



### W. Edwin Hemphill

W. Edwin Hemphill, founding member and fellow of the Society of American Archivists, died on 4 September 1983 at the age of 71. Born 28 June 1912 into a Presbyterian clergyman's family, Ed, as he was known to his friends, had a long and fruitful career as editor, historian, and archivist. His eight volumes of the *Papers of John C. Calhoun* covering the years 1817-1825 were the capstone of his labors in the service of Clio.

Dr. Hemphill was born in Willow Springs, North Carolina, but spent his

formative years in Atlanta and Petersburg, Virginia. He received his B.A. in 1932 from Hampton-Sydney College, his M.A. from Emory University the following year, and his Ph.D. in 1937 from the University of Virginia. His dissertation was a biography of George Wythe. Except for the one year he taught at Davidson College and another year spent in the same way at Emory University, Virginia was the focus of his historical work for the first quarter century of his career. Dr. Hemphill taught

at Hampton-Sydney College, the University of Virginia, and Mary Washington College before beginning service with the state of Virginia in 1944. During the summers of 1936 and 1937 he acted as state director of the Virginia Historical Records Survey; and, while teaching at the University of Virginia and Mary Washington College, he served as archivist of these institutions.

Dr. Hemphill's first book-length publication came from his work for the Virginia World War II Historical Commission: *Gold Star Honor Roll of Virginians in the Second World War* published in 1947. The commission was transformed into a division of the Virginia State Library the following year, and in 1950 the library published his *Aerial Gunner from Virginia: The Letters of Don Moody to his Family During 1944*. That same year he became director of the History Division in the library, and in 1951 he became editor of *Virginia Cavalcade*. With two co-authors he wrote *Cavalier Commonwealth: History and Government of Virginia*, published in 1957 as a text for the secondary schools. The book had a second edition in 1963.

In 1959 Dr. Hemphill came to Columbia, South Carolina as an editor for the South Carolina Archives Department, and he served in that capacity for eighteen years until his retirement in 1977. Robert L. Meriwether, first editor of the *Papers of John C. Calhoun*, had died while Volume I was in galley proofs, and the Virginia historian and editor was selected to succeed him. Initially Dr. Hemphill divided his time between the cooperatively sponsored Calhoun Papers project and the department's "State Records of South Carolina" series. With the help of an assistant editor, he published *Extracts from the Journals of the Provincial Congresses of South Carolina, 1775-1776* in 1960 and

prepared the basic texts of both *Journals of the General Assembly and House of Representatives, 1776-1780* (1970) and *Journals of the Privy Council, 1783-1789* (1971) before turning his full-time attention to Calhoun.

The results of that attention to South Carolina's most noteworthy political figure are a monument to an editor whose industry and close attention to detail are the stuff of legend. Volume I, which Dr. Hemphill helped guide through the press, carried Calhoun to the point when he became Secretary of War. The next eight volumes, those for which he was solely responsible with but a small staff, documented both that office and the man for the more than seven years before Calhoun became Vice President of the United States in 1825. Dr. Hemphill did much more than produce volumes that garnered rave reviews. Between his annual trips to the National Archives, searches elsewhere, and countless hours at the microfilm reader, Dr. Hemphill helped to more than double the project's collection of photocopies of Calhoun documents to an estimated 70,000 versions of 50,000 documents. These photocopies, meticulously cross-filed transcripts or abstracts of the majority of them, and careful accession records were the project's initial goals, for it was recognized from the start that the printed edition had to be selective. During Dr. Hemphill's years with the Calhoun Papers, the project was located in one small room in the South Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina. The collection was always open to research, and many a scholar remembers the gracious reception given him in that room by Ed Hemphill.

Ed suffered a stroke shortly after his retirement, but he recovered sufficiently to remain moderately active until a few days before his death. He is survived by

his wife of forty-four years, Susan Moffett Hemphill, two daughters, and four grandchildren. A memorial service was held on September 7, 1983 in Shandon Presbyterian Church, Columbia, where Ed was a ruling elder.

Like his friends Lester Cappon and Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ed was present when the Society of American Archivists was formed during a meeting of the American Historical Association in Providence, Rhode Island in 1936. In his valedictory address to the South

Carolina Historical Association, Ed noted that the preeminent representative of an even earlier generation, J. Franklin Jameson, recipient of this nation's first history Ph.D. and editor of the prior edition of Calhoun's papers, had also been there. With the passing of Ed Hemphill, one more link with the founders of our profession is broken.

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