



Walter Rundell, Jr.

Walter Rundell, Jr., worked to realize in the archival profession the best ideals of the scholar. For his genuine and unreserved efforts, he was, and is, the only non-archivist ever elected president of the Society of American Archivists.

Walter was born in Austin, Texas, on 2 November 1928, earned baccalaureate degrees in both journalism and music literature from the University of Texas in 1951, and received his master's and doctoral degrees in history from the American University in 1955 and 1957, respectively. Following graduation he taught at Del Mar College (1957–58) and Texas Woman's University (1958–1961) before becoming Assistant Executive Secretary of the American Historical

Association (1961–1965). With a reputation for interest in, and success with, improving the quality of instruction in history, Walter was selected by the Archivist of the United States to direct a two-year Survey on the Use of Original Sources in Graduate History Training (1965–1967).

During this survey, Walter traveled the length and breadth of the United States talking with both users and holders of primary sources. Unlike so many other non-archivist surveyors, he took the time to hear and to understand the concerns of archivists. The project resulted in the book *In Pursuit of American History*, which received the SAA's Waldo Gifford Leland Prize for 1971.

More important for Walter's future

work with archivists, however, were the contacts he made. Walter had a gift for remembering names. A consummate politician, he always had a conversation for everyone he knew. People responded to him accordingly, and he became an ambassador of goodwill from the research community.

After completing his work on the survey, Walter returned to the classroom as a professor of history at the University of Oklahoma (1967–1969), Iowa State University (1969–1971), and the University of Maryland (1971–1982). During these years he started more than a few students on the road toward a career in archivy. He believed in the importance of the work as one of the fundamental callings of society, not as an alternative career to teaching.

At the same time, Walter was a tireless scholar who demanded much of himself. He wrote five books: *Black Market Money* (1964), *In Pursuit of American History* (1970), *Early Texas Oil* (1977), *Military Money* (1980), and *Oil in West Texas and New Mexico* (1982); contributed to fourteen other volumes; and produced thirty-eight articles. His colleagues in history recognized his productivity and scholarship by selecting him for numerous committee assignments and by electing him to the Council and presidency of the Western History Association, a position he held at the time of his death.

Archivists, too, recognized the depth of his character, the wisdom of his thought, and the wealth of his contribution by electing him to the Council of the SAA in 1971, a Fellow in 1974, and 33rd president of the Society in 1977–1978.

In office, as throughout his professional life, Walter viewed the archival profession as more than a technical trade. He believed in and worked to achieve stronger professional ties be-

tween the archival and the historical communities. In his mind, if archivists regarded themselves only as technicians and took no scholarly interest in the records they kept, the result would be bad for archives, harmful for history, and in the end, would disserve society as a whole.

For this reason Walter always could be found at the ramparts defending archives and archivists. In Iowa he wrote and published at his own expense a pamphlet calling for the application of archival principles at the State Historical Society, and later he inspired the creation and served as secretary of the Emergency Committee to Preserve the National Archives. He testified on numerous occasions before Congress urging the employment of sound archival methods at all levels of government in administering the nation's permanently valuable records.

It may be that most archivists did not know Walter personally, because his life's work was teaching history. He did not talk about processing problems. But every archivist who ever met him remembered him: his enthusiasm, his warm heartedness, his gentlemanly civility, and his memory for them as individuals. "He made me feel I knew him well," uncounted archivists have told me; and they knew what he did for them. Walter's great contribution to the archival profession was his work to break barriers that had grown up between archivists and historians, to encourage archivists to view their profession as one of learning, as well as technique, and to foster communication through the warmth and wisdom of his personality.

Walter Rundell, Jr., died at home in his sleep on 25 October 1982, at the age of 53.