars to 'produce works of interpretation or contribution to knowledge which have vitality, relevance and genuine significance.' Certainly his own writing exemplified those precepts. It was at the Huntington Library in 1935 that he published one of his best known and most influential studies, *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England*. Among the books that succeeded were such important works as *The First Gentlemen of*

*Virginia: Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class* (1940) and *The Atlantic Frontier: Colonial American Civilization (1607-1763)* in 1947. At the Folger, he reached an audience that numbered well over a million with the popular paperback editions of Shakespeare's plays which he coedited with Virginia LaMar. He continued, however, to produce scholarly monographs and editions on themes from Elizabethan England and on exploration and colonization in the New World. Thanks to years of intensive research, Louis could move expertly and comfortably back and forth in literary and historical studies, though later in his career he came to think of himself as more of a historian than a literary scholar.

Despite his very full schedule, Louis participated actively in numerous learned and professional societies. Among those he esteemed most was the American Antiquarian Society. He was elected to membership in the Society in 1947, and upon his retirement from the Folger, he agreed to serve on the National Advisory Committee of the Society. In 1973, he delivered a lecture at the Society's annual meeting entitled 'The Prestige of Learning in Early America.'

Other organizations that had special claims on Louis's time were the American Historical Association, the Modern Language Association, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Phi Beta Kappa Foundation, the Board of Trustees of the Winterthur Foundation, the Board of Trustees of the National Geographic Society, the Editorial Board of the John Harvard Library, the Council on Library Resources, and the Guggenheim Foundation.

Louis Wright accumulated more than two dozen honorary degrees in the course of his career and earned the respect, admiration, and affection of scholars all over the world. Despite his remarkable accomplishments and the many honors he received, Louis retained an unaffected simplicity of manner and a sharply honed wit that was the joy of his friends and associates. He declared unrelenting war against 'stuffy pomposity,'

a quality he deplored above all others, and fought no less steadfastly against pedantry, describing it as 'a malady that academics ought to fear like the Black Death.' As a scholar, as a library administrator, and as a man, Louis would have to be awarded the highest marks.

Philip A. Knachel

### IRVING LOWENS

Irving Lowens—music critic, librarian, bibliographer, eminent historian of American music—died in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 14, 1983. A member of the Society since 1959, he was sixty-seven when he died. His career exemplifies the importance of the contributions of scholars outside academic circles to the study of American musical history.

Irving was born in New York City on August 19, 1916, and received his B.S. in music from Columbia University in 1939. After Pearl Harbor he began to work for the Civil Aeronautics Administration (later the Federal Aviation Agency) and by 1942 was employed as an air traffic controller, a profession he followed until the mid-1950s. He was assigned to the National Airport in Washington, D.C., by 1947 and soon began regular visits to the Music Division of the Library of Congress. There he carried on research in the field of American music before 1900, an area in which he had begun to publish about the time he moved to Washington. Curiosity soon led Irving to the corner of that field in which he was to make perhaps his strongest scholarly impact, American sacred music of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He also discovered, through publications, notebooks, catalogue entries, and, less tangibly, general outlook, a scholarly model that was to inspire his own life deeply: the work of Oscar G. Sonneck (1873–

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.