

## Obituaries

### JAMES TINKHAM BABB

James Tinkham Babb, librarian, was born in Lewiston, Idaho, on August 23, 1899, the son of James Elisha, a lawyer of scholarly interests, and Daisy (Tinkham) Babb. After early schooling in this county seat of about a thousand souls he went to Phillips Exeter Academy where he graduated in 1920. He then went off to Yale where he, in turn, graduated with a Ph.B. degree in 1924 after having been captain of the tennis team. Following graduation he went over to the Law School, but left after two years and joined his new father-in-law's New Haven investment banking firm. While working Babb continued his interest in collecting rare books, manuscripts, and letters, first fostered while he was an undergraduate. In the thirties he was active in the Yale Library Associates, serving for a time as its secretary, and he was the author of a bibliography of the writings of William McFee. He remained in investment banking until 1938, when he joined the University Library as assistant librarian, a job he held until he took over as acting librarian in 1943. Upon the retirement of Bernard Knollenberg after the war, during which Babb had served as air warden, he became University Librarian.

In 1946 he was elected to membership in this Society, after having had a good deal of correspondence with Clarence Brigham concerning gifts, sales, and exchanges between the two libraries. He wrote to say that he had been surprised and pleased to read of his election in the *New Haven Register* and noted that 'for some time I have wished to be a member of your distinguished group, but have hesitated suggesting it myself.' In the twenty-two years he was a member, Babb at-

tended one meeting in every five or six, but was a regular correspondent.

In this correspondence Brigham and Babb discussed the pros and cons of placing bids with Rosenbach: Brigham maintaining that to purchase high-priced items through the Doctor removed the strongest bidder, while Babb noted that he didn't relish the idea that Rosenbach 'attempts to force everyone to give him bids,' and that Yale had certain friendly booksellers who did good turns for Yale and they certainly should get the bids. Brigham disagreed with this evaluation, and pointed out that he gave bids over four figures to Rosenbach, 'not only because he is a good friend to this Library, but chiefly to save money.' On the Yale Bay Psalm Book Babb wrote that 'we did not guess that the book would sell for \$85,000, but we had that much to bid for it, and we gave the Doctor our bid.' This cheerless episode of the Bay Psalm Book is recorded in full in Rosenbach's biography by Edwin Wolf, 2nd.

Also among the letters between Babb and this Society was an answer to an appeal from Clifford Shipton that Babb deliver a paper at the meeting in April 1953. Babb replied that he was not a scholar and 'couldn't give a scholarly paper,' but suggested that he talk on how the Western Americana collection at Yale developed. Needless to say, the development of this collection had been spurred by the appointment of this native of Idaho as librarian. Mr. Shipton, then librarian of this Society, gladly consented to the paper with the proviso that it not be limited to Yale. The paper was given, in spite of some difficulties, and was a great success.

Shipton's son George and Babb's son Jimmy were at Proctor Academy together and, in a letter between the fathers, this passage was included: 'When Jimmy met George he said, "And your father is a librarian?" When George replied in the affirmative, Jimmy shook his head, sighed, and walked away.'

During the twenty years Babb was University Librarian a large number of important collections came to the library: the

Coe Collection of Western Americana, the Johnson Memorial Collection of Negro Arts and Letters, the personal papers of such disparate persons as James Boswell, Henry L. Stimson, and John W. Davis. He further added a collection of Robert Louis Stevenson material and some notes by Clark of Lewis and Clark fame. In April 1952 Babb was instrumental in bringing to Yale the Pequot Library books, but upon being congratulated for his coup, he was quick to point out that the items were 'just a loan.'

Upon becoming Librarian Emeritus in 1965 Babb estimated that he had gained more than thirty million dollars for the Sterling Library and its branches and had gotten gifts of papers and books worth about twenty million. In these twenty years he had seen the total number of volumes increase by about a million and a half, making Yale the fourth largest library in the country. Two years before his retirement he presided over the dedication of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. Among Babb's other accomplishments were his roles as president of the Connecticut Library Association, as councillor of the Bibliographical Society of America, and his having been asked by the wife of President John F. Kennedy in 1962 to direct the selection of a Library for the White House. After a year at the chore, he and his colleagues settled on nearly eighteen hundred titles in about twenty-six hundred volumes, with history the category providing the most titles.

He enjoyed work in the library so much that he wrote, 'I almost have to fight to find time for my family.' He defined the 'great library' as that 'where the guy who is looking for a book finds it on the shelves.' The Babbs lived until recently in a big and comfortable turn-of-the-century house in New Haven, and among his hobbies were 'taking care of the place and fly-fishing in the spring,' noting that his one great extravagance was his membership in the Hammonasset Fishing Association, one of the oldest fly-fishing clubs in the country. He also went West whenever he could, for library meetings of

course, but also for the wonderful trout streams. In the early fifties he wrote Shipton, 'I have been off fishing for a week in Canada.'

In later years Babb continued to add to his private collection of books and manuscripts, always with Yale in mind, but he did, from time to time, send along to the Society some gems from his own collection. Mr. Brigham in a Council report noted with pride that the Society had, of the editions listed by Lyle Wright, the greatest number of any library: 'Although the Society for the moment leads Yale, it recognizes the fact that when the collection formed by James T. Babb, the Yale librarian, with its 505 titles, is turned over to his Alma Mater, we will hold second place.'

At sixty-eight years of age, James Tinkham Babb was pronounced dead at Yale-New Haven Hospital after suffering what was apparently a heart attack at his home in Hamden on July 21, 1968. He is survived by his widow, Margaret (Bradley) Babb whom he had married on December 21, 1925, a son, a daughter, and five grandchildren, all of whom are joined by legions from the book world who also mourn this great loss.

J. E. M.

#### CHAUNCEY CUSHING NASH

Chauncey Cushing Nash, stockbroker and collector, was born to Herbert and Mary Chaffee (Baldwin) Nash on October 17, 1884, in Boston. He prepared at Boston Latin School and the Volkman School and entered Harvard with the Class of 1907. After three and a half years and with course work finished he left college at the mid-year in 1907 and went on a shooting trip with classmate William Bowditch Long in the South. He returned to take his A.B. in time and then crossed the river to Boston and Weld, Grow & Company, stockbrokers. In two and a half years he was with Long and Nash, also stock-

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