

## *Obituaries*

### FREDERICK DOVETON NICHOLS

The world of historic preservation lost one of its earliest and staunchest advocates with the death of Frederick Doveton Nichols on April 9, 1995. Through his teaching, written works, on-site consultations, and service on several state and national committees, Nichols influenced many people and saved a long list of important historic buildings.

'Freddie' Nichols, born in Trinidad, Colorado, on July 1, 1911, was the son of Wilbur Oliver and Harriet Doveton Nichols. He received his M.F.A. from Yale University in 1935, transferring there from Colorado College, where he had completed two years from 1929 to 1931. His first job upon graduation, at the height of the great Depression, was as regional director of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) with the National Park Service. It was this work that piqued his interest in architectural preservation and launched him on the career for which he became famous.

The Second World War interrupted his exciting new work by calling him first to serve on the National Committee for Aeronautics (1941-46), and then to actual military service with the United States Air Force (1943-45). He spent four years after the war as head of the architectural studies program at the University of Hawaii.

In 1950 Freddie Nichols took a position at the University of Virginia, from which he would retire after a long and fruitful career in teaching and preservation. Arriving as associate professor of art and architecture, he was promoted to full professor in 1960, and in 1967 was awarded the Cary D. Langhorne chair. As is cus-

tomary in the academic world, Nichols put in his time as department chairman, first of art and architecture, 1965-70, and then of the division of architectural history, which he founded, after 1970. From his prestigious position at this university steeped in the world-famous tradition, architectural and otherwise, of Thomas Jefferson, Nichols was able to exert a strong voice and guiding hand to the post-World War II historic preservation movement.

His career at the University of Virginia provided many opportunities to work on subjects related to Thomas Jefferson, in whom he first became interested while conducting the HABS survey in the early years of his career. Nichols delved into the architectural and landscape-architectural drawings of Thomas Jefferson, and he published on this subject in several prestigious journals. In addition, he advised and wrote portions of the architectural sections of the Jefferson Papers edited by Julian Boyd at Princeton. In 1978, with Ralph Griswold, he published *Thomas Jefferson, Landscape Architect*, which was published by the University Press of Virginia.

As part of his research focus on Thomas Jefferson, Freddie Nichols served on the Monticello Restoration Committee starting in 1956, and in 1970 was elected a member of the board of The Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation, on which he served until just prior to his death. On this board he was the champion of an extensive restoration program of both the mansion and landscape at Monticello. My first encounter with Freddie Nichols was when he was a member of this board. In 1977 I had been short-listed as a possible consulting landscape architect, specifically for the grove and eventually the 1,000-foot garden terrace. Nichols arrived at the meeting wearing his signature bow tie, and his effervescent and cordial personality made me feel very much at home. Within minutes, I felt as though I had known Freddie forever. However, as the interview started, it was Nichols who said: 'We know you are an expert in landscape architecture or you wouldn't be here. Therefore, why don't you tell us what you know about Jefferson the man, his philosophy and

politics, and all of those things?' This was Freddie's way—very warm and cordial, but also very powerful in achieving his goals.

In the professional world, Nichols is best known for his work on Jefferson, especially the restoration of the Rotunda, the key architectural piece in Jefferson's academical village at the University. He directed the project, overseeing the preparation of the working drawings based on original plans, the bidding procedure, and the selection of the restoration contractors, as well as the fundraising efforts to get the job done by the 1976 Bicentennial of this nation. The results are a masterpiece in historic restoration, and Nichols took great delight in having dismantled the 'remodeling' done by Stanford White in the early part of this century as well as later accretions.

Nichols's students, as well as the many professional and lay preservationists throughout the country especially in the South, remember him not only for his strong association with the works of Thomas Jefferson, but also for his monumental work *The Architecture of Georgia*, first published in 1957, and revised in 1976. He also wrote several other books and pamphlets including *Catalogue of the Historic American Buildings Survey* (1941); *Fiske Kimball: A Biography* (1959); and *Thomas Jefferson's Architectural Drawings* (1959).

Freddie Nichols's influence extended beyond the classroom. Much of it was exerted through his membership on important national committees, such as the National Fine Arts Commission, the Drayton Hall (South Carolina) Council, the Properties Committee of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and as founding governor of the American Association for Architectural Bibliographers. He was invested as a fellow by the American Institute of Architects for his leadership in his field. In 1978 he was elected a member of the American Antiquarian Society. When the Society held its semiannual meeting in Charlottesville in April 1985, Nichols led those Society members in attendance on a brief but thoroughly engaging tour of the Rotunda, the Lawn, and Pavilions.

Unlike many academicians, Freddie always found time to consult with individuals and committees at the grass-roots level. Among the sites on which he advised were Stratford Hall, Christ Church (Lancaster County, Virginia), and The Woodrow Wilson Birthplace (Staunton, Virginia). He was a prime mover in the acquisition and restoration of Poplar Forest, Thomas Jefferson's second home in Bedford County, Virginia, near Lynchburg.

Freddie Nichols lived his life much as a sculptor chisels a piece of wood. There were always strong goals and objectives relating to the final product, but along the way, one might have to take a different course around a knot or a particular type of wood veination. I experienced this with Freddie, as did many of his colleagues. One time, when he was planning one of his well-known preservation conferences at the University of Virginia, he phoned me to ask if I would speak. He told me of the theme for the conference and assigned me my topic. This was about six months before the date. In the interim, Freddie encountered one of the 'knots' along the way and changed the entire theme and make-up of the conference. However, while absorbed in his creative pursuit, he neglected to inform me. I appeared in Charlottesville with a carefully prepared talk, along with slides, both totally unrelated to the theme of the day. When I confronted Freddie, he said: 'Oh, that's all right. They'll enjoy it.'

In 1942, just at the beginning of his professional career, Nichols married Jane Root, who predeceased him. Their three children, two sons Frederick and Allen, and a daughter Elizabeth Nichols Kasper, survive.

Rudy J. Favretti

### FREDERIC CHRISTOPHER DUMAINE, JR.

Frederic Christopher Dumaine, Jr., a member of the Society since 1976, died at his home in Weston, Massachusetts, on March 13, 1997, at the age of ninety-four. From his days at Pomfret School,

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