

John M. Coleman



Courtesy of Lafayette College

John M. Coleman died on February 1, 1998 in Easton, Pa. He was a council member and former vice president and president of the Pennsylvania Historical Association. He also served as editor of the Association's quarterly journal, *Pennsylvania History*. A specialist in the history of the American Revolution, Professor Coleman taught at Lafayette College for 12 years. His major publication was *Thomas McKeen: Forgotten Leader of the Revolution* (1975).

Professor Coleman received his bachelor's degree from Amherst College in 1940, his masters from Harvard University in 1941, and his doctorate from Columbia University in 1949. He came to Lafayette in 1950 as an instructor and rose to assistant professor (1952), associate (1958), and full professor in 1976. He was recognized often for his outstanding work as a member of the faculty, receiving a Ford Foundation Faculty Fellowship and the Jones Faculty Lecture Award in 1967.

Colleagues and students remember John Coleman for his frankness and critical insight, especially in the political debates of the 1950s and 1960s. "He was a rebel," recalls Albert Gendebien, chair of the history department during Coleman's tenure, "and, in the 1950s, we needed rebels on campus. His concern was always justice—racial, social, political, economic."

I remember Professor Coleman as my senior thesis advisor at Lafayette in 1969. He was a thorough reader and totally interested in my work. I certainly count him as one of the most influential people in encouraging me to pursue a career in history. I always enjoyed our visits at PHA annual meetings. Fortunately, we were able to sit together (with his wife, Agnes) during the banquet in Philadelphia in November, 1997. He regaled us with the latest news on former members of the Lafayette history department and recounted old war stories on his dealings with the cultural bureaucracy in Harrisburg. His rebellious streak and his good humor prevailed.

Brent D. Glass

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission