

Inter-American Notes

OBITUARY

John Jay TePaske (1929-2007)

Professor John Jay TePaske, one of the leading historians of colonial Spanish America, died December 1, 2007. He was 77 and had retired in 1988 after a long and productive career at Duke University. John is survived by his wife Neomi, his daughters Susan TePaske-King and Maranna TePaske Daly, three grandchildren, and his brother Robert.

John was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on December 8, 1929, the son of Leo TePaske and Leona Kloote TePaske, and the grandson of a Dutch immigrant blacksmith, Evert TePaske. Of Evert's eleven children, Leo, the next to youngest, became an engineer, a vocation that John Jay initially intended to pursue when he enrolled at Michigan State University. Eventually, however, he was drawn to the study of history, and a course with Harold Fields on Latin American History convinced him to concentrate on the Spanish Empire. He was accepted for graduate study at Harvard and Duke. The latter's offer of financial assistance convinced the young scholar to enroll there to study with Professor John Tate Lanning. Financial aid was crucial because John Jay had met Neomi Gray at a college party and in romantic fervor had proposed marriage to her, contingent upon his receiving funding from one of the schools.

The Duke scholarship thus enabled the practical young student to satisfy both his romantic and academic yearnings. Neomi provided additional financial support by teaching second grade in a local elementary school, while John studied with Lanning. He completed his M.A. in 1953 with a thesis ("The Life of Appleton Oaksmith: Its Latin American Aspects") that examined the Filibusterer War of nineteenth-century Nicaragua. At that point the Korean War disrupted John's studies: likely to be drafted, he enlisted for a two-year stint in the U.S. Army (1953-1955). Corporal TePaske spent much of his term of service teaching English on a military base in Missouri and then returned to Duke to work on his doctorate. He taught for

a year at Memphis State University, while finishing his dissertation (later published as *The Governorship of Spanish Florida, 1700-1763* [1964]).

Receiving his Ph.D. in 1959, he took a position at Ohio State University. He remained there for eight years and was promoted to the rank of associate professor in 1964. A Ford Foundation Fellowship in 1962-1963 permitted him to do post-doctoral research at the University of California, Berkeley, where he became immersed in colonial financial history, an interest that consumed much, but not all, of his scholarly energy for more than forty years. He also established lasting friendships with Woodrow Borah, Dauril Alden, and other historians. That period also brought invitations to teach as a visiting professor at Western Reserve University (1964), University of Washington (1965), and the University of Texas, Austin (1967).

In 1967 John returned to Duke University to join the faculty there. Promoted to professor in 1969, he established a distinguished record of teaching, scholarship, and service to his discipline. In 1969 he received Duke's Distinguished Teaching Award. John was the sole editor of eight volumes, co-editor of another seven, and also authored 20 book chapters and 14 scholarly articles. Over his career he garnered prestigious fellowships, including grants from the Tinker Foundation (1975-77), the National Endowment for the Humanities (1976), the Social Science Research Council (1986), the Bank of Spain (1986), and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation (1995). At the same time, he served his discipline diligently. He wrote countless book reviews, evaluated many book and article manuscripts, chaired the Conference on Latin American History (1980-81), was vice-president of the American Historical Association's Professional Division (1986-89), and served on the editorial boards of the *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, *The Americas*, and the *Hispanic American Historical Review*.

Perhaps given his early interest in engineering, it was not surprising that John advocated the use of quantitative methods in historical research. Much of his scholarship focused on the colonial treasury system and what it revealed about the economy of the Spanish Empire. He and Herbert Klein organized a team of researchers that compiled the extant summary accounts for all the colonial Spanish treasury accounts. John then turned his attention to the mining data they contained and worked for two decades to measure the amount of gold and silver produced in Spanish and Portuguese America. His work provides the foundation for understanding how those bullion flows influenced the early modern world economy. He was pleased to receive an Emeritus Fellowship from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in his "dotage," as he called it, to bring the bullion project to a successful end.

Former students and colleagues recall fondly his sense of humor, his intellectual curiosity, and his sincere interest in their work (eschewing ideology and doctrine, he described himself as a "flabby eclectic"). He prized his talks with graduate students and new Ph.D.s, offering them encouragement and gleaning information about new directions in the field. John loved sports. Fly fishing near his summer home on

Michigan's Crystal Lake and tennis were great passions, as were Duke athletics, especially basketball and lacrosse.

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BOOKS IN BRIEF

Los orígenes de la industria petrolera en México 1900-1925. By Joel Alvarez de la Borda. Mexico: Petroleos Mexicanos, 2005. Pp. 308. Illustrations. Tables. Figures. Notes. Bibliography.

This volume is an extremely useful, quick introduction to the history of the oil business in Mexico. At the same time, it offers a short guide to the Archivo Histórico de PEMEX. The main body of the volume opens with a long essay by Alvarez de la Borda detailing the major outlines of the history of the petroleum industry from 1900 to 1925. This basic discussion will be helpful for anyone interested in the major outlines of that story, though there is little that will be unfamiliar to professional historians conversant with the topic. The discussion is always measured and careful, avoiding the polemics that often accompany this theme. It would, therefore, be a good introductory text for Spanish speakers.

A second short essay, written by Eduardo Clavé Almeida, describes the holdings of the Archivo Histórico itself. It includes substantial collections of documents from some of the oil companies expropriated in 1938, augmented by the extensive documentation from those institutions with administrative responsibilities related to petroleum. Not only does the archive cover the history of the oil industry, but it also has documentation involving agrarian, financial, labor, and judicial issues, among others. The dates of documents range from 1850 to 1970. A single collection denominated "Expropiación" contains material from foreign oil companies and organisms created by the various revolutionary and post-revolutionary governments which came to Petroleos Mexicanos at the time that President Lázaro Cárdenas expropriated the majority of privately held companies in 1938. This collection contains 110,000 files, of which well over half have already been cataloged and are now accessible on the Internet. As of the date of the book's publication, archivists were continuing to work on the period from 1900 to 1930. A collection of annotated documents follows these two essays. Particularly fascinating are the more than fifty pages of balance sheets from the Mexican Eagle Oil Company, ranging in date from 1914 to 1919. These reflect the huge amounts of money that were flowing out of the country into the hands of foreign investors, despite the violence of the Mexican Revolution, as the oil itself was pumped onto tankers along the Gulf Coast.

The volume will be of obvious interest for teaching purposes; students will find the historical essay clear, the guide to the archives immensely helpful (and historians will find it enticing), and the documents themselves fascinating. Those within