Carl Ludwig Lokke, 1897-1960

By H. B. FANT

National Archives

ARL LUDWIG LOKKE, historian and archivist, died this past spring. A capable, friendly, and productive scholar, he had aided the Government and the public at the National Archives since 1935.

Son of Norwegian-American parents, Oscar and Carrie Gunderson Lokke, Carl was born at Minneapolis, Minn., April 28, 1897. His youth was passed in the great Northwest, a memorable part of it on rugged Seward Peninsula, the point of Alaska that juts closest to Siberia. There in the Kougarok precinct his grandfather was United States Commissioner, and there, in a Territorial school opened for Eskimos, Carl brushed with elementary education. Later he entered Nome High School, 1913-14, but transferred to Olympia High School in the State of Washington, 1914-17.

After being enrolled for military training at the University of Washington, 1917-18, he performed the bulk of his undergraduate work at the University of California, Berkeley, majoring in German and history. Able, industrious, and intellectually honest, he gained the A.B. degree in 1922 and the A.M. the following year.

While holding a teaching fellowship at the University of California, 1922-24, the young man had the fortune to be selected as assistant to an eminent visiting professor, Carlton J. H. Hayes, from Columbia University. Hayes had much influence in steering Lokke to metropolitan New York for higher graduate studies.

En route east in 1924, Lokke visited the Panama Canal. Like Ulysses he was to travel far and come in contact with many minds. Columbia University awarded him a fellowship for 1924-25, and reinforced that with a lectureship in history, 1925-29. Searching out the original materials of Napoleon's colonial policy, he spent the summer vacation of 1926 in Paris, working in June at the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and from July to September at the Archives Nationales. He also visited Germany and Belgium.

Though bred on the frontier, or perhaps because of that, he drank deeply of the Old World's civilization. Years later in writing in the American Archivist about the French Foreign Office records, Lokke could say with feeling: "History is not to be found in

manuscripts alone. In a famous old city like Paris, it is in the palaces, the churches, the museums, in the public squares and gardens, the cemeteries, the bridges, it is in the very air."

Appended below is a preliminary list of his writings and documentary publications. The first of his many contributions to learned journals was published in the Journal of Negro History in January 1925. Three years later he had an article published in the American Historical Review; and in December 1928, at the Indianapolis meeting, he gave his first paper before the American Historical Association. For six months in 1930 he taught history at St. Stephends College, now Bard College, at Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y.; and during the academic year 1930-31 he resided in New England as assistant professor of history at Smith College, Northampton, Mass.

Columbia University conferred upon him its Ph.D. degree in 1932. His thesis, published that year as no. 365 in Columbia University Studies in History, Economics and Public Law, bore the title, France and the Colonial Question. Charles Downer Hazen, one of Lokke's principal professors at Columbia—whom Lokke was later to eulogize before the Vermont Historical Society—called this study of French opinion, 1763-1801, "a careful, thorough and scholarly piece of work, extremely well done." Other internationally known historians on the Columbia faculty besides Hayes and Hazen to recognize Lokke's qualities and promise were William R. Shepherd and Robert Livingston Schuyler. Professor John A. Krout said of him: "Personally he is a charming young man, energetic without being aggressive; original in his ideas, and a fine colleague to work with."

During the summers of 1933 and 1934, aided by funds from Columbia's W. A. Dunning research fellowship, Lokke visiged European archives to collect materials on the life of Pierre Vicon Malouet. In London he explored the treasures of the British Not seum and the Public Record Office, and at Windsor he delved in the Royal Archives. In Belgium he investigated the municipal archives of Antwerp. In France he refreshed his acquaintance was tended his searches to include the port archives of Toulon, and the provincial archives of the departments, Bouches-du-Rhône and Puv-du-Dôme.

By 1935, when the first Archivist of the United States was as sembling a staff for the new National Archives of the United States Lokke had as yet formed no permanent institutional connection; but he had perfected himself as a historian, had gained a broad knowledge.

edge of archival functioning, and had made significant contributions to a half-dozen or more influential journals in America and France. His formal education was now complete, and he was eager to roll up his sleeves and go to work in Washington. His former associates at the University of California and at Columbia University were just as eager to recommend him for likely employment at the National Archives. Wrote Dr. Hayes: "Lokke has the scholarship, the experience in the use of archives, the perseverance and meticulous attention to detail which should make him a valuable man for you."

This is not the time or place to discuss the problems that were to buffet the National Archives during the first quarter century of its existence. Some of the problems were spawned by 150 years of national neglect, some sprang fullblown from the pressures of the passing hour. Lokke came to Washington, put down his roots here, and nobody strove with more manly fortitude than he. An individual of determination, as well as vision, he may have been discouraged at times, but he never quit.

He began his Federal career on July 17, 1935, as an archivist in the then Division of Classification, headed by Roscoe R. Hill. Lokke investigated the administrative history of the Interior and Treasury Departments, and paid some attention, too, to the history of the German Reichsarchiv at Potsdam. He helped prepare a classification scheme for the U.S. Food Administration records, outgrowth of World War I.

Colleagues who know the full story of his Washington endeavors recall that about two and a half years after he came to the National Archives, Lokke encountered the heavy personal misfortune of contracting pulmonary tuberculosis. For a time, among both physicians and friends, his case was considered hopeless. But after careful hospitalization at a sanatorium in Glenn Dale, Md., he gradually overcame the ravages of the disease. He had to be carried on leave without pay from December 28, 1937, to June 17, 1940. Through the effective pleading of such staunch friends as William R. McCain, then Archivist of Mississippi, and the good will of R.D.W. Connor, the Archivist of the United States, the convalescent was at length restored to a working status.

Lokke came back with one lung collapsed, but his recuperation was soon so complete that his familiar stride along Pennsylvania Avenue—walking was always his favorite hobby—was to be uninhibited for the next score of years, a golden period of accomplishment. It was carcinoma (cancer) of the stomach that brought him down in his final bout for survival—a few brief weeks that found

him in his fatal hour still unseparated from the active civil service.

When Lokke rejoined the National Archives staff in 1940, he was assigned to the office of Solon J. Buck, then Director of Publications. With Pearl Harbor still more than a year in the future, Lokke put his hand to the plough as coeditor of and contributor to the Handbook of Federal World War Agencies and Their Records, 1917-1921.

On April 1, 1943, during World War II, Lokke entered upon historical work for the Petroleum Administration for War. During the following year, he accepted the opportunity, however, to become an office chief at the National Archives; and from 1944 to 1947 he headed the Navy Branch. From 1948 to 1949 he supervised the newly created Executive and Courts Section. And from 1949 to 1960, for the crowning 11 years of his service to the nation, he was chief of the Foreign Affairs Branch. For almost the first half of 1953, after Philip C. Brooks left Washington, Lokke also acted in addition as chief of the next higher echelon, now incorporated into the General Records Division headed by Thad S. Page.

Lokke's language and historical training and experience, as well as his extensive travel and first-hand knowledge of diplomatic records, exceptionally qualified him to head the Foreign Affairs Branch, the office at the National Archives that has custody of the original laws of the United States, the older records of the Department of State, and the records of U.S. foreign posts from overseas. Though plagued, as many Government offices are, by a heavy turnover an assisting personnel, he held the loyalty and respect of his subordinates, two of whom, Julia Bland Carroll and Patricia G. Dowling, remained with him for the full term he headed the branch. Under Lokke's tenure the Papers of the Continental Congress were accessioned from the Library of Congress, and he wrote the illuminating essay on their provenance, 1789-1952, published in the National Archives accession series. In the matter of improving the preservation of the records under his care, he would have liked to do much more. He inspired better arrangement and much more extensive description than circumstances had hitherto permitted. His quarterly reports as branch chief, in typed form, document the story of a busy decade indeed.

He took himself, and imparted to others, a keen interest in the advancement of the archival profession. Though not himself a novice in the history and administration of archives, he took occasion in 1942 to audit the orientation course annually given in Washington. From 1945 to 1948 he served as chairman of the Archival Research Committee of the Society of American Archivists. He



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frequented the society's annual sessions, and at the Quebec meeting in 1949 headed the Resolutions Committee. In the American Archivist, of which he was associate editor from 1948 to 1952, he published numerous reviews, his brief committee reports, and three substantial articles. Named in 1958 among the very first of the Fellows of the Society of American Archivists, he is the first of them to die.

In 1951 Dr. and Mrs. Lokke made a vacation trip to Europe. They visited some of his Norwegian relations but also looked in upon some of the notable archives and libraries of England, Norway, Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, and France. His observations he summarized in an unpublished paper written for the information of his National Archives colleagues. He titled the paper "A Glance at European Archives," and concluded that, taken as a whole, the similarities between European archival problems and American may be greater than the differences.

His work drew him into very cordial relations with many people both in and beyond the national capital. He had close contacts with the universities and cultural institutions of the District of Columbia. In 1949 he was a part-time lecturer at American University; and on at least one occasion he was invited to sit on an examining board at George Washington University.

Besides maintaining his stake in the Society of American Archivists and life membership in the American Historical Association, he bestowed special attention upon the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Norwegian-American Historical Society, the Society for French Historical Studies, the Société des Études Robespierristes (of Paris), and the Columbia Historical Society (of the District of Columbia). For a time he was a member of the Southern Historical Association.

At the time of his passing, he was on the editorial board of Norwegian-American Studies and Records. Shortly before the end he had been nominated for the presidency of the Society for French Historical Studies. He was scheduled to participate this July in Paris in a Franco-American colloquium at the Archives Nationales between that society and the Société d'Histoire Moderne de France.

Carl Ludwig Lokke died late Sunday evening, April 3, 1960. Aged 62, he was survived by his wife, Laura Wendt Lokke of their address, 1801 Sixteenth St., N.W., Washington, D.C., and by two half-brothers, Lars Gravem of Walnut Creek, Calif., and Roy Gravem of Forbestown, Calif. Funeral services were conducted in Washington on April 6, and a few days later the body was in-

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terred at Prairie Lea Cemetery, Brenham, Tex., about 70 miles northwest of Houston.

Comes to mind the wide and starry sky of Stevenson's "Requiem," and the further imagery of the sailor home from the sea, the hunter from the hill.

Harold T. Pinkett of the National Archives has penned this im-

pression: "Great affability, modesty, and intellectual interest were readily recognizable qualities of Lokke. He had the unusual, happy gift of constant agreeability, evenness of temper, and other tratts that combined to give him the power of pleasing without any visible effort. He made no ostentation of his very considerable scholarly talents and attainments. Yet in a paraphrase of Henry Ward Beecher it can be said that Lokke in diligent research and writing used his intellect not as a man uses his lamp in the study only for

THE WRITINGS AND DOCUMENTARY PUBLICATIONS OF CARL LUDWIG LOKKE

his own seeing, but rather as the lighthouse uses its lamps, that

Abbreviations: Author: [A] Editor or Contributor: [E] Reviewer: [R]

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II. PERIODICAL

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A Position Comparable?

- . . . Surely no member of the Society will be satisfied until the editor of the American Archivist, amply supplied with copy, occupies among archivists a position comparable to that occupied among historians by the editor of the American Historical Review. When that happy day comes this Committee with its present objectives will cease to have an excuse for existence.
 - -Carl L. Lokke, "Report of the Committee on Archival Science," in American Archivist, 10:86-87 (Jan. 1947).