



R. D. W. CONNOR

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1878-1950

THE Society of American Archivists lost one of its most prominent and outstanding members and the archivists, educators, and historians of our country one of their most distinguished colleagues in the death of Dr. Robert Diggs Wimberly Connor on February 25, 1950.

As the first Archivist of the United States (1934-1941) and as one of the founders and a former president of the Society of American Archivists, Dr. Connor contributed indispensably to the development of archival procedures and the archival profession in the United States.

As a teacher and principal in its public schools and as Kenan professor of history and government (1921-1934) and Craig professor of jurisprudence and history (1941-1950) at its University, he performed services of incalculable value to his native state of North Carolina in the education of its youth.

As an active member of the American and Southern Historical Associations, as a distinguished teacher of history, and as author and compiler of numerous historical works of recognized merit, he achieved a nation-wide reputation as one of our country's leading historians.

Dr. Connor's constructive work as executive secretary of the Educational Campaign for North Carolina and as secretary, president, and director, respectively, of the North Carolina State Literary and Historical Association (now the Department of Archives and History) was widely acclaimed.

In accepting Dr. Connor's resignation as Archivist of the United States in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote him that "As the first Archivist of the United States, you have not only laid the foundation but have built the actual structure of an extremely important and permanent repository of American historical source material. Your record is one which will always be acclaimed with well-deserved appreciation."

His attainments and accomplishments as an educator and historian will also long "be acclaimed with well-deserved appreciation."

It was my privilege not only to work with Dr. Connor but to play with him, visit in his home, and participate with him in other activities of various types. His achievements as an archivist, educator, and historian, great as they unquestionably were, fail to reflect the true greatness of the man and were surpassed, in my opinion, by his capacities and qualities as a human being — as Bob Connor, husband, kinsman, friend, and confidant.

As son of a distinguished father and a cultured and refined mother, from whom he inherited many of his outstanding traits, he was to the manner born. He was a gentleman in every sense of the word. His genial disposition, his courtesy and cordiality, and his genuine interest in his fellowman attracted people to him and acquired for him a popularity among all classes and types of people that few men have attained. Dr. Connor stood first in almost every poll made of the student body to select the most popular member of the University of North Carolina faculty during his twenty-odd years of service there.

He possessed a dynamic and forceful personality, yet he was a remarkably humble and unpretentious man. He could readily adjust himself to circumstances and people. I have never seen him ill-at-ease in any company or under any condition. He was strong-willed and determined, but at the same time extremely considerate and thoughtful of others. I never knew any one who disliked him.

His capacity for friendship was amazing and his friends were legion. Among them were scholars and illiterates, aristocrats and commoners, rich and poor, and people of various creeds and color. All of them respected his unimpeachable character and his honesty. They had confidence in his dependability; they knew that he was completely reliable and that his word was his bond. From frequent experiences, they learned that they could count on him for sound advice and helpful assistance.

Dr. Connor had a high conception of duty and was extremely diligent and faithful in the discharge of his responsibilities and obligations, yet he immensely enjoyed relaxation and down-to-earth fellowship. He was a delightful companion at play and an aggressive and determined, but always fair, competitor at golf and cards, both of which he loved. He liked to win at these games and more often than otherwise emerged victorious. As a spectator at a college football game, he was as enthusiastic as the students and he got a great thrill from the game.

He had a keen, albeit somewhat droll, sense of humor that stood

him in good stead in times of stress. He enjoyed teasing his friends in a good-natured sort of way, and I shall always remember the merry twinkle that appeared in his eyes on such occasions. A kindly gleam was always in his eyes. During the last few years of his life, he was far from well and many of his activities had to be curtailed because of his physical condition, but there was no lessening of that kindly gleam and merry twinkle in his eyes.

Robert Diggs Wimberly Connor was a distinguished scholar, but he was even more distinguished as a kind, thoughtful, courteous, understanding, helpful, and lovable friend to the thousands who were privileged to count him as their friend.

He was the kindest person and the sweetest man I ever knew.

A noble soul has left us.

May he rest in peace.

The National Archives

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