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WILLIAM JACKSON PARISH

1907—1964

On May 4, 1964, death came suddenly to William Jackson Parish, Dean of the Graduate School of the University of New Mexico. Campus, community, and state, beneficiaries of the intense, varied activity which Dean Parish crowded into his fifty-seven years, know his significant achievements. Now the sharp focus of personal loss further clarifies the man himself—Bill Parish to all who knew him—in relation to the work he has left.

Dean Parish once expressed, almost diffidently, his credo, his conviction that the several disciplines of university and community must be recognized as interrelated and interdependent. At once apparent was his instinct to place the human being at the center of these interdependencies. As educator, economist, or business historian, he was concerned first for man; then for man's means and materials.

Even a cursory review of his university and community service shows his practice of this belief, his obedience to this instinct. In classroom, committee, administration, and research at the University, in his forward-looking deanship of the Graduate School, he strove for improved academic relationships and teaching resources, for the establishment of the University College to benefit entering freshmen—concern for student and standard driving his efforts. His professional articles in diverse publications bear the mark of the humanist as well as that of the trained economist. In city and state, awareness of the needs of man guided his activity: his investigations resulting in the New Mexico small loan laws; his presidencies of the Sandia Foundation, the Albuquerque Council on Foreign Relations, the County Community Council; his work in labor relations; his many directorships, such as that of the Bernalillo County Tuberculosis Association.

But Dean Parish's special contribution to New Mexico, his home since the 1930's, is that of the business historian. He

recognized the treasure in the records of the New Mexico mercantile capitalists, notably those of the Charles Iffeld Company of Las Vegas and Albuquerque, the basis of his doctoral thesis at Harvard in 1950, expanded in 1961 as *The Charles Iffeld Company: a Study of the Rise and Decline of Mercantile Capitalism in New Mexico*. Ledger, account book, and correspondence are here brought to life. Painstaking tables, charts, and analysis set forth the history of mercantile capitalism in all its importance. But further, the integrity of this cool fact is lighted by an imaginative awareness of the men who shaped the early New Mexico economy as they responded to the forces of immigration, frontier fort, and settlement. A related study additionally mined from these veins is "The German Jew and the Commercial Revolution in Territorial New Mexico, 1850-1900," appearing first as the attractive Sixth Annual Research Lecture of the University and later in both the *New Mexico Quarterly* and the *New Mexico Historical Review*. In both studies is the sense of men moving—and moved by—perennial economic forces, figures in a complex, interrelated pattern, acting beyond the accounting of gain and loss to frame the social and cultural milieu.

Dean Parish saw the movement of early New Mexico trade as the old Alexandrian-Carthaginian-Roman trading story retold on the American frontier through the traveling merchants of the Santa Fe Trail. After 1830, the sedentary mercantile capitalists, men like Charles Iffeld and Max Nordhaus, many of German Jewish origin, dominated the scene. Their story is Dean Parish's own peculiar province, explored always with sensitivity to the gentle understanding of Charles Iffeld in his dealings with customer and manager, but with objective awareness of social implications. The vein can be light, as he traces the lure of the Butterick sewing pattern, flicking outward through rural New Mexico from "The Pride of Las Vegas," the department store close to the heart of Charles Iffeld. More important are the serious insights: for example, that the maturing of this mercantile capitalism, as

it involved the rise of merchant banking and such developments as the *partido* contract of the sheep industry, gave rise to some of the more difficult social problems of present-day New Mexico.

Dean Parish saw, too, the fruits of the cultural sensitivity and social conscience of the German Jewish merchants, their fostering of music and drama, of community beautification in a stark land, their defense of the values of personal freedom, tolerance, and amicable compromise denied in the Old World and sought so eagerly in the New.

Through this special focus of historical vision Dean Parish left his own particular accounting of a New Mexico, provincial but touched with the cosmopolitan, catalytic quality of these sedentary merchants, primarily a business history, of course, but a picture of men and the land as well. He made, too, a beginning of future work in his careful editing of the reports of the "Young Observer," the traveling staff correspondent in New Mexico, 1902-1903, for the *American Shepherd's Bulletin*, recently reprinted in this *Review*. A definitive study of the sheep and wool trade in New Mexico has doubtless been lost through Dean Parish's untimely death.

Perhaps it is too early in our history to know the final measure of these works which give "a local habitation and a name" to the records of ledger and statistic. But all along, the large measure of the man has been clear. Let the work of William Jackson Parish be kept in the New Mexico heritage. And let the memory of Bill Parish be kept, too, in its true dimensions of charm and personal force: the sudden smile, the burst of delighted laughter, the stubborn ardor in defense of an idea, the grace and generosity dissolving disagreement; the free giving of costly energy and quick conscience to deep conviction and serious purpose. These the heart remembers, close woven, interlocked with his written word and active deed.

KATHERINE SIMONS