A Tribute to Neil A. McNall
(1913 - 1994)

Neil A. McNall, professor emeritus of American History at Penn State and long-time member of this Association, died December 9, 1994, at the age of eighty-one. Regular attendees of Pennsylvania History Association Conferences in the 1970s and 1980s will remember his rugged six-foot frame, dark eyes, gruff voice and somewhat formidable appearance. Once that exterior was penetrated, however, colleagues, students, and acquaintances quickly discovered a friendly nature, persistent humor, phenomenal memory, and a penchant for coining puns and composing doggerel verse.

A Green Mountain Yankee by birth, Neil studied for both his bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Vermont. His doctorate in American History was earned at Cornell University under Professor Paul Wallace Gates. After teaching three years at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania and two years at the New York College for Teachers in Albany he joined the faculty at Penn State in 1947. There, in addition to teaching hundreds of sections of the survey in American History, he introduced courses in Agricultural History and Western History which he invariably called “Cowboys and Indians.” His An Agricultural History of the Genesee Valley, 1790-1860 received special commendation from and was sponsored for publication by the Albert J. Beveridge Memorial Fund of the American Historical Association in 1952. He also authored scholarly articles for Cornell University, New York History, and Business History Review.

Neil joined this Association early in his career at Penn State, regularly attended its conferences, and upon retirement, took up the arduous duties of Business Secretary for the next five years. Afterwards he continued to assist his successor by packaging back issues of Pennsylvania History and booklets from the Association's History Studies series for mailing.

Among his favorite non-academic activities were gardening and singing in the choir of the Methodist Church of Pleasant Gap, Pennsylvania where he lived. For sev-
eral years he served as Treasurer of the local Boy Scout Troop. In retirement he con-
tinued to garden and sing with the choir, but also became a dextrous manipulator of
three VCRs which he used for taping and editing "favorite" old movies from televi-
sion; there were few he did not like.

Surviving members of his immediate family are his widow Kathryn ("Kay"),
daughter Jessica, son Lyndon, and two grandsons.

Gerald G. Eggert