

fore her husband's death. He is also survived by two sisters, Priscilla P. Fuller of Minneapolis and Sarah P. O'Brien of Scottsdale, Arizona.

Georgia Brady Barnhill

LILLIAN B. MILLER

Lillian B. Miller, a distinguished American historian and a member of the American Antiquarian Society for the past decade, died at the age of seventy-four after a brief illness on November 27, 1997, at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C. She is survived by her husband, Professor Nathan Miller, their son and two daughters, four sisters, and six grandchildren.

Born in Boston to an immigrant family in modest circumstances, Lillian was the first of her family to attend college, made possible by a minuscule scholarship and a job as secretary to the noted astronomer, Harlow Shapley. Thereafter, she acknowledged Dr. Shapley as a major influence in her intellectual life. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Radcliffe in 1943 in the history and literature program and taught American literature for three years at Bard College, resigning to accept a two-year ACLS fellowship to complete a Ph.D. in history. She received her A.M. in 1948 and her Ph.D. in 1962 from Columbia University. Her appointment in 1961 as associate professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, where her husband served as professor, broke the barrier prohibiting married couples from serving in the same department in the entire Wisconsin system. She gave up her associate professorship in 1971 to move to Washington as historian of the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.

I had known her writing but met her for the first time when she arrived in Washington, while I was working at the Library of Congress. In 1982 I moved to the National Portrait Gallery, and we became friends and colleagues. I cannot recall meeting anyone with a greater zest for research than Lillian Miller. She arrived at

the office early in the day and was commonly at her desk in the early evening, long after others had departed. Considering that Lillian had a husband, three children, and six grandchildren, her life manifestly had many other dimensions beyond her scholarship, but to those who saw her only in the museum or the classroom she seemed formidably focused and possessed of superhuman energy.

Energy alone cannot account for the impact Lillian had on her profession. She was authentically a groundbreaker in her research. Her scholarly interests evolved logically, originating in intellectual and cultural history generally, taking a gradual turn in the direction of local and urban history, and settling in the 1950s on the examination of American cultural institutions. She brought to the enterprise her considerable skills as a scholarly detective, always fascinated by the specific individuals who populated the American intellectual scene from its earliest days, always associating them to the social and economic milieus in which they functioned. Effectively, she created a new field of specialization.

The completion of her doctoral dissertation in 1962 about the 'encouragement of the fine arts in the United States' up to 1860 preceded by a year the establishment of the National Council on the Arts and Humanities and the two National Endowments derived from that governing body. She had anticipated a subject that was soon to be a central interest of the federal government, of foundations, and of private benefactors who began to support the arts to an unprecedented degree in the 1960s. So when her book *Patrons and Patriotism: The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in the United States, 1790-1860* was published at the University of Chicago Press in 1966, it quickly became a central text for those seeking precedents for the twentieth-century surge of patronage for the arts and the humanities, as well as for the growing number of students of American art history.

One of the uniquely endowed personalities Lillian encountered in her studies was Charles Willson Peale, and Peale provided the material for the next innovative step in Lillian's career. In her ca-

capacity as historian of the National Portrait Gallery she directed a group of scholars in the creation of two remarkable exhibitions related to the bicentennial of the American revolution: 'In the Minds and Hearts of the People' (1974) and 'The Dye is Now Cast' (1975). These exhibitions were innovative in their use of individuals as the organizing units for the narrative, and for the display of supporting documentation and non-portrait pictorial material to exemplify the role played by each of the individuals selected. While writing the texts for these books must have been gratifying for Lillian, the everyday business of functioning in a developing bureaucracy (the Gallery had been established only nine years before she arrived) and directing the NPG's Office of the Historian diverted her energies away from scholarship and writing. In 1973, reaching into the topic of her first book, she created a new project at the National Portrait Gallery devoted to the detailed study of the life and ideas of Charles Willson Peale and his family. Besides being a painter and a patriot, Peale established the earliest museum in the new nation, and a portrait gallery was a major component of it.

Before the Peale family's contributions could be fully assessed, it would be necessary to collect the voluminous papers this productive family had left behind. Here again, Lillian became a pioneer. One characteristic of American historical scholarship after World War II was the establishment of a number of projects to collect and publish the papers of notables, with annotations providing significant information for the fullest possible understanding of the documents by present-day readers. Naturally, the first such projects were devoted to people like George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson. Peale was the first person in the arts to join this pantheon, and Lillian conducted him to his niche.

With her characteristic focused energy, Lillian proceeded to secure funding to establish the project. The National Historical Publication and Records Commission (NHPRC), augmented by funds from one or two private foundations, supported the initial

collection of documents and their publication. She found a publisher (Kraus Microform) for the 1980 microfiche edition of all the papers she and her assistants could locate, and contracted with Yale University Press to publish a multivolume letterpress edition of the annotated selected papers of Peale and his family.

It was about this time that Lillian first visited the American Antiquarian Society. On January 25, 1980, she wrote Georgia Brady Barnhill, curator of graphic arts, to make an appointment to 'talk with you about seventeenth-century engraving in the colonies and to see your collection of broadsides, almanacs, maps, and engraved portraits.' Her research was probably directed at two objectives: support of the Peale papers project and continuing her personal investigation of American cultural institutions. Later that year, Lillian wrote to William L. Joyce, education officer, noting that she was 'working on a small volume to be called "The Puritan Portraits" and researching the colonial artist Thomas Smith.' In her letter she questioned the attribution of the Society's portrait of Maria Catherine Smith, now published as by an anonymous artist in Wayne Craven's 1986 *Colonial American Portraiture*, but then given to Thomas Smith. Lillian's research was never published as a book, but instead appeared as an article, 'The Puritan Portrait: Its Function in Old and New England'; her careful study and understanding of the distinctive styles of early American artists enabled her to anticipate Craven's reattribution when he came to study the painting.

In 1983 the first volume of the selected Peale papers was published by Yale and was received enthusiastically by reviewers and colleagues. Lillian's office became a center for Peale studies. Assistant editors were assigned portions of the work of selection and annotation. A succession of graduate students and fellows came and went, many working on subjects only tangentially related to the Peales but all involved with the arts in America. Descendants of the Peale family, owners of paintings by one of the Peales, and members of the general public seeking information about the Peales visited, wrote, or telephoned continuously.

Along with the editing of the Peale papers, Lillian participated in the organization of several exhibitions. With Edgar P. Richardson, Brooke Hindle, and others, she worked on the definitive 1982 Charles Willson Peale exhibition that was shown at the Portrait Gallery and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A decade later she organized 'In Pursuit of Fame: Rembrandt Peale (1778-1860)' at the Gallery, and in 1995-96 she was invited by the Trust for Museum Exhibitions to assemble 'The Peale Family: Creation of a Legacy-1770-1870' for the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the San Francisco Art Museums, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Her continuing interest in arts institutions was expressed in her exhibition of 'Portraits from the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters,' shown at the National Portrait Gallery in 1987. Each of these exhibitions was accompanied by a substantial publication, and symposia were organized to bring before the public the latest thinking about the works on view.

In addition, Lillian found the time to teach (at George Washington University and at the University of Maryland), to lecture, to write articles, to review books, and to serve on the boards of many professional societies. She was much admired by many of her co-workers and contemporaries. For younger scholars whom she supervised she set a standard of clarity in writing, precision in research, and productivity that seemed incredibly demanding, but she demanded no less of herself than she was asking from others. Her dry wit, appreciation of humor, and sense of the ridiculous were aspects of her personality that were not always evident, but they were there and served her well at the appropriate moment.

There is not space to list all of her publications and distinctions. In addition to her membership in the American Antiquarian Society, she served on the Council and the Executive Board of the Commonwealth Center for the Study of American Culture, on the Editorial Advisory Board of *American Studies*, and the Board of Managing Editors of *American Quarterly*. In 1997 she was elected a lifetime fellow of the Philadelphia Athenaeum

and was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by LaSalle University in Philadelphia (located on Charles Willson Peale's Belfield farm).

Best of all, the fifth volume of the Peale Papers was in the hands of Yale University Press at the time of Lillian's death, and is now in the final stages of editing. Her cherished project will be completed, and will serve generations of scholars in the years to come. There could be no more fitting memorial.

Alan Fern

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.