GOLF is not everyone's dish of tea. It cannot be denied that Roy Nichols once was the manager of a Rutgers soccer team, and once insisted upon shouldering a heavy pack up the hardest trail to the summit of Mount Washington. But physical exercise as such holds no allure for him. Rather, his exploratory obsession has been the opening up of mental trails into new vistas beyond. Some broad avenues of his traversing have been traced in preceding pages. What here follows is in the nature of "fillins," along the way.

As a base from which to set forth on explorations, the University of Pennsylvania had not attracted him in 1924 with its offering of an instructorship at $1,500 annually, carrying a teaching load of fifteen hours. But in 1925 he visioned some possibilities in an assistant professorship at $2,500, and transferred his base from Columbia to Pennsylvania. From this point he broke new trails in many directions through the next forty-one years. A single volume could not contain the many crisscross maps of his explorations, for he had no intention of confining his role to writing histories and classroom teaching.

Nichols, and the one other assistant professor, Witt Bowden, found the five full professors at 208 College Hall conducting a staid History Department; they were observing benignly as their one, full-time, secretary used a handy table in her spare time to cut and baste her trousseau for a forthcoming marriage to a graduate assistant. The seven attended informal, rather infrequent, "department" meetings to handle such routine matters as were not left to individual teachers; other matters rested with an "executive" committee of full professors only. The keeping of the bare record of "department" proceedings was dumped onto Nichols' lap as "secretary" in April of 1926, and was left there through the next three years, until he was assigned a year's stint as undergraduate chairman.

The rather quiet confines of College Hall may have seemed a
welcome haven to the young assistant professor, accustomed to handling classes of some twenty-five "students." At Pennsylvania his assignments included one class of some two hundred Wharton School sophomores, as rambunctious as second-year men know how to be. This kind of Wharton expertise immediately challenged the explorer of intellectual pursuits—to digress down a rough path of class discipline. By the time he reached his lecture on the Revolutionary War that fall, he had decided to use a stout alpenstock in his trail-blazing; he would support his knowledge with wit.

So, he was ready, one fall day of 1925, when his lecture on the War was rent by a verbal shot from the back row; "How do you know?" All eyes turned to the podium, whence came a devastating volley, "Young man, I was there!" To the jeers of his classmates the rifleman beat a hasty retreat out the door, never to darken it again. Tradition relates that another hardy soul unwarily interrupted a lecture with the peremptory demand, "Aw, turn the record over"; whereupon the assistant professor, luckily aware that "Red Seal" recordings then led the lot, reminded his baiter, "Red Seal records play only on one side." The resulting roar of approval from the class is still relished by some of its members forty-five years later.

Thuswise, between professor and Whartonians a warm and long-lasting camaraderie was established. Symptomatic of it was a custom of the late twenties, rising from Nichols' habit of vivifying famous debates. A favorite was his "Webster's Reply to Hayne" presentation. For it the students would plant in the back row a member with a trumpet. When Nichols had carried the debate through to its climax, the trumpeter would break forth with "The Stars and Stripes Forever" to the enjoyment of everyone present, without exception. From those early years to the present he has been known as an explorer equipped with wit to fortify his wisdom.

The gait of the History Department quickened in the late twenties as enrollment and staffing grew. Exploratory moves for new courses floriated. Nichols won approval in 1927 for consideration of an "American Civilization" course, destined to materialize into various "civilization" and "cultural" courses on the undergraduate and graduate levels, departmental and interdepartmental; until finally a separate "Department of American Civilization" became a reality three decades later.
Meanwhile his roving concerns included: reorganization of undergraduate and graduate instruction; developing Latin American library holdings; collaboration with the Wharton School on economic history; contacts between the History Department and Pennsylvania's senators and representatives in Washington on bills of interest to historians; empathy between the Department and the Federation of State Historical Societies; and permanent recording of all class records. These activities were so far from shocking his senior colleagues that they obstructed three pre-depression efforts to get him to move his base of operations; they hoisted him direct from his assistant professorship up to full professorship, as of July 1, 1930, at age 34. There ensued five years of freedom from departmental chairmanships, exploring new trails on the curriculum, introductory courses, majors, and interdepartmental coordination of instruction.

During the Second World War he was placed in general charge of courses for army, navy and preflight trainees sent to Pennsylvania for instruction in many subjects. Thirty-seven different curricula within eleven major training programs were taught between 9 A.M. and midnight. The peak number of trainees present at any one time was 3,600; their grand total (including some 200 "Wacs") was 10,232 on campus between December of 1942 and the end of 1945. The influx provided federal financial sustenance to the University greatly needed at the time. For instructors, Nichols raided various departments for men and a few women who taught subjects quite removed from their specialties, an unforgettable experience.

The forties were a difficult decade in the History Department. Its "Executive Committee," consisting of the full professors, had charge of all major matters; but by retirement and otherwise, their number was reduced to three or four members most of the period. Nichols himself was absent for his 1948-49 visiting professorship at Cambridge University, but for the other years he was the only member in continuous residence.

It is a matter of record that he was a tower of strength to the Department in coping with the wartime upset and the postwar tidal wave of "G.I. Bill" students. This is commonly attributed to his many talents and excellent relations with students, colleagues and administrators. Incidentally, he proved not lacking in useful-
ness when it came to standing off some desperate dean intent on depriving the History Department of one of its few private offices. At the end of the decade he took a principal part in strengthening the Department by adding to it two outstanding scholars; therefore he has received much of the credit for the fact that independent surveys of American universities in the fifties rated Pennsylvania's History Department among the top ten.

Younger members of the Department, outside the pale of its Executive Committee, were impressed by that interest in younger people which placed their contacts with him on a basis of real friendship, due partly to his receptivity to new ideas and people, accompanied by his straight dealing with those who had to be let go. He avoided factionalism, and never indicated that he allowed friction and difficult problems to get him down, as he never forgot that plans had to be circumscribed by the possibilities in a given situation.

Warmth of friendship likewise marked relationships with the lowest echelon, the teaching "assistants," who sensed that he believed they should have chances to develop their interests along lines preferred by them. In an atmosphere of partnership, rather than authority, free of favoritism, his "assistants" came to appreciate the thoroughness of preparation he expected from himself and from them; they gratefully learned how to organize and master their material so as to present it effectively.

In his elevation to the post of Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (1952) the campus habits of cheerfulness and buoyancy stood him in good stead, for if he were to blaze new trails in graduate programs, he must have cooperation from what some people (but not he) called the "male prima donnas"—the graduate group chairmen numbering 53 at the beginning and 61 before his retirement. Competition among them for the always inadequate fellowships and scholarships was very keen; a special unpaid faculty committee furnished decisions which were not always accepted.

Human frailties are not conspicuously absent in graduate chairmen; prima donnas can have axes to grind. One or two at fellowship time might so try their skill, at crafty listing of candidates and subterfuge, a broad understanding of human nature proved the Dean's best armor. During his tenure there was a very
significant increase in the number and attractiveness of available fellowships and scholarships, helped by Foundations and federal grants.

On substantive issues, when an argumentative, but ill-informed graduate chairman sometimes pressed his position stubbornly, it was observed that the Dean managed to converse in such fashion that the chairman perceived the weakness of his own program without realizing that he had been educated on it, and therefore took no offense. Quadrant meetings were marked by skill at avoiding waste of time, arousing gratitude for sessions blessedly short. Often a rare sense of humor enabled the Dean to point up his serious statements with a quip or two which relaxed someone who was "uptight." This disadvantaged the few disliking him.

His explorations through the educational forests moved him to guide through the Graduate Council and Committees on Instruction a series of reforms designed to make the graduate academic program more responsive to the needs of individual students and graduate groups. A course entitled "Independent Study and Research" was introduced into the offerings of each graduate group with a Graduate School provision permitting any part of the total course requirements for advanced degrees to be satisfied by informal, independent work. With the goal of bringing more depth and cohesiveness to the graduate course structure the semester credit system was abandoned in favor of the course unit and the maximum graduate course load specified as four course units rather than 12 semester credits. The rigid two-foreign-language-exam requirement was relaxed to allow each graduate group to set requirements for knowledge of more cogent tools of research such as statistics or computer programming.

Elaborating on his earlier efforts at interdisciplinary opportunities for students (and faculty), he fostered the creation and growth of a number of new interdisciplinary graduate groups: History and Philosophy of Science, Molecular Biology, Biomedical Electronic Engineering, Applied Mathematics, Business and Applied Economics, Operations Research, and Economic History.

It was fortunate that there could be brought to the whole graduate program a sense of good-hearted academic endeavor, because the office had to operate under two nagging handicaps.

One was the indomitable determination of graduate students
to bend and break any administrative rules ill-fitted to their particular predicament. From student efforts to win by going "higher up," the Dean often was protected by one of his staff; but sometimes department heads and even a much higher potentate wrecked the rules. The Dean managed to streamline the operations of the Graduate School somewhat, in order to provide more efficient and more diverse services to the rapidly increasing graduate student body.

The other main handicap was less readily shrugged off, being a budget weakness highly resistant to cure. The Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences had "approving authority" for nine budgets. Eight of these were for special undertakings with particular budgets which could not be submitted for approval higher up until they were certified by the Dean as conforming to administrative practices respecting appointments of personnel and expenditure of funds. In these approvals it could be a pleasure to participate because of their basic significance: as for example the History and Philosophy of Science, South Asia Regional Studies, Oriental Studies and American Civilization.

The ninth budget—that of the Graduate School—merely provided funds for administrative personnel, equipment and supplies. Actually household finance was so little his forte that a vice dean had to remind him sometimes of the need to raise wages within the family. But for purposes of keen interest to him—graduate professorships and policies—the Dean in 1952 remained a financial eunuch—no funds. However, within a year (1953) his incompetence was relieved by bestowal of the added role of Vice Provost for Graduate Affairs, a dual assignment helpful to the Dean.

Thereby he became a participant in the weekly "President's Staff Conference," and "Provost's Staff Conference," privy to many dynamic plans—not the least of them the building of stronger faculty. The four provosts and the one president under whom he served (1953-66) sought his advice on budget areas within his cognizance and found useful his longtime familiarity with university history and practices.

It has been said that the higher-ups used him as a university institution, its value enhanced by accessibility. He was enlisted as one of a select group of members of the Faculty to address alumni called together in cities throughout the United States, to
hear reports from the University and to loosen pocketbooks. Those attending such gatherings never failed to marvel at his uncanny ability to sense the mood of his audience, many of whom had known him in their undergraduate years. Not infrequently he was asked to bring to life once again some of the great moments in history he used to re-create in his lectures.

References by Chairmen to his scholarship he would brush aside, as he captivated audiences by his wit and keen observation. When asked by one alumnus why the University's founder, Benjamin Franklin, spent so much time in France, his former professor suggested that the questioner take a good look at Deborah's portrait. It was gratifying, on at least one occasion, to receive a morning-after, long-distance call, that one alumnus had so enjoyed the festivities of the previous evening that he was tendering a pledge in five figures.

Behind the jocular front has been the habit of doing his university homework promptly. By no means least in importance was collaboration in the great "University Survey" during the fifties, when Pennsylvania invited outside critics to assist in a purgative self-evaluation covering the entire institution and lasting several years. Invigorating to its participants (Nichols worked on several parts of it) and salutary in the extreme, the results compensated for the hard thinking and endless committee hours. In the Survey evaluation of the Graduate School the Dean found further encouragement.

For an explorer seeking to blaze trails in history the location of this University in the historic city of Philadelphia was a great advantage. Here preservation of manuscripts and books was a traditionally respected undertaking, attractive to the elite. Actually, Nichols' career as a serious author had begun at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1920, because it (like the Library of Congress) held materials needed for his Ph.D. dissertation. So, when he in 1925 took up residence in College Hall, he simultaneously became a denizen of the manuscript room of the Historical Society. Naturally, there in time developed close ties with native prestigious literati—at the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania, the Philosophical Society, the Philadelphia Library Company, the Presbyterian Historical Society, the Athenaeum, the Philadelphia Historical Commission, and the latest grouping, the
historians now working to produce a collaborative History of Philadelphia.

When, in time, he was forgiven for not having been born in Philadelphia between Market and Pine, between the Delaware and the Schuylkill, and not even in Pennsylvania; his loyalties were delightedly welcomed, first in the committees and subsequently on the Board of Directors of these organizations, where his characteristic wit and wisdom were appreciated. Further, his varied affiliations increased his usefulness between these divers groups. Among them he pressed for four policies especially:—acquisition of materials of real historic value, sustained publication programs, accessibility of materials for productive scholarship, and training of historians.

At the Historical Society of Pennsylvania encouragement of its publication program bore fruit in production of many volumes on Pennsylvania's history and continuance of the quarterly journal, The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography. To it he contributed (1933-69) eight articles, sixty book reviews and many editorials and notes, besides responding helpfully and promptly to requests for advice about articles submitted. He summarized the history of the Magazine in an editorial in the October, 1958, issue. With two other members of the Board he planned three highly successful conferences (1948, 1949, 1950) attended by a number of America's most distinguished historians. From them emerged widely read proceedings on such topics as "Do We Need a 'New History' of American Political Democracy?" "Current Trends and Future Opportunities," and "Graduate Training Problems in History."

At the Genealogical Society of Pennsylvania he served as president 1946-57. His stress here was on increasing the volume of the Society's collections through microfilming, readying them for effective use, and training specialists in their use under adequate housing conditions. A course in genealogical methods became the first of its kind to be offered in the greater Philadelphia area, and a group of Fellows was established, based on the excellence of their published genealogical work. A series of monthly "Genealogical Workshops" became a continuing program of the Society. Throughout, his greatest contribution was emphasis upon scholarly methods in genealogical research because of the interdependence
of history and genealogy. A man could not be regarded merely as one of a series of "begats." This he emphasized in addresses on "The Significance of Genealogy," and "Life Without Ancestors." A clarion call for unremitting endeavor marked his capsule history of the Society's first sixty years "Milestones on the Society's Past versus Millstones on the Society's Path."

Into the most ancient elite of United States scholarship—the American Philosophical Society founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1743—Nichols was invited in 1945, and within a year was appointed to an important working group, the Committee on Meetings. There he served 1946-47 and 1952-69. Other assignments included committees on Membership, Council Nominees, and the Bicentennial. Through the years on the Committee on Library, 1953-now, he regularly espoused acquisition of purchases likely to provide materials for scholarly articles and books; but on purchase of mere costly autographs he sometimes uttered a firm, minority, "No." Members of the Committee on Library and Committee on Meetings, whereon he served simultaneously through most of two decades, usually meet on the same day and lunch together. His colleagues there record a special reason for gratitude to him. His protest against the unvarying valetudinarian's menu of the 1950's and early '60's produced a change to a more nourishing (but thus far equally unvarying) meal of chopped steak.

Meanwhile, through 1953-69 he was placed on his mettle as Chairman of the Administrative Board publishing "The Papers of Benjamin Franklin." The American Philosophical Society-Yale University sponsorship of this project was a kind of shotgun marriage, and the association of those two old, proud institutions might easily have been an uneasy and resentful one. That it was not is owing in large measure to the Chairman, who was guided by no other principle than to get on with the project. Sound sense, efficient action, and good humor all conduced to this end. He cared little which institution got credit for the job, knowing that by supporting the Papers each was fulfilling its obligation to scholarship. Though there was some talk at the beginning of the project that officers of the Board should serve limited terms, no one gave the notion another thought after Nichols had served a brief space as chairman; so he held the post for 16 years.

Meanwhile, he had become (1955) a Director of yet another
native institution, the Library Company of Philadelphia. Founded in 1731, this cultural influence was going through a critical period in its history. Necessary rehabilitation required pulling up roots from an historic location and abandoning outmoded practices. This consumed a decade of finding ways, means and realization. Nichols contributed enthusiastic support to a courageous plan for a new building, and to changes in administrative practices. In the establishment of close relationships between the Library Company and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, he was particularly helpful, because he was also, by this time, Vice-President of the latter.

The Presbyterian Historical Society illustrated the long-lasting interest of the professor in the historical careers of former graduate students. One of these climbed up from assistant research historian of the Presbyterian Historical Society to become Secretary of it and Manager of the Department of History of the United Presbyterian Church. He joined others of that group at persuading Nichols (born a Baptist) to serve on the Board of the Society. Thereon the Baptist cooperated in enshrining the Presbyterian library in a new colonial-type structure erected down in that part of old Philadelphia known as “Society Hill”; and he became also a “corporator” of the Presbyterian Ministers Fund. With their dynamic leader, the late Rev. Dr. Alexander Mackie (he of the wry humor), Nichols was wont to strike flint. He cherishes particularly a typical Mackie response to a bit of Baptist cooperation: “O.K., Nichols, I’ll show my appreciation. I’ll bury you free.”

Far from the point of demise, Nichols became interested in yet another library, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, founded in 1814, of which he became a Director within the year of his initial membership (1956), moving on to the Vice-Presidency a decade later. Among this library’s practices is the bestowal of the Athenaeum Literary Award, given each year for the most outstanding book by an author resident in the Philadelphia area. In this case, the award was for his 1961 analysis of *The Stakes of Power*.

Power for the city of Philadelphia to preserve its heritage was the objective of City Council when it established (1955) the Advisory Commission on Historic Buildings, superseded (1957) by an agency for broader functioning—the Philadelphia Historical
Commission. Mayor Dilworth brought Nichols into participation by appointment to the Commission in January, 1960, when he promptly became chairman of a newly constituted "Committee on Historical Values." He set them to work at reviewing and restating the Commission's criteria for certification, and in that connection called a meeting of persons with expert knowledge of nineteenth century Philadelphia to suggest reasonable procedures to guide the Commission on preservation of any part of the Victorian City. This added many important nineteenth-century structures to those already on the Commission's list.

More importantly, the Commission then began to designate for preservation entire streets and areas where the nineteenth-century street scape remained relatively unchanged. Owners of property which had lost some of its original features over the years, were encouraged to maintain their historicity as far as possible by bestowal of an "Award of Merit" to them. This could console them somewhat where their structures had been too far altered to receive one of the Commission's prestigious plaques.

Nichols' Chairmanship of the Commission (from May, 1967) led to a widening of its outlook and an increase in its reputation both at home and abroad. Keeping up to date, they looked into the history of the North Philadelphia black community and published a report, *Before The Model City*. It may not be surprising that grants from the American Philosophical Society financed two architectural and archeological projects of the Commission—one in Southwark and the other at "the Dock." The Chairman was largely responsible for the cooperative program which joined the National Park Service, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Philadelphia Historical Commission in a study of the history, archeology, and architecture of that part of the Delaware water front scheduled to disappear. The cognoscente rate these as truly years of growth in this field.

The field of Philadelphia history had been under tillage for one crop or another through forty-five summer and winter seasons. The feeling the young professor had cherished in 1925, that Philadelphia was a synonym for history, had stuck with him. It came to be shared by the moving spirit in a recently-endowed "Barra Foundation," that sought leadership and turned to Nichols to serve as Editor-in-Chief and Chairman of an Editorial Committee.
set up to engineer a collaborative history of Philadelphia. The donor had not attended the University of Pennsylvania, but most of the contributing authors had been Nichols' students or close colleagues; so the project went forward in a uniquely harmonious atmosphere.

It seemed to the Chairman that the contributors should not find it too difficult to get on with their chapters; for he had happily eschewed ordinary recreation over countless weekends and evenings in order to devote those remnants of crowded days and nights to scholarly writing, whereby he had produced twelve books, in addition to a great number of essays and reviews.

Beneath the gaze of William Penn atop Philadelphia's City Hall lay the greatest aggregation of Pennsylvania's wealth in historical resources; but an historian who was not born in Philadelphia might become quite curious as to research possibilities beyond city limits. A University colleague suggested a multi-disciplinary exploration of the socio-economic factors and historical development of a small community, using historians, psychologists, sociologists and minor groups. The community had to be of sufficient size and accessibility to make the study practicable, so Norristown, twenty miles from Philadelphia, with a population of 38,126 in 1950, was selected. This would be an application of techniques developed during Nichols' many years of work within the Social Science Research council. So he cooperated enthusiastically, helping to make possible a landmark in interdisciplinary research training and effective cooperation. Those involved recall that his wisdom, understanding and unfailing humor were of major importance in integrating diversified and often quarrelsome professors, graduate students and even foundation executives, toward a common goal. The final result, *The Norristown Study*, emerged in mutual respect and understanding; and a most remarkable series of scholarly publications has been carried on in this tradition.

Earlier, a project embracing only his own guild—the historians of Pennsylvania—had found Nichols one of the moving spirits in the small group bringing into existence the Pennsylvania Historical Association, described by Professor Klein. Nichols' particular concerns were a scholarly state journal and a viable constitution. He persuaded the architect of *New York History*, Dixon Ryan Fox, to come down to inspire them; thus *Pennsylvania*
"THE ADMINISTRATOR"
History emerged. His presidency of the founding Association (1936-39) was followed by presidency of the Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies (1940-42), an older organization ill-structured for casting a net to enmesh the individual historians within the Commonwealth. To the establishment at Harrisburg of the great archival center he contributed a driving force. These statewide activities moved Governor Arthur H. James to name Nichols to the Pennsylvania Historical Commission where he functioned 1940-43.

Up and down and across the state went this historian who through it all never yielded to the blandishments of an automobile salesman. Friends who had besought his presence proffered their cars to traverse the trails from the nearest railheads to waiting conclaves, sometimes fifty miles off the "main line." Occasionally the conclave was a commencement ceremony whereat the abiding loyalty of a former student found expression in an honorary degree.

This happened often enough so that the highest authority at his own University, planning to tender such an accolade when the Dean and Provost relinquished his dual post, had the forethought to ask the proposed recipient what sort of degree had not yet been bestowed. Nichols replied, "the doctorate of civil law." This seemed a peculiarly appropriate conjuncture, for he then was writing the "Foreword" for the forthcoming volume embodying the Statutes enacted by the first legislature of the state of Pennsylvania. Thus, the Doctor of Civil Law crowned his accumulations.

The term "accumulations" of course is rarely used in reference to honorary degrees; but it tempts an analyst into an aside on its dual meaning for historians. Only those of the guild profiting by huge textbook royalties think of the term in the financial connotations customary with the general public. Most historians use "accumulations" in referring to their gathering of data useful for both speeches and writing, and likely to be more gratifying than gainful.

Thus it was normally with Nichols. His accumulated data coupled with skillful podium techniques brought frequent requests for speeches and sometimes a gratifying honorarium. But unless the lecture site was quite distant, as far beyond Pennsylvania as Louisiana, Missouri and Carolina for example, the assembled notations did not pour shekels into his purse. After all, one's fellow
ALONG THE WAY

citizens in the home vicinity tend to assume that the honor of addressing them and hearing their plaudits is recompense enough, or nearly enough. For example, an address before a large and prosperous group only thirty-four miles from home—an engagement consuming the entire evening and some travel outlay—was rewarded merely with a briefcase of modest worth—empty of course. Indeed, the briefcase stood as an "extra" considering that it was more than normally was received in the proximity of eastern Pennsylvania.

Yet, address-giving, whether near home or beyond, could be highly useful to an historian keen to clarify his own thoughts preparatory to use in his writings. Thus it served Nichols. Through many years insistent demand for committee meetings and addresses left him with only two or three evenings a week under his own vine and fig tree. But next-mornings, early, correlations of ideas would emerge and be put to paper. A graduate student while talking with a new member of the faculty in 1965 provided an analysis of the Nichols lecture structure which may approximate accuracy. "The most amazing thing is the density of material presented. Each paragraph contains a multitude of facts, a couple of truly exciting historical generalizations, several jokes (slightly off color), and a groan-producing pun."

The admixture of wisdom and wit naturally characterized Nichols' dealings with his peers in his contacts beyond the boundaries of Pennsylvania, according to surviving participants in those endeavors who still relish many a recollection. Most significant were his activities in the American Historical Association, the Social Science Research Council, Rutgers University, the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences and lectureships abroad. Through these groups his personal growth and influence developed over a very broad area, with affiliations dovetailing each other.

Joining the AHA in 1919 while working on his M.A., he became a life member before too long as a matter of economy, an example which historians to this date might advantageously emulate. Beginning in 1923 appear references to him in the index of the American Historical Review and in the Proceedings of the AHA, revealing him as a relatively frequent contributor of articles, a convention speaker, an active committee member and chairman.
At the close of an energetic stint as Chairman of the Membership Committee (1927-29), he chaired a special Committee on Publication Policy (1929). The first substantial endowment possessed by the AHA—the Beveridge Fund—was allotted by him as chairman 1934-40.

The most important role assigned to Nichols by the AHA was his seven consecutive three-year terms as its representative on the Social Science Research Council (1936-56). This organization was an interdisciplinary group which could not be immune from the usual frictions common to “conglomerate” undertakings; thereon Nichols “played an always conciliatory as well as a constructive role,” as John Higham remarks in his History. He was the one chosen to report (in the April, 1945 American Historical Review) on the experience of twenty years of History’s participation in the SSRC. This report was taken by Charles Beard as the basis for bringing out SSRC’s challenging publication of 1946 entitled Theory and Practice in Historical Study best known as “Bulletin 54.” From the discussions ensuing from “Bulletin 54,” Higham emphasizes that Nichols distilled the attitude of confidence which was to characterize the next twenty years of historical work; he expressed it in his 1948 article in the American Historical Review entitled “Post War Reorientation of Historical Thinking.”

Nichols functioned as a “statesman” who sought solutions in civilized fashion, expending a terrific amount of thought and energy upon the work of the SSRC, demonstrating dedicated participation in the broad range of Council activity on many important and productive committees that were concerned with both administrative functions and policies as such. Repeatedly involved in developing the potential contributions of history to research in other social sciences and the use of their approaches and methods by historians, he sought to assure the preservation and increase the accessibility of data for research in all the social fields. Thus he was fostering relations with still other fields of scholarship and with social scientists in foreign countries.

The sequence of committees on which he actively served is too long to enumerate here. As a result of his initiative the Council undertook a series of influential activities in the field of historiography, culminating in the report of the Committee on Historical Analysis (1956-62) and in his essay therein on “The
Genealogy of Historical Generalization.” Successive committees on historiography were appointed on the basis of memoranda he prepared for the Council. From a physical standpoint, such an expenditure of energy at these weekend sessions perhaps could not have been so well sustained if he had not been accorded isolation in his sleeping hour; always he was assigned a single room for SSRC weekend meetings, due to the fact of his reputation as the champion snorer of the group. He himself recently countered this assertion: “I don’t think it was I who snored so much; it was just that I did not want to disturb those who did.”

Eventually Nichols became president of the American Historical Association (1966). That year was marked by the AHA taking an unprecedented step. Jointly with the Organization of American Historians it came to the defense of a member historian in the court case of Frick versus Stevens. This resulted in a decision to the entire satisfaction of members of the Association.

Litigation was completely foreign to a third national organization to which Nichols gave fealty—“The American Academy of Political and Social Science.” It had been devoted to expansion of public interest in this field since 1889 on a strictly nonpartisan basis, through publications and meetings. Nichols functioned on its Board of Directors through a decade (1958-68) and from 1963 served as one of the four members of its Editorial and Executive Committee. Their work included planning the meetings of the Academy, approving topics for the volumes of The Annals, nominating members to the Board, authorizing topics and expenditures for monographs, and helping to formulate top Academy policy in every other field.

Luckily, there were two national organizations which did not subject a top functionary to the punishment of hard labor. An honor which was not onerous came to Nichols as President of the Association of Graduate Schools (1964) and Chairman of the Council of Graduate Schools of the United States (1965).

Hard labor and plenty of it, lightened only by that sturdy supportive loyalty which is too loosely termed “love of Alma Mater,” marked Nichols’ relationship to Rutgers University. He began immediately following his graduation (1918) with working to cement class loyalties to Rutgers; in addition to regular attendance at annual class reunions, he served through a number of
years as historian, secretary and correspondent of his class. By the time of the 175th anniversary of the founding of Rutgers (1941) his professional advance elsewhere moved the powers that be to bestow an LHD.

Three years later President Clothier was seeking for the Board of Trustees younger alumni tolerant of the intellectual innovation and physical expansion essential to a small college en route to becoming a great university. He drew in Nichols among others; and the novice next year was instrumental in establishing the University Research Council, proceeding to serve many years on its Advisory Board. The Nichols-Rutgers relationship greatly advantaged that institution because of his experience in university matters in particular, and in the world of learning in general, assets upon which the Board of Trustees learned to depend.

Through a quarter of a century, 1944-69, with one intermission of three years he remained a trustee, donating much time to the University Press Council and to the needs of the Library. His value therein rose from his knowledge of publication of academic scholarship, and in the priorities he urged for library construction and book funds. As a librarian of many years explains it, “No librarian was ever blessed with such a champion in high places. He tirelessly explained the facts of University library life to the Trustees” continuing long as the Chairman of the Board’s Library Committee.

When a Board of Governors was created (1957) he began taking his duties seriously within that body also, again serving on major committees. Among the Trustees and the Governors he has been especially valued for his “rare talent for keeping such meetings light and for bringing a faculty perspective to all deliberations,” to quote the official best qualified to judge. The usefulness of these talents broadened as Rutgers became state-oriented with branches in other cities and as projects multiplied. There was, for example, new planning for educational courses, research, retirement policy, the graduate school, and a medical school. Particularly vital was participation in the wise selection of a new President in 1958.

Over many years therefore the Nichols menage knew an in-veterate Friday ritual, once a month and sometimes twice as often, for making connections with a 9:00 A.M. train (one some-
times at 8:05) that stopped at New Brunswick, and with a return afternoon train involving a time-taking transfer at Trenton before regaining home around suppertime. Often he has found rejuvenation (he recalls) in a nap in the day coach, by some miracle never going beyond his stop; surely his trainmates must have had a fellow feeling for anyone who snored in transit.

A transit of more than 3,500 miles at summer's end of 1948 moved the explorer temporarily to a base camp in Britain. There he luxuriated through eleven months in the greatest freedom for his own research which he ever possessed after he became a university professor. A multitude of undertakings at Pennsylvania and elsewhere had prevented acceptance of an invitation to lecture one term at Cambridge early in World War II. A second request, for a full three-term engagement, with an invitation to be a Fellow at Trinity (one of the three largest colleges constituting the 22 then at the university on the Cam) was now accepted. Further, in family council it was decided that he should reside "in hall" (rather than in outside lodgings) in order to experience to the full the life of a Fellow.

These arrangements proved ideal. Warm hospitality (despite rationing which moved the thoughtful guest to decline a second serving at a private home) and developing friendships delightfully interlaced the hours of absorbing work among the wealth of historical sources. Life was by no means without its lighter moments, wherever he was. His living arrangements at wholly-male Trinity, and those of the other half of the "Dime" at London's female clubhouse maintained by the British Association of University Women (whence she commuted to her lecturing at the University of Birmingham and her research at the Public Record Office and elsewhere) meant that the "Dime" oftentimes abode weekends at the non-segregated Dartmouth House, clubhouse of the English Speaking Union. To sympathetic friends inquiring as to their locales, they were wont to chorus in high glee, "Five days a week he lives in a monastery at Trinity and she in a nunnery at Crosby Hall; weekends, they live in sin at the English Speaking Union."

Each day of the working part of the week was made more meaningful by the careful homework by which Nichols had prepared for two lecture series at Cambridge. One was to embrace United States History, 1763-1948, the other was to treat of the
origins and development of American political thought and action. Since the broad spectrum of his intellectual unfolding is limned in the opening article of this issue of PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY, there is need to do little more here than refer to his "Inaugural" address, prepared before leaving the United States and delivered before a Cambridge audience of the Vice-Chancellor, the Masters of Trinity and St. Johns and some of the Fellows concerned with history.

They heard him define his particular interest in the relation between British and American political institutions, in their mechanism of operation and control. Exploration of American political sources had convinced him of their great age and English origin. The two-party system, he noted, had rarely existed outside the Anglo-American experience. As parties are the real instruments of democratic control, and as the understanding of them has been obscured by over-emphasis on leaders and neglect of the led, historians should seek the more intricate causes of mass political behavior. Comparative study of political history might help to overcome handicaps imposed by nationalism. Occupants of the Pitt chair, working with a Cambridge "cooperator" might write chapters for a "Cambridge History of Democracy."

The Cambridge Press published the Inaugural, and a few other essays out of these experiences appeared in print. Nichols studied the British sources throughout his residence, pushing his thinking further and further back, exploring ancient behavior patterns from tribal days, from shire and borough government, down into Parliament and through the various changes in the executive over the years. Throughout he was engaged in efforts at historical understanding of time, so essential to the measurement of the social validity of institutions.

One of the many pleasant Cambridge events was the bestowal of the honorary M.A., customary for Pitt incumbents and required for the status of Fellow. This historic ceremony was held in the "Senate House," with onlookers seated in facing rows, the wide space between being used to escort recipients to the dais. There the Vice-Chancellor, enthroned atop two steps, bestowed the degree upon the robed recipient, kneeling on the first step. One onlooker felt some concern lest a particular recipient, on rising
from his knees, trip on the back hem of his gown. This anxiety proved quite unwarranted.

Between the Michaelmas, spring and summer terms of Cambridge a number of lectures were given on request before various educational circles; and holidays were spent in different parts of the Continent where abandonment of wartime rationing had made available more adequate heat and more varied diet.

Western Europe, in general, had become a rather familiar area of trail-following, because of faithful attendance at the quintennial sessions of the International Congress of Historical Sciences and at various "American Studies" meetings.

The longest trail that Nichols ever followed—one of 19,000 miles in midsummer of 1962—was opened up by a Washington request for educationists to function in the program of the United States Educational Foundation in India. Four from Pennsylvania and two from elsewhere became the functionaries that year. A round-the-world airplane ticket opened up a once-in-a-lifetime vista, regardless of a miniscule monetary recompense. A conference with a Cairo educationist and a meeting with Pennsylvania alumni in Bombay (interspersed with such historical inspiration as pyramids and Luxor tombs) preceded, for the Dime, arrival at New Delhi in midday "coolness" of 117 degrees. With much more than "all deliberate speed" they negotiated by train the 175 miles northward into the foothills of the Himalayas at Dehra Dun. The final twenty-five miles of the trail was by ancient taxi, reeling around hairpin curves of a narrow, upward road.

There at the village of Mussoorie, a former British "hill-station," the Foundation had assembled forty-four professors from various Indian universities, for sessions on the teaching of American history and literature in their respective universities. Three weeks of all-day (and sometimes evening) sessions of lectures and discussions made the experience enlightening for everyone on the trail. The results of it were not significant. A number of the Indian participants subsequently were able to study at colleges in the United States. The very next year, through the assistance of the Foundation and the University of Osmania (the locale of one of the Mussoorie participants), there was established at Hyderabad an American Studies Research Center. It boasts a considerable library and a regularly-published Newsletter; and
its present director, a former post-doctoral fellow in American Civilization at the University of Pennsylvania, now is carrying on the Hyderabad work.

Further, Nichols late in his vice provostship was largely instrumental in arranging the creation of two chairs at the University of Bombay: one in American History and Civilization, the other in American literature. This was accomplished through an exchange arrangement between the Department of State and the University of Bombay, whereby American professors function there and Indian professors study in the United States preparatory to occupying those chairs at home.

Among other aspects of this globe-encircling exploration were lectures in Japan, at Kanazawa University (affiliated with Pennsylvania), at Kyoto, and at Tokyo. Nothing could stop the pen of Nichols, writing in the comparatively cool shelter of the International House in Tokyo while the other half of the Dime ventured a little speaking and sightseeing in Southeast Asian countries. He was developing further the thinking which added three more books and separate chapters in three collaborative volumes, to his authorship list by 1968.

It has been a crowded life, perhaps too crowded for his physical well-being. But Nichols has explored where he wanted to explore, going forward in the directions beckoning him. He has done what he most wished to do and has become what he most wished to be. Perhaps that can almost be satisfaction enough?