Lansing Bartlett Bloom

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I N THE death of Lansing Bartlett Bloom at his home, 612 North University Avenue, Albuquerque, on February 14, 1946, New Mexico lost a scholarly indefatigable research worker in its historic annals. The scion of an old New England family, tracing its lineage to the Mayflower, he was born at Auburn, New York, April 12, 1880. He graduated from Williams College with the B.A. degree in 1902, attended the Auburn Theological Seminary from 1904 to 1907, and received the M.A. degree from Williams in 1912, having by that time engaged in missionary work in Utah and Mexico, but coming to New Mexico because of a break in health. In 1907, he married Maude E. McFie, daughter of Judge and Mrs. John F. McFie of Santa Fé, and moved with his bride to Saltillo, Mexico, to assume his duties as Presbyterian missionary in that city. There, through his friendship with the American vice-consul, and during his previous stay, he had become interested in the records of carretas that passed through Saltillo on their way to Santa Fé and thus was led into a study of Southwestern history, eventually making it his life work. Transferred to the Presbyterian church at Jemez pueblo, he delved into the archaeology, history and lore of that part of the Pueblo world, having the satisfaction in later years to superintend the cleaning out of centuries of debris which had accumulated in the great San Jose de Jemez mission ruin and helping to excavate the adjoining Pueblo ruin at Guíusewa for the School of American Research. After a pastorate at Magdalena
and occasionally preaching in the First Presbyterian church at Santa Fé, he exchanged the Presbyterian ministry for a position on the staff of the School of American Research and Museum of New Mexico in 1917, being assigned to the compilation of the service and biographical records of New Mexico's enlisted men in the First World War, a monumental task, which he completed with great skill, giving the State a priceless record of the sixteen thousand or so men who were in active service, at the same time adding a detailed account of the manifold war activities by official boards and by civilians. The distribution of War trophies throughout the State was also assigned to him by the Governor of the State.

In 1920, Bloom became associate in history of the School of American Research, assistant director of the Museum of New Mexico and secretary of the New Mexico Historical Society, editing the NEW MEXICO HISTORICAL REVIEW from its founding in 1926 up to the time of his death. Previously he had been associate editor of Old Santa Fe, predecessor of the REVIEW. In 1924 he was elected a fellow of the Historical Society and at the time of his death was its corresponding secretary, carrying on correspondence with historians the world over and especially with those who had made Latin American history and archives their specialty in research. In 1929 he became associate professor of history at the University of New Mexico, retiring less than a year ago with the title of research associate and professor emeritus. Last year Bloom was elected a member of the Managing Board of the School of American Research.

In 1928, Governor Richard C. Dillon appointed Bloom as New Mexico Commissioner to the Seville, Spain, Exposition. The Archives of the Indies at Seville, the Escorial, the Archivo Histórico Nacional and the library of the Academy of History in Madrid, and the Archivo de Simancas, were searched by him for material on early New Mexico history, and there he found considerable hitherto unknown references. He brought to the Museum the first photographs of the new grotto of Santillana del
Mar and its skeleton of primitive man. In 1930, once more sent by the School of American Research, the Historical Society and the University, he took 18,000 photographs of archive documents in the National Archive in Mexico City. The year 1934 again found him at work in Mexican archives retrieving valuable material. Two years, 1938 and 1939, were spent in research in archives and libraries in Seville (where he enlisted excellent cooperation by Spanish authorities despite the civil war), in Rome, Florence, Ravenna, Bologna, Venice, Paris, taking 30,000 micro-films including photographs of the "Sahagun" in the Laurentian Library in Florence, and of the drawings in color in the Vatican Library, in the manuscript volumes of the History of Missions in the Spanish Southwest by Adolf Bandelier presented to Pope Leo XIII upon the occasion of his golden jubilee as a cardinal in 1903. To Bloom's disappointment, he found no trace of the manuscript itself, nor did he discover any report on the founding of Santa Fé which he was especially desirous of locating.

Of late, Bloom was engaged in listing the Franciscan missionaries who had worked in New Mexico from earliest Spanish times. With his customary meticulous thoroughness he searched the church records in the library of the Archbishop of Santa Fé, whose gracious permission he readily obtained. All other available sources were also studied so that finally he had the names and records of some 700 missionaries. Mrs. Bloom, who had accompanied him on his journeys in Europe and Mexico and who had been an ardent and invaluable assistant in his research, tells us that he would check, recheck, double check these names many times, that he would worry over similarity in names, badly spelled ones and apparent discrepancies in time and places. In preparation at the time of his death for publication in the New Mexico Historical Review he had a long series of chapters on the life-work of these missionaries, the first instalment intended for this number of the Review.

Though ordinarily serious as proverbially becomes a Presbyterian clergyman and a research scholar, Bloom also
had a sense of humor and was witty in a restrained way. Every meeting of the Historical Society which he attended he made notable by some original contribution to knowledge of New Mexico history and often, witty comment. He was a lively correspondent and his letters from the field were interesting and informative. To illustrate, from a letter written in 1934 in Mexico:

"As I write, I am looking at 45 'pill boxes' which I could put in my two side pockets—but they contain about 2000 pages photographed to date, supplementing the material which I got four years ago. I believe I shall make a total of about 5000 by September 13, when we shall suspend operations. We shall then head north using a few days for stops at Guanajuato, Queretaro, Zacatecas and Chihuahua, returning to Albuquerque by the 22nd September. Mrs. Bloom has been through a good many volumes and has located a lot of material which will have to wait until next summer. Much of it is 'original' and today she found papers with signatures of Santiago Abreu, Facundo Melgares, while I am photographing papers signed by Pena­losa, Mendizabal, Juan Manso, Juan de Miranda—all 17th century governors of New Mexico. The 'residencia' of Mendizabal, for example, is very important for the insight it gives of the middle 17th century. And other documents have the signatures of Benavides, Posadas, etc.

Bloom was one of the founders of the Quivira Society, was a member of the American Historical Association, occasionally attending one of its national conventions presenting papers embodying results of his investigations. He held membership in the Archaeological Institute of America, and the Archaeological Society of New Mexico. He was a past president of the Southwest Division of the American Association of Science. Socially inclined, he was a Kiwanian, a Phi Alpha Theta, a life member of the Y. M. C. A., a 32d degree Mason, faithfully attending Scottish Rite Masonic reunions in Santa Fé. A member of "Mayflower Descendants," he also took an interest in other patriotic organizations. Fishing, chess, billiards and music were
among his recreations but of late years he gave little time to them. A regular attendant and member of the Presbyterian church, it was the Rev. J. Denton Simms, former pastor of the First Presbyterian church in Albuquerque, who took part in the Rose Croix funeral services in the Scottish Rite Cathedral in Santa Fé and officiated at the grave in Fairview Cemetery in Santa Fé, in which the deceased found his final resting place.

The widow, Mrs. Maude E. Bloom, a son, John, and a daughter, Carol, both of whom have been in war service, are the immediate family remaining to mourn the passing of a husband and a father whose friendships were continental in scope.